

**Mediating Self-Representations:
Tensions Surrounding 'Ordinary'
Participation in Public Sector Projects**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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July 2007

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Abstract

Within a contemporary context of self-revelation, which Jon Dovey has called the 'self-speaking society' and Ken Plummer has described as the 'auto/biographical society', public funds are being directed towards inviting members of the public to represent themselves on public platforms. This thesis asks how processes of mediation shape these self-representations in public sector projects in the cultural sphere.

The notion of mediation as a process delineates a specific form of enquiry which stresses both the multiple factors that shape meaning, and the open-ended nature of meaning-making. Within this broad concern, this study focuses on the processes of mediation implicated when public service institutions invite members of the public to represent themselves, assist them in constructing their self-representations and then frame and disseminate the finished texts. Three overlapping but distinct processes of mediation are examined: institutional, textual (including technological) and cultural. The empirical analysis explores the production processes in two cases: BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* and The Museum of London's *London's Voices*. The case studies are multi-method, including in-depth interviews and observations with participants and producers, and the textual analysis of selected self-representations.

The empirical research suggests that processes of mediation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* are constituted through a series of tensions that are both challenging and productive. The public museum and public service broadcaster constitute markedly different contexts and consequently the particular ways in which tensions emerge in each case study are distinctive. Nevertheless self-representations in both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are mediated by tensions in four areas: *Purposes, Quality, Ordinary people, and Community*. Institutional personnel hold varied conceptions of purpose and participants take part for a range of reasons, from imagining audiences for what they produce, to training in specific skills. Some stakeholders emphasise quality of process while others emphasise quality of outcome. The category of the 'ordinary person' is both strategically avoided, and invoked and, in the texts produced, the 'ordinary person' is both brought into being and simultaneously undermined. 'Community' is something which these projects aim to engender and, at the same time, is seen as always already there.

In analyzing the empirical data, I draw on Nikolas Rose's Foucauldian analysis of structures of governance to argue that the categories of 'ordinary people' and 'community', as revealed in the case studies, work to constrain how members of the public represent themselves. At the same time the empirical analyses reveal cracks in these structures of governance, which are potentially challenging to their very operation. However, I argue that it is also possible to imagine these cracks as valves, which allow the structures of governance to continue to function all the more effectively. Finally, the thesis considers the normative and critical arguments for the continuation of publicly funded projects of this kind. In particular, I suggest that projects of this kind present a challenge to the increasingly formatted representation of members of the public in media and cultural spaces that is evidenced, for example, in the expansion of reality television formats across the television channels.

Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

NThumim

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Permissions

Thank you to BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* and to Dai Evans for permission to reproduce Figures 7, 8 and 11 from the *Capture Wales* website. Best efforts were made to contact Val Bethell re Figure 11.

Thank you to the Museum of London for permission to reproduce Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 from the *London's Voices* website and publicity materials.

Acknowledgements

A lot of very special people have supported me throughout the process of this PhD. To all those amazing friends and family, a huge thank you; I'm not going to list names, you all know who you are, how much I appreciate you, and that you kept me going.

I have had a brilliant, and engaged, supervisor in Sonia Livingstone and have learned so much along the way from her. Roger Silverstone and Nick Couldry were on my thesis committee and both of them provided insights, suggestions, and challenges that helped this work enormously; thank you to them both and I am so sad Roger is not here to see me finish this. Everyone in the Media and Communications Department at LSE provided a stimulating and supportive environment in which to work during these last few years.

Of course, this research would not have been possible without the research participants. Everyone involved in *Capture Wales* at BBC Wales, and *London's Voices* at the Museum of London – the producers, the participants, the representatives of partner organisations – were all so very welcoming, open, thought provoking and giving of their time. So many people took time to talk to me about their experiences and opinions, and cheerfully put up with my sitting watching them as they went about their work as producers and as participants. All these people really made the research come alive. I hope I have done you all justice in this thesis.

Carole Gilligan - *Video Nation*, Karen Brookfield - Heritage Lottery Fund, Dorothy Sheridan - Mass Observation Archive, and Chris Mohr - *Video Nation* all helped me to think about the case studies in a wider context. Thank you to them all for their time and thoughts.

The ESRC gave me full-time funding and made it possible for me to do a PhD; for this I am grateful.

Thanks to Chris Morris for his invaluable help in reproducing the images.

Vanessa Cragoe proof-read the whole PhD and, moreover, helped me in the last few days when RSI made the final finish even harder. I am so lucky to have her practical help, and her friendship.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Publicly Funded Self-Representation

Introduction

Members of the public are today telling personal stories across a range of public contexts and to such a wide extent that Ken Plummer has described contemporary society as an 'auto/biographical society' (Plummer, 2001) and Jon Dovey has suggested that we are living in a 'self-speaking society' (Dovey, 2000). The ideas of an auto/biographical or a self-speaking society both point to the ubiquity of members of the public telling personal stories, *in public*. This study seeks to explore what lies behind the rather grand claims that contemporary society is 'auto/biographical' or 'self-speaking'. Specifically this study explores two examples drawn from the many kinds of practices that, taken together, mean it is possible to suggest we are living in an auto/biographical society. Within a broad context of self-revelation, public funds are being directed towards inviting members of the public to represent themselves on public platforms. This thesis asks how processes of mediation shape self-representations in public sector projects in the cultural sphere.

The term *self-representation* is used in this study to refer to the practice by which members of the public represent themselves. The term self-representation was used in the 1990s by producers at the BBC Community Programmes Unit to describe the kind of representations produced for the television series *Video Nation* and *Video Diaries*¹. Producers used the term self-representation to distinguish representations in which media producers facilitated people in 'speaking for themselves' from those in which media professionals represented other people. A web search of the term self-representation reveals that it is widely used to describe any kind of presentation of self, for example, autobiographical writing and fine art practice. While the prefix 'self' suggests the claim that the individual or group in question is doing the representing themselves (Renov, 2004), rather than being represented by others, one could also argue that people who appear in documentaries, and in Reality TV, are also representing themselves, although with varying degrees of control over the final outcome (Wood &

¹Mandy Rose in interview with the author, MSc Dissertation, 1999.

Skeggs, 2004). Thus there are a number of forms that self-representations currently take, and they take place across a wide range of settings, as discussed in Chapter 2.

This thesis is concerned with publicly funded self-representations, with the relationship between producers and audiences when publicly funded bodies invite members of their audience to represent themselves on the institutional platform, and to be assisted in the creation of this representation by institutional personnel. It seems to me that it is politically as well as sociologically important that cultural institutions like public museums and public service broadcasting are today inviting members of their audience 'to have a voice' on their platform. This thesis sets out to explore the practice of self-representation which is taking place in these particular kinds of settings.

As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the appearance of members of the public in British media and cultural spaces has a long history. However the 1990s was a particular moment of change; and many subsequent changes are ascribed to the deregulation of British Broadcasting that came with the 1990 Broadcasting Act (see, for example, Murdock, 2000). In 1994, discussing the history of the Access idea in broadcasting, Corner noted:

As television becomes increasingly open to market-driven channel choice in Britain, the survival of the very public space in which access has always had its difficult, marginalised existence is threatened. Within the new programme formulas, there will inevitably be a tendency for the accessed ordinary to be made productive within the terms of market competition (Corner, 1994, p. 33).

Indeed, during the 1990s, Reality Television programmes proliferated, as did other kinds of representations of members of the public in a range of settings, and Dovey's comments in 2000 suggest that Corner's predictions were correct:

So much of contemporary factual television is based upon ordinary people's speech that it is easy to fall into the presumption that the airwaves are full of people 'speaking for themselves' when in fact they are saying what the script requires of them in the time the script requires to be filled, with all the attendant mediations of representational processes that go to shape their inputs (Dovey, 2000, p. 110).

Within this proliferation of "'ordinary people's speech' there were projects that rested on the claim that they were enabling people to 'speak for themselves'. Between the start

of the BBC Community Programmes Unit's *Video Nation Shorts* project in 1993 and the ending of this as a terrestrial television project in 2000, the presence of representations of 'ordinary people' across a range of public service institutions in the cultural domain appears to have changed dramatically. In 1993 *Video Nation*, in its prime time location on BBC2 in the evening, and the self-representation that it invited and displayed, was novel and practices of self-representation within mainstream publicly funded cultural spaces was marginal (although there were precedents, as will be discussed in Chapter 3). I refer specifically to *Video Nation* because it, and the *Video Diaries* project by which it was preceded, are regarded as recent exemplars of self-representation and the Access tradition by many scholars (see, for example, Carpentier, 2003; Corner, 1994; Dovey, 2000; Kilborn & Izod, 1997).

By 2000, when the televised *Video Nation* project ended, the presence of 'ordinary people' across a range of representational spaces had increased, and the notion that they should be invited to 'speak for themselves' had become part of the discourse of funding bodies, producers, and audiences alike. During the 1990s then, the notion that members of the public should represent themselves became part of the status quo. This means that it is difficult to find a counter argument being endorsed by publicly funded bodies. The history of representations of members of the public, and the reasons why self-representation is being funded today, are explored in Chapter 3.

What is at stake 'behind the scenes' when an individual 'speaks for themselves' on a publicly funded platform? The research question explored in this thesis is: how do processes of mediation shape self-representations by members of the public in public sector projects in the cultural sphere? It is suggested that a focus on mediation provides a useful way in to exploring what is going on when members of the public are invited to represent themselves. The notion of a process of mediation is explored in Chapter 2.

Following the exemplary status of the BBC's *Video Nation*, the research presented in this thesis began with a plan to use a multiple case study approach; the methodological approach of a multiple case study is discussed in Chapter 4. The multiple case study would be used to explore three examples of publicly funded self-representation, of which *Video Nation* would be one, two other exemplars of publicly funded self-representation were sought, to be explored alongside *Video Nation*. I had observed that self-representation was taking place in contexts beyond public service broadcasting and

wanted to investigate self-representation as a contemporary, and not only a public service broadcasting, phenomenon, for the research was motivated in the first place by the observation that people were seemingly ‘telling their stories’ in all sorts of settings.

In planning the research I met with Dorothy Sheridan, Director of the Mass Observation Archive, now held at the University of Sussex; with curators at The Imperial War Museum and The Museum of London; with the Editor of the *Video Nation* online project; and with the producers of *Capture Wales*, a BBC Wales project produced by the New Media Department. The research focus on *how* self-representations were mediated called for an exploration of *process* and therefore the study needed to investigate projects that were ongoing at the time the empirical work would be carried out. Furthermore, in order to facilitate comparison across quite different settings, projects of similar size and scope had to be chosen.

It quickly became clear that it was better to frame *Video Nation* as the precursor to more recent initiatives. While *Video Nation* was still ongoing as an online project, I decided to investigate projects that had come into being after *Video Nation* and, I began to think, could only have come into being after *Video Nation*. It was decided, furthermore, that it would be possible, for practical reasons, to carry out a multiple case study of the production of two projects, but not of three. Thus, *Video Nation* was excluded and two projects were chosen that were ongoing at the time of the research and which seemed to have the status of exemplars, evidenced by being in receipt of public funding, and recognition in their given sectors. Of course how exemplary a project might be can only really be judged with hindsight, and this thesis sought projects that were ongoing; therefore gaining exemplary status was something that would happen during their existence.

In choosing the case studies the project is shaped. For example, had I been able to find a project on a similar scale produced by Channel 4, this would have been different from studying self-representation within the very particular context of the BBC. Similarly, while museums may share a particular move towards encouraging public participation and self-representation, as discussed in Chapter 2, all museums have different emphases and it is likely that, depending on their particular focus, different museums would invite particular kinds of emphases in the self-representations which they facilitated. The Imperial War Museum, for example, linked self-representations to the subject of war.

Self-representation is encouraged by the Arts Council of England, but I think that the Arts Council may still have a narrower audience than museums and the BBC, though clearly there is a hope that this will change, as evidenced by the emphasis on funding projects that involve the public (Arts Council of England, 2007).

Finally two cases were chosen that seemed to be equivalent – the Museum of London’s *London’s Voices* and BBC Wales’ *Capture Wales* - both of which were funded for three years in the first instance, and found in public service institutions of the cultural sphere whose remit was broadly social rather than focused on a particular topic of interest. Of course, in addition, the ability to access the productions is vital and the curators of *London’s Voices* and the producers of *Capture Wales* agreed to participate in the study.

Capture Wales and *London’s Voices* have achieved high profile status as innovators, as evidenced by the fact that they have each won, or been short listed for, awards which mark their perceived excellence. *Capture Wales* won a *BAFTA Cymru 2002 New Media award*, and *London’s Voices* was short listed in the website category for the 2003 *Race in the Media* awards. The awards suggest that the projects satisfy some contemporary consensus about what are seen as desirable activities for publicly funded cultural institutions to be engaged in, and support the argument that these are exemplars of the practice of publicly funded self-representation.

Capture Wales and *London’s Voices* are both relatively large scale, each having been funded for three years. *London’s Voices* is addressed to the plural communities of London, a capital city, and *Capture Wales* is addressed to the plural communities of Wales, a nation, whose status within the United Kingdom is controversial. In the twenty-first century two kinds of public service institution of the cultural sphere are thus converging on the activity of inviting members of the public to ‘tell their own stories’. Furthermore, these separate institutions are converging in terms of the methods and technologies that they deploy to produce and exhibit these representations. For example, both projects use workshops as part of the process of production, and both projects use the web as one of their exhibition spaces.

Capture Wales and *London’s Voices* each provided a site for the comparative exploration of the issues explored in this study. The findings from the empirical work are explored in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. In Chapter 5 the institutional context which

produces *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* is explored through a discussion of the processes of institutional mediation. In Chapter 6 exemplars of self-representation drawn from the two case studies are explored in detail in a discussion of the processes of textual mediation. In Chapter 7 the point of view and experience of participants in the two projects are explored in a discussion of the processes of cultural mediation.

In the remainder of this chapter, firstly an overview of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* provides details of these cases in order to set the scene for the analysis in the three empirical chapters that follow later in the thesis. Secondly, an outline of the chapters is provided, together with the rationale for the structure of the thesis.

Two Cases: *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*

The Museum of London's *London's Voices*

The following information draws on a combination of sources to describe *London's Voices*, namely: internal project documents, interviews with project personnel, and observations made at the projects. The *London's Voices* website, reached via the Museum of London's homepage, provides a publicity platform for all the projects as well as exhibition space for the web exhibitions, and can be found at:

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk>.

The Museum of London's *London's Voices* project was a three-year project run by the museum's oral history and contemporary collecting division and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project began in 2001 and consisted of eighteen small projects which experimented with using the museum's existing oral history archive in new ways, and which built on who is represented in that archive, and in the museum more generally.

The eighteen projects under the *London's Voices* umbrella involve a range of different aims and methods. Museum exhibitions both displayed oral histories from the already existing archive and invited visitors to contribute their own memories. New collecting was also carried out whereby the project personnel worked with groups of members of the public in different locations around London to record their memories and to represent themselves through the use of old family photographs, new photographs, written reminiscences, and musical composition. Collaborations took place in which

artists, dancers, musicians and members of the public were invited to explore and interpret the museum's oral history collection in light of their own experiences. Finally online exhibitions displayed a combination of oral history from the archive and new contributions from members of the public. The projects are outlined in Appendix A.

London's Voices, as it was originally proposed to the Heritage Lottery Fund, set out to fulfil two main aims:

Voices has two aims: firstly, to develop access to our oral history collections and secondly, to further the cause of social inclusion by promoting opportunities for contribution and participation, and by redressing the under-representation of particular people in our collections and visitor profile. The two aims are inextricably linked. O'Connell, R. (2001). *Heritage Lottery Fund, Revenue Grants Programme, Application Form*: Museum of London.

Some of the *London's Voices* projects set out to increase access to the museum's existing oral history archive since, as the Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting noted in an interview with the author, it is considered an underused resource (Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London). In addition *London's Voices* projects aimed to increase access to the archive by using the oral history collection in innovative ways (ibid.). Many of the *London's Voices* projects were devised to provide opportunities for 'participation and contribution' and this is in order both to widen the range of who is represented in the museum's oral history collections, and to contribute to the aim of the museum as a whole to broaden the range and 'diversity' of visitors to the museum. Many of the *London's Voices* projects speak to both of these overarching aims: to increase access to the original archive, and to widen participation. The original funding application states:

There are two underlying principles: firstly that the subject of all this activity is the cultural diversity of the London region; and secondly that all three activities will be carried out in such a way as to maximise opportunities for participation and collaboration. O'Connell, R. (2001). *Heritage Lottery Fund, Revenue Grants Programme, Application Form*: Museum of London.

It is immediately clear that any self-representation that takes place in *London's Voices* came about because of an intention to 'maximise opportunities for participation and collaboration'. It would seem therefore that inviting people to represent themselves is

considered to be a particularly appropriate way to meet this intention. But also it is clear that *London's Voices* is not solely focused on inviting people to tell their stories, but also on inviting members of the public to hear *each other's* stories (including those already collected and stored in the museum's existing oral history archive).

When *London's Voices* began there was one full time member of staff, the *London's Voices* Project Coordinator; in addition the project team consisted of:

- Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting.
- Project Manager (also Deputy Head of Access and Learning Department.)
- Head of Department of Later London History and Collections
- Diversity Manager
- External Exhibitions Manager

At a later date, the Project Coordinator was appointed to a new permanent post, Assistant Curator of Oral History, and a new Project Officer was appointed. In addition, representatives of other departments had input into the project at various points, most notably press and marketing officers.

The Museum of London's website draws attention to the museum's role in representing members of the public:

The Museum of London Group represents a quarter of a million years of history and over seven million modern Londoners...
<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk>, accessed 14 March, 2004.

The Museum was created in 1976 by the merging of two older museums: the London Museum, a social history museum, and the Guildhall Museum, an archaeological museum. The Museum of London is a publicly funded museum and it is defined on the Museum of London website as a 'Non-Departmental Public Body'. The Museum is jointly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Corporation of London (Ibid.) A crude indication of the size of the Museum of London is provided by a comparison of visitor numbers with some other public museums in London. These figures do not tell us anything about the socio-economic, gender, or racial make-up of the museum's visitors, but they show its relative size.

- 311,900 people visited the Museum of London during the financial year 2001/2002
Museum of London Financial Statements, 2002.
- 71,760 people visited the Horniman Museum in 2000/2002
The Horniman Public Museum and Park Trust Report and Consolidated Financial Statements, 2001.
- 1,660,000 people visited the Natural History Museum in 2000/2001
The Natural History Museum Annual Report, 2001.
- 1.65 million people visited the Science Museum in 2001/2002
The Science Museum Annual Report, 2002.

According to the *London's Voices* application to the HLF the museum employed 196 people in 2001 (O'Connell, 2001); this is in comparison to the 75 employees that worked at the museum at its inception (Ross & Swain, 2001). The museum now consists of three sites: the main museum at London Wall, the museum in the Docklands, and Mortimer Wheeler House in Hackney. The main museum at London Wall houses major exhibits, the Docklands museum is themed around the history of London's docks, and Mortimer Wheeler house is a publicly accessible store for the museum's archaeological and social history collections, and a resource centre (London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre, LAARC). The commercial archaeological service MoLAS is also based at Mortimer Wheeler House (interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London).

The Museum of London's management structure is divided into five 'groups'. Three of the 'groups' are linked to physical sites, and a manager for each site has responsibilities across the sites. The fourth and fifth groups are not tied to specific sites. The fourth group is Financial and Corporate Services, and the fifth is the Public Programming Group. Within the Public Programming Group there are four sections: two curatorial departments, Early and Later, the Access and Learning Department, and the Design Department. The Early Department deals with all material prior to 1700 and the Later Department with all material post 1700. Within the Later Department there are five divisions:

- Social and Working History;
- Paintings, Prints and Drawings;
- Dress and Decorative Arts;
- Historical Photographs;
- Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, established in 1992.

Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

The information about the museum structure and the place of oral history within it suggests that the Oral History Department is quite marginal within the museum, as Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, notes:

I think probably among a lot of the museum here there is still a primacy placed on objects. Although in terms of the resources we have equal resources, I don't think necessarily across the museum there is a perception that oral history is equal to the objects or the material for use in the display, so I think there is still a bit of a gap there.

Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

While it seems as though representation of members of the public is on the increase and is favoured by funding bodies, at the same time the standing of this kind of work within the institutions concerned is controversial.

Notions of 'access' and 'diversity' and their linkage to 'community' are now ubiquitous, particularly across the public sector, and the museum's strategic plan for 2001-2006 reflects this ubiquity:

The museum will significantly increase the number and diversity of Users. The museum will provide richer, wider, more engaging access to its resources for all.
Museum of London Financial Statements, 2002.

These aims can be seen as responding to recent research in the museum sector which suggests that museums in general have only served a limited section of the public, namely the white middle classes and, apart from school parties, museum goers tend to be older people. As the executive summary of the original funding application for *London's Voices* states:

In particular there is a growing body of reports and guidelines that emphasise the need to alleviate cultural exclusion by making museums more accessible to today's diverse population.
O'Connell, R. (2001). *Heritage Lottery Fund, Revenue Grants Programme, Application Form*, Museum of London.

In particular the DCMS' *Access Policy* recommends that, to fulfil their duties and receive public funding, museums should broaden the diversity of their visitors (O'Connell, 2001). While the museum structure suggests that the Oral History Department may be quite marginal within the museum, that department is at the same time particularly well suited to addressing the aims for museums, which come from policy directives like this.

In line with longstanding thinking about publicly funded institutions in a democracy, the Museum of London's publicity literature emphasises the necessity for the museum to represent the public that it serves (Ross & Swain, *Museum of London: 25 Years 1976-2001* (Brochure)). It now seems to be a widely held, though not uncontested, notion that, in order to represent people, institutions should 'engage' them. Inviting people to participate by creating their own representation is regarded as one very good way to meet the public service requirement to provide representation. The Assistant Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Sarah Gudgin, makes this point about the role of the *London's Voices* project within the Museum of London:

I don't think people automatically think the Museum of London equals, you know, inclusive community. But that is the work that we're doing. That's what we're trying to do in *London's Voices* and I think through the outreach work we are actually making those connections in people's minds. You know, that we're interested in their community, that we value their stories and their input and we want to share that with them and do projects with them.

Interview with Sarah Gudgin Assistant Curator Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, *London's Voices*

BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*

Capture Wales is a digital storytelling project² run by BBC Wales' New Media Department, and Cardiff University's Centre for Journalism Studies. The project began in 2001, fully funded by the BBC³. The *Capture Wales* project teaches people to make short 'digital stories' for exhibition on one or other of the two *Capture Wales* websites (English language, and Welsh language) which can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales>. The Creative Director of the project describes what the project does as giving 'the people access to the tools' (Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director *Capture Wales*).

²Digital Storytelling is a term coined by the *Center for Digital Storytelling* in California.

³*Capture Wales* is currently funded for a further period of time.

In a paper presented to the International Digital Storytelling Conference in Cardiff, November 2003, Meadows described the project. Each month a selection of the *Capture Wales* team runs a five-day workshop for ten people, in different towns and villages in Wales. Some workshops are run in English, and some in Welsh. The workshop team most often consists of the creative director, the script consultant, two researchers and two workshop trainers, though the make up of the team differs in the Welsh language and English workshops in order to ensure that the majority is Welsh speaking in the Welsh language workshops. Two weeks prior to the start of the workshop selected team members run a presentation evening in the town or village where the workshop will take place. At this meeting digital stories are shown, the process is explained, questions are taken, and applications are invited. Applicants fill in forms including information on what story they think they may like to make, although it is stressed that this may change in the course of the workshop.

Two weeks after the presentation evening a 'gathering' takes place in the location in question, at which the ten people who have places on the workshop meet up, watch more digital stories, and ask more questions. There are usually some icebreaker and storytelling games at this stage and participants begin work on their stories. One week after the gathering the 'story circle' takes place, which is a day of storytelling games and activities. By the end of this day people have finalised their stories. The day after the 'storytelling circle' is the 'image capture' day. Members of the BBC team help people to scan and prepare images for their digital stories. During the next week people work on their stories at home and the BBC team considers the scripts. A week later the three-day production workshop takes place, where people learn the computer packages, Adobe Photoshop and Premier, and make their own digital stories. The three-day workshop culminates in a screening of all the stories made in that workshop. By 2003 more than 200 people had participated in workshops and made digital stories (Meadows, 2003a).

The stories are all uploaded to the *Capture Wales* website where they are searchable by the following themes: challenge, community, family, memory, and passion. The stories are also searchable by area, for which the web user clicks on locations on a map of Wales. In addition there is a slot entitled, 'this week's story' in which contextual information about a selected story is offered. There is also space for the web user to

respond to the story⁴. A selection of the digital stories are shown on television: on BBCi, on BBC One Wales' main evening news and current events programme, *Wales Today*, and on the Welsh language channel S4C. In addition, the audio tracks from selected digital stories are played on BBC Radio Wales and Radio Cymru.

The original proposal for the project summarised the project aim: 'To create a project which uses digital, multi-media story telling in Wales as a way of connecting the BBC more closely to communities'. The proposal continues:

This is a type of work which has its roots in community arts and oral history, which stretches from pre-literacy cultural traditions to recent phenomena, like BBC 2's Video Diaries series. There is also a precedent for a broadcaster-led initiative of this kind in Canada (www.storyengine.ca).
Internal BBC document Welsh Lives – original *Capture Wales* proposal.

In addition, one of the project aims is to encourage sustainability whereby partner organisations, 'in the community', will apply for public funding and set up digital storytelling projects of their own, on which the BBC team will act as advisors.

Capture Wales is part of a trio of projects run by the New Media department. The three projects come under the umbrella of *Digination*, and consist of *Capture Wales*, *Community Studios* and *Where I Live* sites⁵ (Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales). These projects all contribute to the BBC Wales *Connecting Communities* initiative. The BBC Wales Annual Review 2002-2003 states:

At the heart of these projects is a desire to establish a dialogue with communities through the sharing of skills and stories, the discovery and nurturing of talent, and the exploration of both our heritage and our future potential. Such a dialogue will influence the way we work in the future, enrich our output and enable communities to become more actively involved in the broadcasting process (BBC Wales Annual Review 2002 - 2003, 2003).

⁴The *Capture Wales* project led to two sister projects in two BBC English regions, Lancashire and Humber. These were modelled on the *Capture Wales* form but did not last as long - the *Telling Lives* projects ended in 2005.

⁵ The *Where I Live* sites host local news and information to which members of the public can contribute, as well as hosting *Video Nation*, in common with many other *Where I Live* sites across the UK. The *Community Studios* are places where members of the public can learn media skills, find out about, and 'engage with' the BBC.

Capture Wales aims to give members of the public living in Wales a voice on a BBC platform, that is to facilitate self-representation. In addition, *Capture Wales* aims to contribute to ‘Wales’ New Economy’, ‘the knowledge economy’, by providing skills in new media usage. The proposal promises: ‘[A] boost to the Welsh creative economy – which is a crucial aspect of the development of the so-called “new economy” in Wales’ (Hargreaves, I. (2001). Internal BBC document, *Welsh lives: a proposal*, original *Capture Wales* proposal). Finally, *Capture Wales* seeks to contribute to the core BBC role of providing content for consumption by audiences.

At the time the empirical work was carried out during the initial three year funding period of *Capture Wales*, there were ten members of the *Capture Wales* team, three of those full-time and the rest part time and free-lance:

- Creative Director (on secondment from The Cardiff School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies, Cardiff University)
- Executive Producer
- Project Producer
- Web-producer and Welsh Language Workshop Trainer
- English Language Script Consultant
- Welsh Language Script Consultant
- Workshop Trainer, and Post Producer
- Two Researchers
- Audio Engineer

The BBC divides the UK into Nations and Regions. BBC Wales is one of the three BBC Nations (outside England) Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The BBC Nations are the pillars of the BBC’s regional and national strategy, and the BBC services fifteen regions and sub-regions and the three nations (OFCOM, 2004a). BBC Wales’ Connecting Communities strategy is part of the BBC’s wider strategic approach to the Nations and Regions, as the 2003 BBC Annual Report makes clear:

Nations & Regions is at the heart of the BBC’s relationship with its audiences, connecting with communities in every part of the UK and celebrating the cultures and diversity of modern Britain (BBC Annual Report, 2003)

This description of the remit of the Nations & Regions emphasises that aspect of the BBC remit in general which focuses on the BBC's role in representing members of the public, as members of *communities*, in plural (as will be further discussed in Chapter 2, below). *Capture Wales* is further singled out for mention in the fulfilling of this aspect of the BBC remit:

BBC Nations & Regions is committed to enabling audiences to tell their stories in their own words with projects like Digital Storytelling in Wales and Video Nation in England (BBC Annual Report, 2003).

This mention of *Capture Wales* suggests that self-representation ('tell their stories in their own words') is a particularly appropriate way to fulfil this aspect of the remit.

When *Capture Wales* was first commissioned in 2001, the budget for the pilot came from the Talent Department at BBC Wales. This suggests that the original view of *Capture Wales* was primarily as an innovatory project. The longer term three-year funding came from the budget of the New Media Department. The New Media section of the 2003 Annual Report described how BBC New Media policy focuses on fulfilling the BBC remit, on the one hand, to inform and entertain and, on the other hand, to represent members of the public *to each other*:

BBCi provides a public service resource to enable people to explore topics that interest and entertain them and a forum for dialogue with each other and the BBC (BBC Annual Report, 2003)

It is within these three contexts that the *Capture Wales* digital storytelling project takes place. First, within the BBC as a whole, *Capture Wales* addresses that aspect of the BBC public service remit which focuses on representation. Second, *Capture Wales* is central to the Nations and Regions 'Connecting Communities' policy, and the view that this is best achieved by facilitating self-representation. Third, *Capture Wales* is central to the aspect of BBC New Media policy, which focuses on bringing about 'dialogue' between members of the public, in Wales.

The 'Connecting Communities' strategy discussed above indicates the BBC's aim to encourage participation. Facilitating self-representation is clearly seen as one way to fulfil this aim. Here the BBC is, like the Museum of London, a public service institution in the cultural domain, which is addressing the idea that a part of their role is to

represent the public that they serve by providing forums in which that public can represent themselves. This view also invokes Mayo's notion of 'community as policy', which will be discussed in Chapter 2 (Mayo, 2006).

In addition, *Capture Wales* is able to fulfil other important BBC objectives, such as the view that the BBC should contribute to building the local economy in the Nations and Regions where it operates. At the International Digital Storytelling Conference, held at the BBC in Cardiff, in a speech entitled, 'Communities The Vision', Patrick Sullivan, Director (All Wales) Media Technology Programmes, Welsh Development Agency (WDA), espoused the virtues of *Capture Wales* in terms of its contribution to the 'knowledge economy' (Sullivan, 2003). Sullivan suggested Digital Storytelling could help Wales achieve its goals in terms of 'economic wellbeing'. He proposed that there are two stakeholder groups in Wales: communities and citizens, and argued that, if those groups embraced ICT, then they would be able to interact with each other more effectively. Sullivan described ICT as one tool in regeneration and argued that Digital Storytelling promotes skills in literacy and that, through Digital Storytelling, the 'literacy issue' is addressed in a non-threatening environment.

In Sullivan's presentation, the aim of community participation in the BBC was connected explicitly to the notion of community as a tool of governance (discussed in Chapter 2). Here *Capture Wales* was used in arguments about the promise of technological development for positive social change (a kind of argument that has been accused of technological determinism). In fact, as the Editor of the New Media department at BBC Wales pointed out, social and economic regeneration is not a part of the remit of the BBC, and therefore any socio-economic developments must be additional to the main role of the BBC, which is to provide content for its platforms (Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media BBC Wales).

The necessity to justify its existence in terms of the content provided for its platforms poses a problem for *Capture Wales*. The project fulfils the remit to represent members of the public, but it must be justified, not in terms of those numerically few who represent themselves by making digital stories, but rather by the audience who view the completed stories as BBC content. Hence, with internet use still low in comparison to television, *Capture Wales*' digital stories must be shown on television in order to reach

a wider audience and justify the licence fee being spent in this way (Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media BBC Wales).

The tensions arising here, between facilitating self-representation by some of the audience, and the production of content for a wider audience, will be discussed further in the empirical chapters to follow.

Thesis Chapter Plan

This thesis is in eight chapters, of which this introductory chapter is the first. In Chapter 2 the theoretical approach adopted in this study is presented. The chapter begins with the phenomenon under investigation - ubiquitous self-representations. It is argued that, while self-representations emerge in discussion of a range of genres and forms, from debates about talk-shows to discussion of fine art practice, a theoretical framework for making sense of self-representation across multiple contexts does not yet exist.

The notion of process of mediation is offered as a useful orienting concept for considering self-representations. A sketch of the history of the study of audiences in media studies shows how the notion of mediation can be seen as emerging from work on audiences and, in particular, work which took into account sites of production, text and reception, or audience activity. The discussion then moves on to explore debates on mediation, where this term has come from in media studies and the range of ways in which the term is employed. The approach taken in this study is introduced, entailing understanding mediation as a set of processes that must necessarily take place to shape any text that is produced, self-representations being no exception. Thus the empirical work seeks to identify what processes of mediation are and how they shape self-representations in the two case studies, *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. To facilitate this empirical investigation, three overlapping but distinct dimensions of processes of mediation are identified: institutional, textual (including technological), and cultural. It is noted also that the kinds of close mediations explored in this study exist in a context of a wider field of mediations (Martin-Barbero, 1993).

The theoretical discussion then moves on to explore two constructs, 'the ordinary person' and the 'community'. It is suggested that these concepts are key both to academic and policy debate of representations of members of the public. Williams,

Mayo, Silverstone and others are drawn on to explore the complexity and ambiguity of the terms 'ordinary people' and community'. It is suggested that the way in which these constructs function in the making of self-representations has implications for two areas of debate about mediated public space, the division between public and private subject matter, and the notion of a unified body – the public. Rose's suggestion that 'community' can be understood as functioning as a tool of governance in the Third Way politics of Blair's New Labour, and Couldry's notion of 'media' and 'ordinary' worlds lead to a question: do the categories 'ordinary people' and 'community' operate, as part of the processes of mediation, to constrain and limit how members of the public appear in the self-representations produced in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*? This discussion is revisited in the conclusion to the thesis, Chapter 8, after presentation of the empirical work on how processes of mediation shape self-representation.

Chapter 3 turns to the contexts from which the two case studies explored in the thesis are taken. This chapter provides a long and broad look at the history of public service broadcasting and public museums in Britain, in order to identify precedents to current practices of self-representation, and in order to try to suggest some explanations as to why public service institutions are today inviting members of the public to represent themselves. In this chapter it is suggested that two public service institutions of the cultural sphere are today converging on the activity of inviting public participation in the form of self-representation.

The thesis then turns to a discussion of methodology. In Chapter 4 the reasons why the multiple case study is the most appropriate method for exploring the primary research question are outlined. The empirical work which influenced this thesis's focus on *process* is discussed, and studies of production and of texts are explored. The discussion then reviews methodological approaches deployed by scholars concerned with the audience presence in production.

The chapter then goes on to discuss the research design for this thesis. The rationale for the move from a conception of production, text, reception, to one of processes of institutional, textual, and cultural mediation is outlined. The detailed research questions are given. An outline is provided as to how the case study approach was put into practice. Next, the methodological issues encountered in carrying out the multiple case study are discussed. This section includes a discussion of the role of the researcher in

the research, ethical concerns, issues of access, and other practical matters. The chapter then turns to a discussion of how the empirical analysis was approached and undertaken. Finally, the way in which the analysis led to the notion of areas of tension as constitutive of processes of mediation is described. Four areas of tension are introduced: tensions between different and conflicting ideas about the purpose of self-representation; tensions between conflicting and different constructions of the 'ordinary person'; tensions between different and contradictory understandings of the notion of 'community'; and tensions between different understandings of how to define quality, in the production process or in the outcome or in the raw material, for example.

The empirical analysis of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* is presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The conceptual division of processes of mediation that is outlined in Chapter 2 is used to structure the presentation of the empirical work. Thus Chapter 5 focuses on processes of institutional mediation; Chapter 6 focuses on processes of textual mediation; Chapter 7 focuses on processes of cultural mediation. Each chapter is further structured around the four areas of tension identified above and discussed in Chapter 4. As I note in the conclusion to the thesis, a decision that was taken for the sake of allowing sufficient depth in each area of analysis comes with a cost: the structuring of the empirical work into three chapters, each focused on one dimension of the mediation process, actually reifies the boundaries between these dimensions, even though the conception of three dimensions of mediation was not intended to suggest an actual separation. Nevertheless, the structure that is presented allows the most depth in the exploration of the mediation process.

In Chapter 5 processes of institutional mediation are explored. The category of producer is used as an umbrella term covering a range of stakeholders from different positions inside and outside the organisations producing *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Tensions over the purpose of the projects explode the possibility of understanding a clear reason for the facilitation of self-representation in the institutions. Instead a range of purposes coalesce and result in the invitation to the production and display of self-representation by members of the public. The producers' use, and their avoidance, of the terms 'ordinary people' and 'community' lead to a troubling of the meaning and function of these terms. Finally, the ways in which quality is defined and achieved cause tension but, also, it is suggested that this tension is productive as producers try to deliver quality in a wide range of ways.

In Chapter 6 it is argued that the very same areas of tensions discussed in Chapter 5 can be seen in the texts themselves. The discussion of processes of textual mediation suggests that tensions over purpose are manifest in the contradiction between what I call the micro texts – the self-representation, and the macro text - their display context of, for example, library display or website. In a related argument, the construction of ‘ordinary people’ and ‘community’ are shown to be the site of tension within the micro texts themselves, but also in terms of the detail of the self- representation, in combination with how it is framed. Finally, tensions pertaining to issues of quality in the self-representations are explored. Here, for example, we encounter tension between the distinctiveness of the ‘amateur aesthetic’ and the fixity that such an aesthetic implies. The final part of this chapter addresses the problem of carrying out textual analysis at a time when its value has been subject to critique. Here it is suggested that the very process of carrying out textual analysis of selected self-representations drawn from the case studies, itself foregrounds some of the problems that are raised by textual analysis.

The processes of cultural mediation are addressed in Chapter 7. In ways analogous to those found in the discussion of processes of institutional mediation, this discussion indicates that a very wide range of purposes inform both the decision to participate in projects like *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, and the understanding of what the projects are for. When audiences are producers (within certain constraints), then their understandings of the purpose of the projects, and their own purpose in taking part, go towards shaping what is produced. The chapter goes on to explore how tensions over ‘community’ and ‘ordinary people’ are constitutive of the processes of cultural mediation, although unsurprisingly these tensions do not appear in quite the same ways as they did in Chapter 5. When the people who are understood to be ‘ordinary people’ themselves invoke the term, for example, they do so to different ends than do producers at the institutions. The discussion of tensions over quality explores some surprising understandings of where quality comes from - for example, the idea that quality is found in the raw material of the participants’ experience. Overall, the discussion of processes of cultural mediation shows how the experiences, expectations, suppositions, and views about the role of the institutions are manifested in tensions in four areas: the purposes of the projects; the construction of the ‘ordinary person’; the construction of the ‘community’; and how to define and achieve quality. It is argued that tensions in these areas are key constituents of the processes of mediation that shape the outcomes in

Capture Wales and *London's Voices*, though of course how those outcomes then circulate in mediation processes in everyday life is not addressed here, a point to which I return in the concluding chapter.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, revisits the original research question as to how processes of mediation shape self-representation in public sector projects in the cultural sphere. The contribution which this study makes to theories of mediation is discussed. The questions developed in Chapter 2 as to how the constructs of 'ordinary people' and 'community' might operate to constrain and limit the kinds of self-representation that take place are revisited in light of the empirical work. Here critical and normative arguments for the continuation of publicly funded projects of this kind are considered. Finally, some conclusions are provided concerning the question of what lies behind notions such as the self-speaking and the auto/biographical society. First I turn, in the following chapter, to the theoretical framework informing the research presented in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework: Mediating Self-Representations

Introduction

The present chapter outlines the theoretical approach taken in this study to explore how processes of mediation shape what gets made when people, who more often make up the audience for media productions, take part in a particular kind of production, that of self-representations. Precisely because self-representations take many forms and take place in a range of contexts, there is no established theoretical framework for how media studies researchers should think about and make sense of the phenomenon. Self-representation emerges in a range of public and academic debates, ranging from discussion of talk shows (see, for example, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Coleman, 1997; Gamson, 1998; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Priest, 1995) to documentary and Reality TV (see, for example, Bruzzi, 2000; Corner, 1994, 1995b; Couldry, 2002; Hill, 2000; Hill, 2002) to Mass Observation (see, for example, Highmore, 2002) to museum practice (see, for example, Bennett, 1995; Hemming, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997; Message & Healy, 2004) to the internet (see, for example, Cheung, 2000; Dovey, 2000; Parisier, 2000) to alternative media (Atton, 2002) and to artistic practice. In each of these areas of debate, different theoretical resources are drawn on to evaluate, comment on, and critique the phenomenon of self-representation.

It has been suggested that new media technologies, in particular the internet, have enabled the production of self-representations on an unprecedented scale. Thus, for example, Cheung argues that the internet ‘... is the only medium in which most people are truly able to become “authors”, presenting their suppressed or misrepresented selves to audiences around the world’ (Cheung, 2000, p. 51). In a related development in the wake of the July 7th 2005 bombings in London, the notion of the ‘citizen journalist’ was widely used to refer to the images taken with mobile phone cameras, and experiential accounts from members of the public that were aired by television news programmes; as Hermes notes, ‘Quality newspapers are flirting with citizen journalism and web logs’ (Hermes, 2006, p. 306). Self-representations must always be considered in the contexts of continuing unequal access to media technologies, particularly the internet, and

varying levels of media literacy (see, for example, Bonfadelli, 2002; Burrows, Nettleton, & Pleace, 2000; Haddon, 2000). Furthermore, the significance of such representations for improving the democratic character of media representations in general is implicitly brought into question by the argument that the consumer has achieved primacy over the citizen (Gandy Jr, 2002). This last observation means that any consideration of self-representation must ask *how* members of the public are representing themselves, which aspects of self are represented, in what context the self-representations appear and, following from this, what the implications are for established power relations, as Carpentier notes:

To which extent (and how) can these citizens be present in the media product itself? When this kind of civil participation becomes visible, it also supports more active representations of citizens and their presence within the public sphere (Carpentier, 2007a, p. 167).

In the current context of the appearance of a range of differently mediated self-representations, those that are invited and facilitated by publicly funded institutions take on a particular importance because of the public status of those institutions.

The theoretical starting point of this study is, first, to argue that all self-representations produced and/or displayed in public fora are always and unavoidably mediated. Secondly, I observe that, across the range of debates in which the idea of self-representation is discussed, it is frequently linked with two notions: the 'ordinary person' and the 'community'. Therefore I suggest that the 'ordinary person' and the 'community' are key constructs in the processes of mediation shaping self-representations. Self-representations claim our attention, it seems, because these are 'ordinary people' representing themselves, not experts, or elites, or celebrities; moreover, collectively, so many 'ordinary people' representing themselves to each other implies a claim that 'community' or 'communities' are being fostered through being represented.

In this chapter, first the activity of self-representation by members of audiences (museum goers, media consumers) is situated in a discussion of approaches to the audience in media studies research. Next a theoretical framework is developed for exploring self-representation, mediation, and the notions of 'ordinary people' and 'community'.

Researching Media Audiences

Audiences engaged in production

Research on media audiences must now take account of audience activity that today includes (for some members of the audience) representing themselves in media spaces. I am by no means suggesting that this activity, by a minority of the audience, has become more important than other aspects of audience activity. Nevertheless, self-representation is an activity with which audiences have increasing opportunities to engage, and this observation suggests exploring self-representation as part of a trajectory of work on audiences. The articles in Livingstone's edited volume on audiences and publics (Livingstone, 2005a) attest to the current interest in framing members of the public's participation as part of the inquiry into audiences. For example, Mehl notes:

But the main programmes on the major channels today tend to be characterized by a concern to involve the audience and by the constant celebration of their proximity (Mehl, 2005, p. 83).

While self-representation is of course not the only type of audience involvement, or the only type of audience activity – watching, using, consuming media in all its forms continues - nevertheless it is one which warrants attention as a part of the study of audiences. Self-representation demands attention because of the ways in which it has come to be part of what audiences do and part of what media and cultural institutions foster, as the discussion in Chapter 3 will suggest.

Self-representation by audience members refers here to the production of a bounded representation and is therefore different from the notion of 'performance of self' since, as work on performance of self suggests, we are all 'performing self' all of the time and this is not necessarily a conscious process (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Butler, 1990). This would suggest that self-representation and the concept of representation in itself does not replace performance, but is conceptually different. Performance of self and self-representation coexist. When audiences produce a self-representation they produce a text, which is necessarily mediated. This thesis explores the mediation of such self-representation by members of the audience.

Within the broad range of (always) mediated self-representations, this study is concerned with the production of self-representation when people are consciously constructing a thing with which to represent themselves, for example a text, an image, or a film. Both the consciousness and the boundedness of the representation are particular to the notion of self-representation as I am using it here. In this way, a self-representation is produced and becomes a text that is subsequently engaged with. I begin therefore with a sketch of the history of approaches to the audience in media studies, since key to the idea of self-representation is the engagement and activity of audiences, audiences who are now representing themselves by means of the production of texts.

Media studies and conceptions of the audience

The study of media and culture has been approached from a range of very different perspectives across the social sciences and arts, as Boyd-Barrett and Newbold note: ‘... the field is a term which enables us to discuss under one umbrella the eclectic nature of mass communications research’ (Boyd-Barrett & Newbold, 1995). One influential conception of the field of media studies is Lazarsfeld’s division between two traditions: the administrative and the critical (Lazarsfeld, 1941). This distinction divided research carried out to address the concerns of public and private bodies, for instance policy orientated research, from that which sought critical and theoretical understandings of media and communications for the sake of scholarly endeavour and social critique. In fact, this division itself should be understood as located in a particular historical moment and location – the early days of media and communications research in the United States (Hardt, 1992). The division between administrative and critical approaches refers to media studies within the social sciences. As Corner notes, media studies, at least in Britain, drew on the arts as well as the social sciences disciplines (J Corner, 1995a).

Studies of media effects addressed societal and governmental concerns with the possible effects of media on its audience (Gerbner, 1995 [1969]; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Work by the Frankfurt School addressed and sought to expose the ideological operations of media on the audience (as ‘mass’) (see, for example, Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993 [1944]). Early textual criticism drew on models from literary studies, particularly structuralism and semiotics to ‘read’ the messages of media texts (see, for

example, Barthes, 1973 [1957]; Eco, 1981; Hall, 1973; Wright, 1975); in this work the critic or the semiotician had the skills to 'read' the text and to decipher, for example, the dominant ideological message.

Now, what I have just offered is clearly an extremely limited characterisation of the history of a diverse field of study; nevertheless, this summary serves to indicate that early work from the range of approaches to the study of media placed emphasis on the power of media institutions and their productions to affect their audience. Thus we can say that assumptions, and frequently concern, about the audience informed approaches to the study of media from their beginnings – even when those studies were not framed by their authors as being explicitly concerned with the audience for media and communications, that is the members of the public who constitute the audience for media productions⁶.

Of course over time the field of media studies saw many developments of, and challenges to, the approaches of earlier work (including those authors of the earlier work themselves). Of particular importance was the challenge to the implicit conception of the audience as simply passive receivers of messages which had underpinned so much of the study of media. For example, the proponents of the 'uses and gratifications' approach asked what audiences got out of media texts that they consumed, thus moving the focus to exploring how audiences consumed media (see, for example, Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Around the same time semiotics was developed using the notion of polysemy (Eco, 1981; Hall, 1973). In his seminal article, 'Encoding and decoding in the television discourse', Hall drew on ideas from semiotics to develop the idea of encoding and decoding, and the notions of 'preferred', 'oppositional' and 'negotiated' decodings of media texts. The thinking in 'Encoding and decoding in the television discourse' is central to the framework of this thesis, because it was key to bringing into a kind of circuit the importance of sites of production, text and reception as all contributing to the production of media meanings. I return to this idea below.

The encoding and decoding idea led to a wealth of studies that explored the processes of reception and the point of view of the audience as central to the making of meaning. The idea that meaning is constructed means that, for different audiences, meanings of

⁶See Livingstone (2005b) for a discussion of the history of the concepts 'audience' and 'public' and their very different connotations.

texts will vary and that, therefore, investigating the audience empirically came to be seen as central to understanding what (and how) media mean (see, for example, Liebes & Katz, 1990; Livingstone, 1998; Morley, 1980). It was suggested that this emphasis on the *active audience* led to over-optimistic interpretations of audience power and, consequently, insufficient attention was given to the unequal power relations between media institutions and their audiences (see, for example, Seaman, 1992). The useful implication that this thesis takes from the critiques of audience studies, and the notion of the *active audience*, is the necessity to consider the meanings audiences make in relation to the producing institutions, as well as to the specific texts in question.

A further critique of audience studies was articulated in Ang's influential argument that 'the audience' does not actually exist, but instead is constructed by academics and the media industry and in the interests of market research to describe people for particular purposes (Ang, 1990). This means that researching social subjects as if they were solely members of the audience for a specific programme fails to grasp the complexity of their lives as social subjects and the place of media in their lives. Hence research into audience activity, which fails to take account of the situated position from which subjects respond to media as audiences, must be flawed.

Critics have suggested that the focus on reception of particular programmes, for example, fails to account for the place of a range of media in people's daily lives. The ethnographic turn in media studies moved to focus on the place of diverse media in people's daily lives (see, for example, Martin-Barbero, 1993; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992). The development of ethnographic work in media studies also criticised the view of the audience as 'reader', and of media productions as 'texts' akin to written texts, which does not address the different ways media are consumed by audiences (Morley, 2006). Thus more recent work on media audiences has increasingly seen audiences as diffused, embedded and contextualised.

Taken together, these critiques of uses of the category 'audience', and of the focus on audience 'readings' of media as 'texts', suggest to me that we guard against reifying the category 'audience', or indeed 'text', and instead continue to look at what specific audiences are doing, in relation to specific texts and production contexts. Furthermore, the activity of specific audiences now includes those who are engaging in the production of self-representations. But the focus on the production of self-

representations means thinking about producers, and representations (texts), as well as the audiences who are involving themselves in production.

Producers, texts, audiences

Hall develops the ideas first posited in the article 'Encoding and decoding in the television discourse' (Hall, 1973) in a later work in which he notes:

Where is meaning produced? Our 'circuit of culture' suggests that, in fact, meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different processes or practices (the cultural circuit) Meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction in which we take part. ... It is also produced in a variety of different media ... (Hall, 1997, p. 3).

Hall's 'circuit of culture' suggests to me that, if we want to look at the meaning of a certain kind of media production, then we need to attend to producers, texts and audiences. The idea of looking at producers, texts and audiences is important to the development of the theoretical frame of this thesis, as I go on to show in this chapter, and also to the methodological approach deployed, discussed in Chapter 4.

It is now widely agreed that meaning is not fixed in texts by producers but, rather, it is continually remade at each stage of the production process - in production, in texts, in reception. Here *production process* refers to the production of a message, that is to say a text, and also, more broadly, to the production of meaning. Firstly, producers of media content might have optimistic views of how their programme will be understood, but they cannot control the 'message' in this way. Secondly, there is now recognition, across the disciplinary areas that contribute to media studies, that content is widely varied and should be examined in and for itself, rather than being treated, for example, as a stimulus with which to investigate the audience (see, for example, Corner, 1999; Livingstone, 1998).

Attention to the sites of production, text and reception is a theoretical approach which insists on the importance of each of these analytic sites to the production of meaning. (Buckingham, 1987; Corner, Richardson, & Fenton, 1990; D'Acci, 1994; Hobson, 1982). Buckingham's case study of the British soap opera *Eastenders*, Corner, Richardson and Fenton's reception study about television communication of the nuclear

energy issue, D'Acci's case study of the US drama series *Cagney and Lacey* and Hobson's case study of the British soap opera *Crossroads*, have in common their attention to some combination of contexts of production, analysis of texts and investigation of reception. That is not to say that equal weight is given to all of these areas in each of these studies; for instance, the emphasis in Corner et al's study is on the reception of the programmes, but the way that a range of programmes depict the issue is understood to be important:

Thus, the research, rather than holding the idea of 'television' constant in order to explore response, would also explore variables both in the rhetorical intentions and discursive operation of sample programmes (Corner et al., 1990, p. 9).

The context in which these programmes were produced does not form part of the empirical work presented in this study (although these contexts are alluded to and therefore *are* taken into account); rather the research is about the reception of particular examples of texts, but the approach taken does highlight *how* meaning is produced in audience response and in the formal aspects of the texts. D'Acci's study of *Cagney and Lacey* and Buckingham's study of *EastEnders* both look at production, texts and reception, and explore how the meaning of the programmes is made and remade in these moments and locations. These three studies are all instructive for thinking about processes of production, text and audience, and are suggestive about the idea of processes of mediation to which I now turn.

Processes of Mediation

From producers, texts, audiences to processes of mediation

The notion of mediation builds on insights from research that explicitly recognises the roles of producers, texts, and audiences in the production of meaning – even where that research may not choose to give each of these sites equal attention. The notion of mediation emphasises the way in which meaning circulates both between *and* around sites of production, text and reception. In this way the implications of Hall's encoding/decoding model are followed through by work that aims to bear in mind (at least) the production of meaning between and around sites of production, text and reception (Hall, 1973; 1997).

The conceptual space delineated by the notion of mediation builds on this history of research on audiences to encapsulate both the detail of specific instances of production, text and reception, and the broader social contexts of media use. In this way, the notion of mediation delineates a specific form of enquiry, which stresses both the multiple factors that shape meaning, and the open-ended nature of meaning making. We can identify four debates, which take the notion of mediation in different, although absolutely not mutually exclusive, directions. All the senses of mediation that I shall now introduce have a bearing on how the idea of mediation is used in this thesis.

First, mediation is used in a sense that focuses on the role of technology in the making of meaning. Thus Thompson refers to the ways in which communication is mediated and replaces face-to-face interaction, and he introduces a second term, 'mediatization', to refer to the more fundamental changes in society brought about by technical innovation (Thompson, 1995). Work that is concerned with the particular kinds of constraints and possibilities engendered in new media forms uses the term mediation in this sense. The Mediatized Stories Network's⁷ focus on mediated and mediatized stories, and the particular focus on the notion of digital storytelling, is an example of this sense of the term mediation. The sense of mediation as foregrounding technological mediation permeates this thesis, because technology intervenes in face-to-face interaction in the two cases – indeed this is the case in all instances where any kind of representation is made. But, in a period where there is much academic and wider debate about the potential of new media technologies to contribute massive changes to social and to political life, then ideas about technology, as well as the technologies themselves, are clearly key to the notion of mediation. The imagined, the actual, the hoped for, and the difficulties caused by new technology, I suggest, all play a role in the mediation of self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, and therefore mediation in the sense of technological mediation is an overarching theme to which I return in Chapter 8.

Secondly the term mediation is used to indicate a shift away from a focus on specific media texts and productions, to a focus on the broader (reception) contexts within which media meanings come to be. Within this usage of the term mediation there is debate over where the emphasis should lie. Silverstone uses the notion of process of mediation

⁷See the Mediatized Stories Network. Mediatized Stories: Mediation Perspectives among Youth. www.intermedia.uio.no/projects/research-projects-1/mediatize.

to focus on the never-ending circulation of meaning that he suggests takes place. Silverstone places the media (in their many guises) at the centre of these circulations, so that the media are central to how and what we know. In this way, the centrality of the media to mediation forms part of an argument about why we should study the media (Silverstone, 1999). On the other hand, some authors use the notion of mediation to decentre the media (Martin-Barbero, 1993; Couldry, 2006). For Martin-Barbero, for example, the media are only one site – albeit an important site - through which meanings are generated and circulated; media are decentralised as the focus of media and cultural studies and the focus is now on daily life, and ‘mediations’. Martin-Barbero writes:

This is how communications began to be seen more as a process of mediations than of media, a question of culture and, therefore, not just a matter of cognitions but of re-cognition (Martin-Barbero, 1993, p. 2).

This thesis begins by situating the media as absolutely central to the production of meaning in society, an approach exemplified by Silverstone’s use of the term mediation. In this way self-representation is approached through the exploration of the production processes of self-representations in two cases studies. However, as I discuss in Chapter 7, this more media-centred view is troubled in the empirical research when participants are offhand about the chance for their self-representations to appear on public media and museum platforms. But I return to a media-centred view when, in the concluding Chapter 8, the unequal power relations between cultural institutions and audiences are discussed. However, my work is not focused on the circulation of meaning in general; thus this sense of mediation as the circulation of meaning provides the context within which this study’s narrower understanding of mediation takes place.

Thirdly, the term mediation is used in work on production-text-audience, to describe close readings of the processes (techniques, technologies, ideologies), which shape a representation that is produced and displayed in the media. In this sense mediation is about the processes that must come between those represented in a particular media text, and their audiences. Mediation in this sense has been used particularly in work on the documentary and representation of ‘the real’. This use of the notion of mediation has entailed a focus on production and editing, and is found, for example, in the work of John Corner (Corner, 1994). This sense of mediation is the most directly deployed in terms of how this study uses the term mediation, because the primary research question

with which this thesis is concerned is, *how* are members of the public representing themselves? But Fornas' understanding of mediation as 'The crucial in between' is also instructive (Fornas, 2000). Fornas takes mediation as a crucial notion in media and cultural studies for balancing the analysis of texts with the analysis of lived experience, rather than opting for one or the other.

The fourth sense of the term mediation is used by Katz in his discussion of *who* mediates. Katz refers to 'disintermediation', and explores the idea that members of the public might communicate with each other without media professionals as intermediaries. However the study of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, combined with the historical view of self-representation provided in Chapter 3, suggest that rather than an undoing of mediation as implied in the term 'disintermediation', there might well be new intermediaries developing who mediate between producers of self-representations and their audiences (Katz, 1988, pp. 30-31).

While the present study offers a detailed examination of mediation processes at work in specific case studies, it is also true that the meanings produced are subject to wider forms of mediation, as Silverstone and others use the term. Debates about mediation thus provide the theoretical framework for my analysis of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The present study builds on developing debates around the notion of mediation to address the phenomenon of self-representation. I now turn to how the notion of mediation is deployed in the empirical analysis presented in subsequent chapters.

Three dimensions: Institutional, textual, and cultural processes of mediation

The focus of the research presented here is on the interaction between production, text and audience, in particular instances where the reception context is altered because the audience member has (albeit temporarily) become a producer. These interactions and the resultant self-representations are all subject to processes of mediation. While acknowledging that these processes are ultimately endless, this research explores some specific moments in the mediation. The focus is on what I identify as three dimensions of mediation: *institutional mediation*, *textual mediation*, and *cultural mediation*. This is not to suggest that mediation is in practice separated in this way, nor that these dimensions describe every kind of mediation at work, but simply that such a breakdown is conceptually useful.

In the conceptual separation of processes of mediation into three dimensions I build on the work that has taken account of producers, texts, and audiences/reception, discussed above. I suggest that the concepts 'production', 'text', and 'reception' map onto the concepts *processes of institutional mediation*, *processes of textual mediation*, and *processes of cultural mediation*. These conceptual changes contribute to the development of the theoretical approach, as I shall now explain. I developed the argument for a focus on processes of mediation above. Next, I suggest a move away from the terms 'producers' and 'audiences', because this division becomes confusing when the focus is on one among several ways in which members of the audience have begun to participate in production (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Further, the term 'institutional mediation' is both broader and more specific than the term 'producers' or 'production'. The concept of 'processes of institutional mediation' specifically points to the production context of the self-representations with which this thesis is concerned - public service institutions operating in the cultural sphere. At the same time, the term 'institutions' is broad enough to allow us to group together discussion of the individual persons directly working on producing self-representations with/by members of the public, with those many others in the institutions and related institutions, such as funding bodies and partner organisations, who have a bearing on the outcome without actually being involved in the day to day running of the projects.

I refer to 'processes of cultural mediation' to describe the processes of mediation that have to do with how the points of view and experience of the audience members who participate by producing their self-representations shape the resultant self-representations. I move from the term 'audience' or 'reception' to the concept of 'processes of cultural mediation' because 'the audience' as a term does not adequately describe the people in question – the audience member temporarily engaged in production, and certainly the term 'reception' does not describe the type of audience activity with which this thesis is concerned. The concept of 'processes of cultural mediation' is used to indicate the focus on what the audience/participants bring to the production of self-representation in terms of abilities, expectations, understandings – what is brought to the mediation process from the participants who are outside the institution.

The notion of *process of cultural mediation* to refer to the mediation processes that emanate from the activity of audience members engaged in production is a specific and

purposeful use of the term culture, which does not intend to deny that cultural formations shape all aspects of the mediation process. For example, the cultural formations of the institutional employees are clearly also important. But this is similar to the argument about the problem of the term 'audience' implying that there is a discrete category of persons who are the audience, and suggesting that media producers are not themselves also members of the audience, which of course they are.

Nevertheless, the separation of the mediation process into processes of 'institutional' and 'cultural mediation' is an imperfect, but useful, working model, I return to a discussion of this model in Chapter 4, the methodological chapter.

Finally, I suggest that we retain the word 'text' in the term 'processes of textual mediation'. Despite debate about the relevance and authority of textual analysis today (as discussed above), I argue for a continued place for looking at texts, as long as the texts are explored in relation to the context in which they are produced and, again, I return to a discussion of the notion of processes of textual mediation in Chapter 4, the methodological chapter. In this thesis the texts are explored in relation to institutional and cultural processes of mediation – these are processes of mediation encoded into a textual form. In what follows I illustrate how the concepts of the mediation process are deployed in this thesis.

Firstly, how are the self-representations of the people who participate mediated by the institutional invitation to tell their story? That is, what are the mediations that take place when institutions and their personnel invite, train, shape and ultimately exhibit, people's self-representations? For example, as I discuss in Chapter 6, *Capture Wales* takes place within BBC Wales and there are a range of stakeholders in that organisation for whom self-representation exists for different reasons. Thus, for members of the team that runs *Capture Wales*, the project provides an opportunity for people to represent themselves truly, as opposed to being inadequately represented by media professionals. This view shapes the ways in which the team runs the workshops, advises the participants and assists in the production of self-representations, as well as shaping the form that the representations take. On the other hand, for senior management in the BBC, *Capture Wales* is a successful project because participants come away with a positive attitude to, and even a sense of ownership of, the BBC, which, in turn, reinforces the legitimacy of this institution. These views of the role of *Capture Wales* determine the funding and internal support that the project receives. For the BBC's middle management, however,

the role of self-representation is often unclear, and this has led to the *Capture Wales* production team facing difficulties in finding broadcast spaces to exhibit the self-representations to a wider public. I argue that there are tensions between these varied views on the meaning and purpose of self-representations. Further, these tensions shape the resultant texts, and are part of what constitutes institutional mediation in *Capture Wales*. Processes of institutional mediation are explored in Chapter 5.

Secondly, how are the self-representations mediated by the making and display of the text? That is, how do the form and technologies used, as well as the location and presentation of the text, mediate the resultant self-representations? For example, a group of young people took part in the *London's Voices 16 - 19* project, and their self-representations took the form of poems that they wrote in workshops run by a professional writer. These poems were typed up. Thumbnail titles on the *16 - 19* website were accompanied by a description of the workshop from which the poems came. The thumbnails are reached via the Museum of London homepage. That the Museum of London invited and facilitated these self-representations shows that the museum (and the funding body, the Heritage Lottery Fund) considers self-representation important; at the same time, the framing, which includes a description of the project, alerts the web user to what these texts are. In this way, it is clear that self-representation must be explained to an audience, so that the status of the material is clearly signposted for them as self-representations by young people produced under specific circumstances. These self-representations cannot be left to speak entirely for themselves. Such signposting is an example of the processes of textual mediation, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Thirdly, how are the self-representations of the members of the public who participate shaped by their own cultural formations and the expectations that they bring to the project? For example, how does a person's view of themselves, of the BBC, and of their relation to the BBC, shape both what they expect to produce in the *Capture Wales* workshop, and consequently what they do produce? Participants' conception of themselves as both 'ordinary' and, at the same time, unique, leads to self-representations that both call upon, and at the same time undo, the idea of the ordinary, as is discussed in Chapter 7. Or people's expectations of what the project is for lead to changes in what is produced and how it is produced. A group of young people took part in *London's Voices 16 - 19*, for example, because of the opportunity it afforded them to learn photography. Yet this was not the main aim of the project from the point of view

of the museum staff. The curators running the project had intended those groups that were doing photography projects to use disposable cameras in the interests of resources (time and funds), and also in the interests of maintaining equality between the different participating groups. But this particular group worked with a professional photographer, and the emphasis of the project moved to learning skills in photography. These are two examples of the processes of cultural mediation that are explored in Chapter 7.

In practice, these dimensions of mediation are not separate; for instance, in the third example, *cultural mediation*, the textual possibilities, engendered by the use of professional instead of disposable cameras, shape the resultant self-representations just as much as the focus on learning photography does. Thus the processes of mediation that take place around this decision are in fact both textual and cultural processes. Nonetheless, for the purposes of analysis, it is useful to break-down the levels of mediation in this way.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, when the appearance of members of the public in media and cultural spaces today is debated and discussed, it is frequently linked to two constructs. One of these is 'ordinariness' or the 'ordinary', and the second, linked, construct is 'community' or 'communities'. I now turn to a discussion of the two interlinked constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community'.

Constructs of Ordinary People and Community

Ordinary People

In explaining his distinction between 'ordinary worlds' and 'media worlds', Couldry offers an analogy between Durkheim's theory of the socially generated distinction between the sacred and the profane in religion, and his own conception of the 'pervasive' division between 'media worlds' and 'ordinary worlds'. He argues that in both cases the distinction '..operates as if absolute' but is in fact continually reconstructed. Although the distinction between media and ordinary worlds *is* constructed, Couldry insists on the 'real' distinction between those who have and those who do not have access to 'symbolic resources', and that these constructed differences have experiential consequences (Couldry, 2000a). This is the version of social

constructivism that is employed here: that is that social realities are constructed but that these constructs have real, lived consequences.

This research focuses on instances when the audience is invited to make self-representations and exhibit them on the established platform of a particular public service institution. I suggest that the concept of the '*ordinary person*' functions as a key construct shaping these projects and their outcomes, that is that the audience, from where participants are drawn, is constructed as composed of '*ordinary people*'. It must be added that the *careful avoidance* of a term, whose meaning is assumed to be common knowledge, is as significant as its use.

Williams' *Keywords* provides a starting point for considering the use of the term '*ordinary people*' (Williams, 1983). Building on Williams' discussion, we can identify four broad senses of the term: *denigration; celebration; everyday; citizenry*. These are not neat categories, but do provide a useful conceptual framework. In all senses, '*ordinary*' and '*ordinary people*' are understood in opposition to something or someone extraordinary.

First, '*ordinary*' is used in a denigratory sense. Here '*ordinary people*' are ordinary because of their inferior position in a hierarchy. Here *ordinary* is equated with ignorance, and defined in opposition to *expert*, which is equated with possession of knowledge. Or, '*ordinary people*' might be evoked in opposition to unusual people, special people, extraordinary people: In this sense '*ordinary*' can also imply banal, dull, and mundane. '*Ordinary people*' have long been invoked in a denigratory sense in the notion of the '*mass*' and here the term often functions as a euphemism for working class (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993 [1944]). The mass implies an undifferentiated group, and '*ordinary people*', in this sense, denies distinctiveness and difference.

As discussed above, Couldry suggests that the definition of someone as '*ordinary*' reconfirms a hierarchy between those that do and those that do not have ready access to the tools of media production and distribution. He points to what he calls the "pervasive" division between '*media worlds*' and '*ordinary worlds*' (Couldry, 2000a). Couldry's work suggests that the term '*ordinary people*' operates not only in a denigratory sense, but also as a categorising and containing construct. This idea is returned to below.

Second, *'ordinary'* is *claimed* in a *celebratory* sense in direct reaction against that negative portrayal. In this sense *'ordinary people'* are valued precisely *because* they have been marginalised. Here again *'ordinary person'* can often operate as a euphemism for working class, as in the phrase *'voices from below'* found in the rhetoric surrounding the collection of oral history. The celebratory sense of the term *'ordinary people'* indicates a political position, one which disputes whose account of reality matters. The oral history movement can be understood, in this light, as being motivated by the argument that the history of the general public is as important as the official history of rulers, politicians and the like. But *'ordinary people'* is used in this celebratory sense to invoke any number of marginalised groups, indicating a tension between the notion of *'ordinary'* and the notion of difference: can everyone be *'ordinary'* while also being different? For example, on the one hand, the British National Party invokes the notion of *'ordinary people'* to *unite* white, working class British people, and to *exclude* others. While, on the other hand, public service projects that invite members of the public to represent themselves invoke *'ordinary people'* to argue that everyone's life is central to the historical record of a society. Here, *'ordinary people'* is used to unite across difference. The term is used in the celebratory sense, then, to unite groups of people based on shared marginality from positions of social, or political, power in societies.

Third, the everyday sense of *'ordinary people'* describes the use of the term to refer to *people* whose *practices* are *'ordinary'*. In this sense *'ordinary people'* again operates as a *claim*. But in this usage the claim is to declare that people who might seem different, in fact have much in common, they too are all *'ordinary'*. The sense of *'ordinary people'* as those who live everyday life claims commonality and even equality and denies difference between people. Yet, Highmore's observation that the everyday is also the home of the bizarre and the mysterious highlights a paradox in this everyday sense of *'ordinary people'* (Highmore, 2002). The idea of everyday is also problematic since we need to ask, everyday for whom? (Highmore, 2002). While Sacks suggests that we continually reaffirm our *'ordinariness'* by speaking from recognisably personal perspectives in an understandably *'ordinary'* way (Sacks, 1984, p. 429), Billig argues that conversation analysis fails to address inequalities in conversation and society which problematise the unifying project of *'ordinary'* (Billig, 1999, p. 554). Schegloff, responding to Billig, sees difference and distinction as factors emerging from time to

time but not rendering the notion of 'ordinary' (*as everyday*) as inherently problematic (Schegloff, 1999, p. 566).

Lastly, we can discern a use of the term '*ordinary people*' which locates '*ordinary people*' as the citizens of democracy - the citizenry, the public. Here, '*ordinary people*' functions to invoke people as a political force, as in the phrase, '*the people*'. Peters notes that, in the bourgeois public sphere, 'the personal characteristics of the speaker must be irrelevant to participation and critique' (Peters, 1993, p. 551). When '*ordinary people*' are invoked to mean 'the citizenry', the term is used in opposition to the notion of the 'mass'. The use of the term '*ordinary person*' to mean *citizen* is used to argue that public service institutions should *represent* citizens, as well as informing and educating them (see above). This sense of '*ordinary people*' also figures in the subsequent debate about how well the public is being represented, that is in evaluating how the public is represented - are such representations, for example, biased and stereotypical, or fair and truthful?

On the one hand the term '*ordinary people*' is used to unite given groups of people under the unifying heading '*ordinary*', so that, for example, working class people might be pulled together under the heading '*ordinary people*' across racial and ethnic divides and, in this way, *ordinary* works to smooth out or ignore problems caused by difference. On the other hand, '*ordinary people*' unites people as a group in distinction to those who are not '*ordinary*', and thus the term actually marks difference. In any case most usage of the term '*ordinary people*' slips between these meanings, and *uses* the slippage in some way, hence the rhetorical and symbolic power of the construction '*ordinary person*' to support arguments and make claims.

Academic debate about the presence of '*ordinary people*' in representations revolves around whether we are witnessing a kind of poor imitation of what 'real' representation might look like. The debate concerns *why* the representation is there, its veracity and authenticity, and the extent to which it can be seen as a proper representation versus the extent to which it might be seen as publicity - in Habermasian terms, a managed show, pandering to the discourse of community and participation which currently appears dominant (Habermas, 1989; 1974). Debates about access, literacy, and citizenship all invoke '*ordinary people*' as the *citizenry*. While questions about how members of the

public are represented in a democracy have acquired new dimensions in the context of the new media environment (as discussed above), they are nonetheless longstanding ones in debates about the role of public service broadcasting, and particularly factual broadcasting. The figure of the '*ordinary person*' looms large in these discussions, and this is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

Community

I have argued that the members of the public who appear in contemporary media are constructed as '*ordinary people*'; the next part of my argument is to suggest that a second construct shapes these representations: that of the *community*, since the participating public are always understood as located in 'communities'. The term *community* has common sense meaning, and is used as a descriptive term, as in the ubiquitous phrase 'working with communities'. It is assumed to be self-evident that we all know what this means. In common with the construct '*ordinary people*', the construct '*community*' always operates as a claim (Silverstone, 1999). '*Community*', like '*ordinary person*', is both an emotive and a slippery concept.

'*Community*', as Williams has noted, conjures an image of people rather than institutions (Williams, 1983). For Anderson, '*community*' is a work of a collective imagination. He writes 'the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson, 1991). For Anderson, then, '*community*' refers to a kind of '*comradeship*' that rests on a shared (*imagined*) history (and future). Anderson describes how the press functioned to sustain a symbolic *national* community. But to say it was symbolic is not to suggest that it was not also lived, as Silverstone notes:

Communities are lived. But also imagined. And if people believe something to be real, then as the American sociologist W.I. Thomas famously noted, it is real in its consequences. Ideas of community hover between experience and desire (Silverstone, 1999, p. 97).

Anderson highlighted the role of the press in sustaining the idea of a national community and, as Silverstone notes, the rise of other mass media, notably the radio, further fulfilled this function (Silverstone, 1999, p. 100). And, in Chapter 3, I show how the two major public service institutions in the cultural sphere, the museum and public service broadcasting, are involved in the construction and maintenance of the idea of

national community (Bennett, 1995; Boswell & Evans, 1999; Corner & Harvey, 1991). The idea of national community is central to the very idea of public service institutions in the cultural sphere, and representing members of the public becomes important to what public service institutions in the cultural domain are understood as being *for*, as is discussed in Chapter 3.

As many people have pointed out, the notion of *community* was always problematic because it is necessarily exclusionary (Bauman, 2001; Hall, 1999). As a result, 'national community' is a notion that must be continually reconstructed, through, for example, institutions like public museums and public service broadcasting. Alexander and Jacobs note that communications media are vitally important for the construction and maintenance of connection across peoples in differentiated societies. They argue that what they describe as the 'realm of symbolic communication' is a vital function of the public sphere in civil society. For Alexander and Jacobs, where the size of our societies means that actual interaction with everyone is impossible, the maintenance of the 'symbolic realm' depends on the media and, in particular, on the media's ritualistic function (Alexander & Jacobs, 1998).

The national community cannot exist, or be represented in the contemporary fragmented and diversified media environment. As Silverstone notes:

As a result of these developments, the minority and the local, the critical and the global, it is possible to suggest that the first and most significant casualty will be national community (Silverstone, 1999, p. 103).

The problems that the idea of national community glossed over, like the problem of racism (Hall, 1999), may now have fractured the idea of national community. This returns us to the situation of fragmented publics raised, for example, by Gitlin (1998). Yet, national public service institutions are inviting members of the public to represent themselves, constructing them as 'ordinary people' and locating them in 'communities'. The question is then, how is the construct '*communities*' functioning in these kinds of projects, and why is this a key term at a time when it has become so troubled?

In discussing what she calls 'community's resuscitation in recent debates' (Mayo, 2006, p. 388), Mayo refers to Sennett's earlier argument:

'The Fall of Public Man' (Sennett, 1976) started from the erosion of public life, the self-absorption and the alienation accompanying late twentieth century capitalism. In response, community became a 'problem on people's minds', Sennett pointed out (Sennett, 1976: 298) (Mayo, 2006, p. 389).

Silverstone, Bauman, and Mayo, among others, have pointed to the current ubiquity of the term 'community' and have linked this ubiquity to the individualised, fragmented and insecure nature of life in contemporary societies. Mayo, drawing on Giddens (Giddens, 1991), emphasises that the argument is not to suggest that life was once more secure, or community more real, but rather that 'individuals are expected to take responsibility for themselves and their families' (Mayo, 2006, p. 390). Mayo goes on to link the current situation to the neo-liberal political and economic policies that dominate the globe, and the so-called Post-Washington Consensus. The Post-Washington Consensus in economic and development circles, and particularly in the World Bank, is the name given to the consensus (from the mid 1990s) that social programmes tackling poverty and exclusion should be used to temper the free rein of the market. Bergeron notes that the ideas favoured under the heading 'Post-Washington Consensus' meant including consideration of cultural and social context, but she emphasises that this was consideration of cultural context in order to make economic policies more effective (Bergeron, 2003). The 'Post-Washington Consensus' followed the earlier 'Washington Consensus' which was the title given to argument in favour of parties across the political spectrum, and the globe, agreeing on the promotion of neo-liberal economic policy, described by the originator of the term, as 'good economics' (Williamson, 1993, p. 1330). In describing what has become known as the Post-Washington consensus, Mayo writes:

And by the mid to late nineties there were increasing expressions of concern about the need to mitigate the negative effects of too rampant neo-liberalism, concerns that were expressed internationally (via United Nations Human Development Reports for example) as well as by national governments and by voluntary and community organisations and agencies (Mayo, 2006, p. 392).

Mayo suggests that it is in this context that we see 'community as policy'. I suggest that it is in the same context that the two constructs '*ordinary people*' and '*community*' shape the *self-representations* of members of the public in projects run by public service institutions, in this case broadcasting and museums. Mayo's work highlights the political context in which the cultural productions, on which this study is focused, take

place. I now turn to consider this broader context, and, in particular, the democratic claims implied in the facilitation of 'self-representation'.

Self-Representation: A More Democratic Kind of Representation?

Widening who and what is represented?

Corner's discussion of representation in documentary-making highlights how documentary practice typically involves film-makers, producers and researchers representing a topic (including the people relevant to the topic). Corner, highlighting that such representation involves choices, writes:

Out of the range of possible kinds of reality open to documentary treatment, a topic is chosen as the subject of a film or programme. But how will this topic be depicted in particular images and sounds? The initial decision here concerns what to film, whom to film and what kinds of sound (including speech) to record. No matter whether the topic is an abstract one (for example, loneliness in student communities) or a physically grounded one (for example the problem of heavy traffic in rural areas), *a strategy of representation and of visualisation* is required (Corner, 1995b, p. 79) (Italics in original).

The point I want to draw out here is that representation is made by one set of people (the film-makers) of another (the subjects, or people who can illuminate the subject).

The idea of self-representation is a challenge to what is typical in practices of representation, because the subjects are representing themselves, rather than being represented by others. As Perkins argued the academic study of representation remains theoretically and politically important because representations are themselves political; she wrote:

In recent years it has become difficult to pursue critical paths which engage students about the political work of representations or to discuss how criticism and research may, if only by circuitous routes, influence representational practices. This implies that films, *along with other forms of representation*, play an important role in forming ideas about, and attitudes to, the world, in alleviating anxiety and even in diffusing conflict – in short, they do do political work (Perkins, 2000, p. 76) (italics in original).

Indeed, there is something more explicit about the political work involved in self-representations, since the term *self-representation* in itself expresses a challenge to the

idea of representation. But Corner's discussion of '*a strategy of representation*' remains useful. In instances of self-representation there must still be choices about what aspects of the self to represent and how to represent them.

Democracy entails elected persons representing the political will of the citizenry. The media in its many forms has long been seen as a key site for the airing, debate and circulation of the points of view of the diverse citizenry, as highlighted in Silverstone's notion of a process of mediation (discussed above). How far the media can successfully represent a diverse range of views has long been a hotly debated area of media studies (see Livingstone and Lunt's discussion of these debates for a useful overview (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994)). Habermas' work on the bourgeois public sphere has been particularly central to these debates and to discussion of whether or not the media can be usefully understood as a contemporary version of the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas, 1974; 1989). More recently, work on the role of the internet in political activism has also looked at the question of representation of diverse views but, further, as Fenton makes clear, such work addresses the relationship between representation and activist-led material political change (Fenton, 2007).

The question of the link between representation and material change in social and political life is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note that the question of this relationship is raised by the study of the mediation of self-representation. Morley notes that we must guard against belittling audience activity that is not explicitly about political change, since such activity may in indirect ways lead to action (Morley, 2006). At the same time, the question of the political material significance of self-representation does follow from an exploration of how such representations are mediated. The notion of mediation is key to debates about democratic representation in the media, in particular the idea that mediation weakens the possibility for democratic representation. In this light those that claim to facilitate self-representation in the media claim that the pitfalls of mediation are avoided, or at least lessened, because members of the public are able to 'speak for themselves'. Of course if we argue, as I do, that all self-representations are always mediated, then, in the context of the debate about democratic representation in the media, exactly how they are mediated is of crucial importance.

Leaving aside debates about whether or not the media should be understood as a public sphere, this study draws on two aspects of debates about the mediated public sphere which are particularly pertinent to the study of self-representation by members of the public: firstly the question of the status of the public sphere in a differentiated society (see, for example, Gitlin, 1998) and, secondly, the question of the place of the personal in the mediated public sphere (see, for example, Coleman, 1997; Fraser, 1990; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Van Zoonen, 2001).

Gitlin suggested that in contemporary society a unified public has been replaced by a proliferation of separate groups who are out of touch with each other (Gitlin, 1998). This suggestion begs questions about the meaning of public service institutions hosting projects that invite members of the public to represent personal experience *to each other*. Such publicly authorised representations might be understood as attempts (by public sector media and cultural institutions) to address a perceived lack in communication, and understanding, between the various groups constituting the population of the nation. The question, returned to in the concluding Chapter 8, is how self-representation is seen to help in this endeavour?

A consideration of the place of the personal in the public sphere points to the *construction* of public and private space, and to the *construction* of public and private subject matter. Does the dissemination of self-representations by members of the public in the context of the Museum of London and BBC Wales challenge or uphold the division between public and private subject matter? These questions are explored in the empirical analyses in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Challenging representation or fixing in place?

Thus, two theoretical approaches frame the investigation of processes of mediation shaping the self-representations that are explored in this study. On the one hand, this thesis explores possibilities for the mediated self-representations analysed in this study to a) promote possibilities for improving democratic representation in a differentiated society, and b) challenge the designation of some subject matter as private and beyond the reach of public debate. These debates refer to Habermas' ideal public sphere, and address the extent to which media spaces can operate as any kind of public sphere or, more generally, operate in the service of social justice causes and social activism

(Fenton, 2007), or whether media spaces can be used for improving public participation in society and by extension (it is hoped) in the democratic purpose:

Notably, in the face of the rise of voter apathy and the decline of civic society, we are witnessing considerable efforts and initiatives to engage audiences in civic or political fora, these being aided – or so many hope – by new forms of interactive and participatory media. Thus, governments are regarding the potential civic or political participation of what were once merely ‘audiences’ with some optimism...(Livingstone, 2005b, p. 27).

On the other hand, ideas about the possibility of certain kinds of media and culture being harnessed to improve public participation in the society can also be framed within ideas about governance. Livingstone is writing here about specifically civic and political engagement, but the kinds of cultural engagements encouraged by the BBC and the Heritage Lottery fund, through *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, can be understood as being used in similar ways - to engage the public (Bennett, 1995).

Here Rose's use of Foucault's work on governmentality, and the notion of a tool of governance, provides an alternative way of framing the investigation of the processes of mediation, to explore how the self-representations studied might operate to foreclose democratic debate and any potential challenge to existing ascriptions of public and private. To explore theoretically these two approaches, I now turn to a discussion of the constructs ‘community’, and ‘ordinary people’. These constructs are important because, as suggested earlier in this chapter, ideas of ‘ordinary people’ and ‘community’ implicitly and explicitly frame academic and wider discussion about the appearance of members of the public in media and cultural spaces, especially when there is a claim that those members of the public are representing themselves.

As has been shown, a key difference between the constructs ‘*ordinary people*’ and ‘*community*’ is that ‘*ordinary people*’ are invoked, often implicitly, in discussion of the representation of members of the public. However, ‘*community*’ is used much more overtly as a term in policy, and elsewhere. Rose, drawing on Foucault, focuses on *how* ‘*community*’ works and *who* it works for (Rose, 2001). He suggests (in a similar argument to Mayo, above) that ‘*community*’ is a key tool of governance, in the Third Way politics of Blair's New Labour. Rose argues that ‘*community*’ now functions to proscribe and limit the kinds of ‘*community*’ that can be imagined. The notion of a tool

of governance might also help us to make sense of contemporary manifestations of the idea of '*ordinary people*'.

As discussed above, Couldry, in a *denigratory* use of the term, suggests that the definition of someone as '*ordinary*' reconfirms a hierarchy between those who do and those who do not have ready access to the tools of media production and distribution. He points to what he calls the 'pervasive' division between '*media worlds*' and '*ordinary worlds*' (Couldry, 2000a). Couldry's argument suggests that the term '*ordinary people*' operates not only in a denigratory sense, but also as a *categorising and containing construct*.

Taken together, Rose's argument about *community*, and Couldry's argument about '*ordinary people*', make a convincing case to suggest that, where the constructs '*community*' and '*ordinary people*' are invoked together, they must operate to *control* and *order* people's representations of themselves. However other work on how these constructs operate suggests that '*ordinary people*' and '*community*' might not so easily be pinned down to these functions.

The earlier discussion of the construct '*ordinary people*' highlighted the contradictory ways in which the term is used. In addition to the *denigratory* sense invoked by Couldry, marginalised individuals and groups, for example, claim the term '*ordinary people*' in the *celebratory* sense, in the service of a struggle to be heard. And the term '*ordinary people*' is also used to mean the *citizenry*, and to invoke the citizens of a democracy, in which case it is used in political arguments to fight for representation of the citizenry, regardless of difference. Finally, the term is used in the *everyday* sense to emphasise commonalities between people; this is seen by many as part of the role of public service institutions in the cultural domain in modern differentiated societies.

If '*ordinary people*' operates to categorise and constrain, can this wholly diminish the importance of other senses of the category that members of the public might invoke by taking part in projects like *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*? Can New Labour's Third Way usage of '*community*' succeed in prescribing what the kinds of projects we are looking at here *mean* for all concerned - that is for producers, and for participants? Mayo highlights the risks and problems associated with social policy initiatives taking

place in this era of, what she calls, 'community as policy', and her argument adds support to Rose's view of *community* as a structure of governance. She writes:

'Community as policy' also raises problems of representation and democratic accountability. Communities are not necessarily socially undifferentiated, let alone harmonious islands of consensus. So who can legitimately speak for whom and how can the interests of the least powerful and most marginal be represented as well as the interests of the most articulate? (Mayo, 2006, p. 394).

Mayo is talking here about community development and regeneration programmes, but the same questions must be considered in the context of representation in the cultural sphere. Indeed, in the projects examined in this study, the boundaries between these spheres merge, so that museum and public service broadcasting initiatives based in communities are often seen as contributing to development and regeneration.

However, Mayo argues that there are important positive aspects to the 'community as policy' programmes, and it is worth quoting her points at length:

- Community policies and programmes can and do provide spaces that can be and are being taken up and used by individuals, groups and community-based organisations, working to meet locally defined needs and to further social justice agendas more generally[..].
- Through participating in these programmes individuals, groups and community-based organisations can and do develop knowledge and skills including the knowledge and skills to research their own needs and to develop critical analyses of the wider structures of opportunities and constraints[..].
- For individuals as well as groups and organisations, participation in community policies can also widen their own horizons[..].
- Community activists and community-based organisations can and do develop strategic alliances both within their localities and beyond them [..] (Mayo, 2006, pp. 395-396).

It might be that projects involving *mediations* of *self*-representations cannot actually function to contain and limit what 'ordinary' and 'community' turn out to mean. It is possible that such projects might allow questions such as - what is a 'community'?, who is in a 'community'?, and *who* is 'ordinary'?- to become part of a public conversation. The use of the terms 'ordinary people' and 'community' in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are explored in terms of these ideas: in what ways do these constructs

function as structures of governance? In what ways do these constructs function as empowering categories for the members of the public who represent themselves? Further this research explores *how* people have represented themselves: how images are negotiated, chosen and displayed in projects where professionals invite members of the public to represent themselves.

Bourdieu suggests that there is a hierarchy of 'systems of expression' in terms of their legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1990 [1965]). In this hierarchy amateur photographs are at the bottom end, while 'consecrated arts such as theatre, painting, sculpture' are at the top end (ibid.). When public service institutions invite members of the public to represent themselves, processes of mediation may ensure that the participants stay in their place by producing representations that are recognisably amateur and '*ordinary*', and therefore located at the bottom end of a hierarchy of legitimacy. It might be that representations of '*ordinary people*' are only legitimate if they do not challenge this positioning. If this were found to be the case it would be evidence in support of the view that '*ordinary people*' operates as a categorising and constraining construct. On the other hand, as Mayo finds in regard to community development initiatives, the evidence might suggest that these projects *can* empower people and allow them to define themselves, and to use the constructs '*ordinary people*' and '*community*' to their own advantage and for their own ends. Indeed, these self-representations might even challenge the hierarchy of legitimacy, as is the case with alternative media, where legitimacy is actually acquired through the deployment of a purposefully 'amateur' aesthetic (Atton, 2002).

Of course, the idea of a governing structure does not preclude the notion that there is space for people to gain from the ascription 'community' or 'ordinary person'; indeed it might be that this space is an integral part of 'community' and 'ordinary people' as a structure of governance, enabling such a structure to work all the more effectively, because it is not resisted as a category but rather embraced. Ultimately these questions require the empirical exploration that is delivered in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter I suggested that self-representations have become ubiquitous. I argued that self-representations are always mediated, and that we need the notion of mediation to theorise their meaning. I showed how the notion of mediation can be understood as having emerged from the history of work on audiences and on production-text-audience. I introduced three senses in which the term mediation is currently used and positioned the current study in relation to those debates. I proposed the model *institutions, texts, culture* as building on earlier work in an age where audiences are producing representations of themselves.

I then explained how I deploy the notion of mediation in this study through three dimensions of the mediation process, namely institutional, textual (including technological) and cultural. I noted that I deploy these conceptual dimensions to explore mediation as process in the case studies *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. I noted that the meanings produced are also subject to wider forms of mediation that are beyond the bounds of this study.

I laid out four contradictory and overlapping, as well as sometimes complementary, senses of the construct 'ordinary people': *denigration, celebration, everyday, and citizenry*. I argued that the construct '*ordinary person*' is used sometimes explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, in academic discussion of representation and self-representation of members of the public in media and cultural spaces. It was further argued that the four meanings of the term are variously implied when the term is invoked.

I then discussed the senses in which the construct 'community' is used. I argued that the construct 'community' is key to contemporary cultural policy – in Mayo's notion of 'community as policy'. And, at the same time, I suggested that the term 'ordinary people' might be avoided in cultural policy precisely because of the multiple senses invoked by its use, and particularly the political and the exclusionary ones. Thus the two constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community' work together in a mixture of absence and presence, to structure self-representations in contemporary public sector projects.

I then argued that the term self-representation is explicitly political because it articulates a challenge to typical representation in a democracy, precisely because, in these cases, the subjects are representing themselves. But I argued that, in self-representation, as in representation, there must always be choices regarding both which aspects of the self will be represented, and the form that these representations will take. I suggested that it is in the making of such choices that processes of mediation take place. I argued that in the current context, where we see a wide range of differently mediated self-representations, those that are invited, facilitated and disseminated by publicly funded institutions take on a particular importance because of the public status of those institutions. I argued that the way discourses of 'ordinary people' and 'community' are employed (including how these categories are both used *and* avoided) has implications for two areas of debate about the public sphere - firstly, for the idea of a unified public and, secondly, for the idea of potential challenge to divisions between public and private subject matter.

I drew on Rose's work on 'community', and Couldry's work on 'ordinary people', to argue that these constructs might function to constrain and limit the kinds of self-representation possible, and in this way function as structures of governance in the processes of mediation shaping self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. At the same time, I argued that the very ambiguity of the constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community' means that their function as structures of governance is potentially unstable. In addition, the messiness that collaboration between members of the public and producers brings to the production of self-representation means that self-representations might be used in ways that empower those members of the public who participate. Thus, ultimately, the question of how processes of mediation shape self-representation in the public sector projects *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* is an empirical one. Further, to address the question of how far the constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community' function as structures of governance, and how far they function as empowering categories, requires empirical investigation of the three dimensions of mediation processes: institutional, textual, and cultural.

This thesis examines self-representation in the public sector, where considerable claims are made regarding the potential of publicly funded media to facilitate or to aid democracy and individual empowerment. How far mediated self-representations do support these goals is therefore an important question, politically and sociologically. At

the same time, the question of how compelling it is to see these projects in terms of governance ideas, as tools of governance, must be returned to in Chapter 8, after presentation of the empirical work. Before analysing self-representation in the two case studies, I turn to explore the historical roots of self-representation in the public sector. I then explore empirically the mediation of self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Chapter 3

Historical Context: Representing the Public in Public Culture

Introduction

Who tells what stories is a question of power. Public service broadcasting and public museums are cultural institutions that play a part in constructing the nation through the telling of stories. The way in which the population of the nation features in those stories has changed over the period from the nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. In the nineteenth century, national institutions assumed a clear authority about whose story counted and should be told. The history of the period from the nineteenth century to the present day can be understood as a history of attacks on that authority. It is a truism of contemporary historiography that the authority of the white upper and middle class man was challenged from within the nation by women, the working class and non-white populations, and from outside the nation by the populations of the rest of the world. Those attacks on the authority to narrate the nation can be seen in the ways in which the public was conceived and represented within public service institutions in the cultural sphere. As part of these critiques, the idea that the personal and experiential had no place in public discourse was hotly disputed.

In this chapter, I trace the social, cultural, political, economic and technological contexts which have combined to bring about self-representation by members of the public, in public service institutions in the cultural sphere, in the contemporary moment. I argue against seeing this history as one of linear progress from the authority of the expert male voice to an authority of a plurality of 'ordinary people's' voices in the present; rather the history is one of tension over the place of other voices in the institutions of the cultural sphere. The focus of the chapter is on public museums and public service broadcasting since these are the two major exhibitory cultural institutions of the public sphere. The history presented in this chapter begins with the nineteenth century and the 'birth of the museum' but this is not to suggest that representations of the public began in the nineteenth century, nor that their existence is limited to public cultural institutions. Of course, representations of the public are to be found in all forms of cultural production, and perhaps we can say they began with the birth of the concept of the self. Representation of the self must begin with the modern notion of the subject

which can be traced to the seventeenth century post-Renaissance period, as John Berger notes in his 1967 essay, 'The Moment of Cubism':

The Copernican revolution, Protestantism, the Counter-Reformation destroyed the Renaissance position. With this destruction modern subjectivity was born (Berger, 1967, p. 82).

Nevertheless, national cultural institutions began with nations, and representations of the public, as part of nation-building, began with the *construction* of nations. The historical context for this thesis begins with the nineteenth century and the birth of nations and national institutions to represent the nations' stories back to their populations, and follows representations of 'the people' through to a point in history (today) where two public service institutions of the cultural sphere appear to be converging in their practice of inviting their publics in to represent themselves – at a time when publics are 'representing themselves' across a range of settings in contemporary life. The construction of the public as 'ordinary people' is found in the early days of the nation state; throughout this chapter I will point out the ways in which the term 'ordinary' is deployed, and to what purpose – referring here to the discussion of the four senses of the term 'ordinary people' discussed in Chapter 2. The idea of 'community' is invoked to different ends across the time period discussed in this chapter, beginning with the nation as, in Anderson's terms, the 'imagined community' through to the contemporary ubiquitous invocation of multiple 'communities'.

Nineteenth Century: Building the Nation through Representing the Public

The end of the eighteenth century is widely regarded as the moment of the creation and construction of the idea of the nation in the west (see, for example, Anderson, 1991). Nation-building took place in earnest in the western democracies in the nineteenth century. As Anderson demonstrates, the construction of the nation was as much a construction in symbolic and imaginary terms as in any concrete sense. It was vital that the idea of the nation was adopted by the population of the nation - the public. Representing the nation to the public was a key to fostering and encouraging national belonging and the very idea of nation.

Prosler suggests that the museum was central in the making of the nation in the nineteenth century: 'The museum was one of those spaces within which the nation could present itself as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) in all possible aspects' (Prosler, 1996, p. 32). This national community must by definition be a community with borders, so that the western nation was imagined against that which it was not:

In parallel to this the creation of ethnological museums based on the cultures of 'uncivilised peoples', and the introduction of colonial pavilions at world exhibitions, served to chart a difference between peoples and hence reinforce a national consciousness during the phase of the definition of a 'standard of civilisation' (Prosler, 1996, p. 34).

Thus, the purpose of some museums was to represent people *within* the nation, whilst the purpose of others was to represent people *outside* the nation. In this way the museum played a part in constructing the nation, by representing who belonged.

The British Museum opened (to a limited extent) to the public in 1759 (McLean, 1997; Schubert, 2000). Provision of public museums grew throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see, for example, Bennett, 1995; Prosler, 1996; Walsh, 1992).

However as Witcomb notes of early museums, 'The museum is mostly seen as inculcating bourgeois civic values that served the needs of the emerging nation-state and the dominant interests within it' (Witcomb, 2003, p. 14). Indeed, McLean notes of the earliest so-called public museums:

The predilection for housing museums in grand buildings, reminiscent of a gentleman's private residence, did nothing to encourage public participation. Nor did the curtailing of access in many of the early museums. Museums were not universally regarded as catering 'for the public benefit' (Museums Association 1984) – there was no immediate right of entry (McLean, 1997, p. 11).

The world fairs of the nineteenth century, beginning with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, changed perceptions about the museum audience:

These exhibitions attracted vast numbers of people, who were able to visit them with the advent of the railway age. These trade fairs persuaded governments that museums could be used as a means of social utility and social control; the population could use their spare time constructively by

visiting museums and educating themselves, becoming more civilized in the process (McLean, 1997, p. 12).

Similarly, Bennett notes a change in the purpose of museums in the mid-nineteenth century:

The mid-nineteenth century reconceptualization of museums as public resources that might be deployed as governmental instruments involving the whole population thus entailed a significant reevaluation of earlier cultural strategies. In the earlier phase, the rules and proscriptions governing attendance at museums had served to distinguish the bourgeois public from the rough and raucous manners of the general populace by excluding the latter. By contrast, the museum's new conception as an instrument of public instruction envisaged it as, in its new openness, an exemplary space in which the rough and raucous might learn to civilize themselves by modeling their conduct on the middle-class codes of behavior to which museum attendance would expose them (Bennett, 1995, p. 28).

Bennett draws on Foucault to argue that the purpose of museums was one where 'culture is brought within the province of government, its conception is on a par with other regions of government' (Bennett, 1995, p. 18). Bennett draws on Habermas' work on the history of the public sphere, and notes the role of museums as part of art and culture in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere. He writes that it was this public sphere '...in whose name the subsequent development of the debased public sphere of mass culture could be castigated..', arguing that 'the public' was partly constituted by the museum (Bennett, 1995). Museums were sites of power because they were key institutions in defining and representing who belonged in the nation, and who did not. Bennett suggests that the role of museums in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere laid the way for museums to be used in the service of governance.

Early museums represented 'uncivilised peoples' as a way to define the civilised population of the nation. But crucially the 'civilised' population of the nation did not include the whole population, and museums were sites where it was hoped the working class population would learn to emulate the 'civilised' middle classes. Nineteenth century museums addressed the working class population as part of the national public. Of course, the extent to which the public museum did actually serve the working class was extremely limited. Museums were associated with the middle classes and high culture and education, while fairgrounds and pubs were associated with the notion of low culture, and 'the masses'. While there is debate over the extent to which the

working class population attended museums, it is clear that nineteenth century museums were places that educated the national population about the nation, and how to be a proper member of the nation. The point of view or experience of members of the public of different class and gender, or indeed racial and ethnic, backgrounds was not understood as part of the national story that the museum should tell. And this was part of a wider view in the nineteenth century: the different points of view of different members of the public were not widely represented; instead, a unifying story of the nation was told from the perspective of white middle class male authority, as noted at the start of this chapter.

Early Twentieth Century: Building the Nation and a Wider National Public

After the General Strike of 1926, one of the earliest of the many BBC reviews, that of the Crawford Committee, recommended, as had the first BBC review, the Sykes Committee of 1923, that the BBC be nationalised (BBC *Committees of Enquiry*; Born 2004; Smith 1974). Thus public service broadcasting in Britain began with the formation of the BBC 'as a state-regulated monopoly in 1927' (Scannell, 1996a).

Public service broadcasting in the early twentieth century was seen as a vehicle for the promotion of a national, more inclusive, mass audience. In this way, through its address, public service broadcasting joined public museums in the continuing project of constructing the nation state. The BBC spoke to the nation, first via radio and subsequently also via television, as Ellis writes:

Through the idea of public service broadcasting, broadcasting became another tool in the construction of the nation state. As such, it joined earlier forces of social unification: the construction of railways, the standardization of clock time, the drive towards universal literacy, the standardization of working practices and holiday entitlements, the development of universal suffrage, the development of a national press (Ellis, 2000, p. 51).

In the early years of the BBC, the public service broadcaster claimed to address the whole UK population in the notion of the public and to include the working class in that national public. Thus Smith, describing the origins of broadcasting with the invention of wireless telephony in the 1890s, argues that the BBC addressed a national public that included all social classes:

There had been a relaxation of the barriers between classes and a widespread realisation existed that information, as well as entertainment, no longer needed to be circulated within proscribed class lines. There was, therefore, the beginning of a conception of the national audience as a mass audience. The new journalism and the new entertainment encouraged and nurtured this incipient feeling (Smith, 1974, p. 20).

Because it claimed to speak to (and in so doing constructed) the national public, public service broadcasting faced questions about who constituted the public, and what the appropriate way to fulfill a public service mandate might be. In this way, seeds for the activity of self-representation by members of the public were sewn in anxieties about institutional purposes that began with the inception of public service broadcasting.

Anthony Smith's edited compilation of reports by and about the BBC makes clear that the question of *how* to represent the public arose in the earliest days of the BBC:

As broadcasting developed into a double medium, and television joined radio to create extremely powerful concentrations of cultural power in each society, the problems of how to organise the medium, how to finance it, how to supervise it and *how to allow the public some kind of representation within it* multiplied the perplexities which had been present from the beginning (Smith, 1974, p. 14) [my italics].

Issues of how to represent the public of the nation, then, were present and cause for debate from the beginning of public service broadcasting; for example, decentralisation was recommended as early as 1935 by the Ullswater Committee (BBC *Committees of Enquiry*, p. 2) and reiterated in later reviews, and the Beveridge Committee of 1949 raised the question of the representation of minority views (BBC *Committees of Enquiry*, p. 3).

Notions of high and low culture, and the associated class-based audiences, worried proponents of the public service institution of broadcasting in ways that echo anxieties about mass culture, and the educational, reforming and controlling role of the public museum. While nineteenth century museums claimed to address the national public, but hoped to 'civilise' those members of the working class who did venture into their spaces, early public service broadcasting was discussed in terms of an educational role, and critiqued when it was seen as pandering to 'the lowest common denominator'. As Bonner writes of the Reithian remit to 'inform, educate, entertain':

In some of the earlier enunciations of this mission, especially when in a political context, such as over the introduction of television, it was apparent that 'entertain' was very much the least of the three, only really a sweetener for the real activities of education and information (Bonner, 2003, p. 22).

However, it is sometimes forgotten that the purpose of public service broadcasting was always debated. Thus Smith shows that, even before the BBC became a national public service, there were those who did not agree with Reith's view of how to serve the public. Captain Peter Eckersley, the chief engineer of the early BBC, noted in his memoirs:

The BBC of those days is to be congratulated because it took a line which its directors considered was in the best interests of the public and not necessarily commercially beneficial to the wireless trade. The company undoubtedly saw itself as a great cultural force, by which it meant something uniquely constituted to avoid the postures of vulgarity. The unfortunate thing, to my mind, was that its idea of becoming a cultural force was so uncultured. P.P Eckersley. *The Power Behind the Microphone*(1942), 48, 53-4 in (Smith 1974).

Thus, there was always debate about the meaning of culture and, specifically, critique of the dominant Reithian definition of culture.

Unlike museums, however, the BBC has a long history of actually representing 'ordinary people'. Scannell's, and Scannell and Cardiff's work on British broadcasting history suggests that the notion of the '*ordinary person*' played a key role in early British radio and television. They argue that there were explicit and conscious representations of '*ordinary people*' throughout the early years (Scannell, 1996b; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991). Scannell's and Scannell and Cardiff's work also invokes '*ordinary people*' in the everyday sense: 'broadcasting produced and produces itself as part of and as for the everyday world, for that is the world in which listeners and viewers ordinarily live' (Scannell, 1996b, p. 89).

However the perceived lack of representation in cultural institutions of the diversity of experience and points of view of the national population continued into the 1930s and was addressed in various ways outside the institutions. Corner places the category of the 'ordinary person' at the heart of documentary practice from the Grierson-led movement of the 1930s onwards, suggesting that this cinema explicitly valorised the category of the ordinary:

..a declared belief in modern citizenship, unprejudiced by older, class hierarchic values and newly committed to exploring 'ordinary life' as part of a proper representation of community and nation (Corner, 1995b, p. 82).

Similarly, Highmore describes the 1930s Mass Observation project as an explicit response to the way that 'ordinary people' were hitherto represented (Highmore, 2002). Debate over understandings of Mass Observation focus on the question of representing 'ordinary people', and Highmore argues that the conventional view of the project as giving voice to middle class people to describe the 'other' (working class people) is over-simplified and that, rather than imposing class-based categories on participants, Mass Observation allowed more nuanced versions of class affiliation to emerge (Highmore, 2002).

Mid Twentieth Century: Anxiety about Representing the Public

However, debate continued over how to represent the public properly. Anxiety over representation of the public is central to Hoggart's celebrated 1957 *Uses of Literacy* (Hoggart, 1957). Hoggart suggested that the construct '*ordinary person*' is used to suit economic imperatives. He suggests, as did mid-Victorian critics before him, according to Hampton's account, that representations of 'ordinary everyday life' are an exploitative replacement of the opportunity for meaningful, rational participation in society (Hampton, 2001; Hoggart, 1957). Williams's 1958 article, '*Culture is Ordinary*', also places the construct of the '*ordinary person*' at the centre of the debate about how cultural representation is shaped by economic imperatives. But Williams claimed value for the '*ordinary*' in culture, where culture had more commonly been understood to mean high culture (Williams, 2002 [1958]). However, Palmer argues that, from its inception in the 1950s British television documentary involved middle class producers representing working class people for consumption by middle class audiences (Palmer, 2002).

Ellis suggests that the history of television can be roughly divided into three eras: 'scarcity' (up to the late 1970s or early 1980s); 'availability' (from the early 1980s); 'plenty' (the future of television or 'content' as predicted by the industry) (Ellis, 2000). Of the era of scarcity, Ellis notes:

This was another aspect of television's era of scarcity: a small group of adepts, the programme-makers, were accumulating practical knowledge of the effects of the process of witness, but these knowledges had no wider currency. In the age of scarcity, television came from an elite, and it remained an honour for anyone outside that elite to be invited to appear on the screen (Ellis, 2000, p. 51).

From the 1960s, the oral history movement addressed the continued perception that there was a serious lack in the mainstream representation of the public in the historical account. Also in the 1960s, Corner suggests that the Direct Cinema movement in the US, and Cinema Verité in France, offered a specific response to a perceived failure in attempts to represent 'ordinary people' - both movements claiming to represent 'ordinary people' with minimal mediation. Corner argues that these movements influenced subsequent documentary television and the development of access television in the 1970s (Corner, 1994). Corner describes access:

..we can say that access is the avoiding or the correcting of imbalances in broadcasting's representation of politics and society by the articulation of a diversity of 'directly' stated views from different sections of the public and by the reflection, again 'directly', of the real diversity of cultural, social and economic circumstances, particularly those which require attention and action (Corner, 1994, p. 22).

'*Ordinary people*' are here conceived of in a celebratory sense because the purpose of Access is to celebrate or validate, through enabling self-representation, the reality of those lives, and to argue for social change (Corner, 1994). The explicitly political view also invokes the citizenry sense of the term 'ordinary people'. These movements - oral history, Cinema Verite, and the early forms of access television - were explicitly political and drew on the political, celebratory sense of the term 'ordinary people'.

But these movements used personal perspective and personal experience; they politicised the personal experience of members of the public. Renov notes the growth of self-representation in documentary film practice, which he links specifically to the influence of the second wave feminism. He writes:

.. the work of later practitioners bears the marks of a radical shift of values associated with the emergence of second-wave feminism by the early 1970s. A new foregrounding of the politics of everyday life encouraged the interrogation of identity and subjectivity and of a vividly corporeal rather than intellectualised self (Renov, 2004, p. 171).

While Renov is interested in the work of authorial film-makers, the same political context impacted on which members of the public were represented in our two spaces of cultural representation, the museum and public service broadcasting. There continues to be a debate over the question of whose account of history is legitimate, and in which public settings should those accounts be presented.

Late Twentieth to Early Twenty-First Century: Publics Represent Themselves

Both public museums and public service broadcasting have responded to the wider shifts associated with the contemporary period, by moving towards displaying a multiplicity of representations, shifts in political and economic policies and in technological developments and, perhaps most importantly, shifts associated with the period of late-modernity or post-modernity. In this section, I will elaborate on how these shifts seem to have combined to effect some changes in the activities of the institutions – one outcome of which is the facilitation of self-representations by those institutions.

Undermining grand narratives

Accounts of both public sector museums and broadcasting situate changes in their role over time in a context of a post-modern failure of grand narratives, and the rise of multiculturalism, or in the context of a more gradual transition from enlightenment to modernity and late-modernity. This historical period is associated with growing individualisation; the ‘individualisation thesis’ (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). And, as Plummer has described in the phrase ‘auto/biographical society’, this individualisation is associated with a growth in the telling of *stories* of individuals (Plummer, 2001). Contemporary museums around the world are tackling questions about how to represent society in the context of the questioning, criticising and undermining of the grand narratives, of, for example, nations. Museums responded to these wider cultural shifts, and Macdonald dates this situation to the 1980s:

Most of museums’ long-held assumptions and functions have been challenged over the last decade or so; and at the same time the boundaries between museums and other institutions have become elided such that museum professionals can declare: ‘The truth is, we do not know any more what a museum institution is’ (Sola, 1992: 106) (Macdonald, 1996, p. 1).

Museums had previously offered factual accounts of, for example, social history. Now overarching historical accounts were called into question, as Urry notes:

The post-modern undermining of grand narratives has authorized diverse histories and in the British case has begun to de-legitimate the anglo-centric masculinist, home counties vision of Britain and British history (Urry, 1996, p. 58).

The wider validation of diverse histories makes possible the idea that a range of peoples' (who constitute the museum-going public) views of history should be made and recorded by museums. As a result, a shift in the purpose of museums emerges, from delivering one historical account to delivering a plurality of accounts, as Walsh notes:

Modernity considered that reality was representable, or rather there was a problem that could be solved. .. Post-modernity, or rather, that brand of post-modern thought steeped in the discourse of deconstruction, questions the possibility of representing the real, as well as the possibility of intersubjective communities, where some kind of broad agreement can be reached, and consequently a united position regarding a problem achieved and maintained (Walsh, 1992, p. 63).

Ellis's argument (above) that the expansion of available broadcasting frequency meant that television did not remain in the hands of an elite few can be usefully applied to thinking about museum practice today. Ellis suggests that particular technological circumstances helped create professional elites in what he calls an 'era of scarcity'. Perhaps the end of scarcity in broadcasting also presents a challenge to museum curators: there are now many more sources of historical account and the position of museum curators as *the* historical experts is rendered less powerful. Nowadays, museums compete for audiences with a wide range of tourist and media industries' attractions⁸. This argument suggests that technological developments have contributed to the destabilisation of the authority of the curator's account of history.

Encouraging participation versus educating the public

Funding bodies such as arts councils, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and the government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) encourage participation

⁸See for example Eco's essay on representations of social history in bizarre museums/tourist attractions across the USA. Eco, U. (1986). Travels In Hyper Reality. In U. Eco (Ed.), *Travels in Hyper Reality*, London: Picador; Pan Books.

by, and representation of, members of the public in the projects and institutions that they fund. For example, a recent Arts Council of England press release refers to the Arts Council of England's 'national ambition to demonstrate the ability of the arts to transform people's lives in all our communities' (Arts Council of England, 2003). And a recent governmental grant to museums is described on the website for the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, thus: 'Museums around the country are to share a £2.5 million cash boost in partnership with the big national collections - to help fund projects engaging young people and community groups' (DCMS, 2003).

The majority of commentators on museums suggest a shift in the role of the museum in the late twentieth (and early twenty-first) century. In this vein, Hudson writes:

At The Tenth General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), held in Copenhagen in 1974, it was made clear that museums throughout the world are coming to regard themselves less and less as self-contained professional units and more and more as cultural centres for the communities within which they operate. One could summarise the change by saying that museums are no longer considered to be merely storehouses or agents for the preservation of a country's cultural and natural heritage, but powerful instruments of education in the broadest sense (Hudson, 1999, p. 371).

This view of the museum as an 'instrument of education' echoes Bennett's description of the public museum of the nineteenth century. The history of museums shows the construction of the public, and the subsequent continued anxiety over how to fulfil a public service remit. The education of the public in museums seems to have moved towards attempts to allow the public in, to represent the public and to allow the public to represent themselves. This representational role does not replace the educational role, but rather complicates it. That is, education of the public is increasingly challenging, when the question of how to educate the public is the topic of fierce debate.

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in her Forward to the recent DCMS consultation on museums in the 21st century is quite explicit that the role of museums in the governance of the public should be strengthened:

But for me, and the Government, they [museums] are something much more: a way for us to see our place in the world. This is all the more important as society changes, and new values of nationality and community emerge. The fixed points of history and heritage have an even greater

meaning as our world becomes smaller, and our values develop (DCMS, 2005, p. 3).

This is, I think, a call for a traditional authoritative and a governmental role for museums. But this call is tempered by the suggestion that we are in a time where 'new values of nationality and community emerge'. Jowell's remarks are made at a time of uncertainty in museums about the very authority of the fixed point of view, and at a time where there are strong arguments, within the museum sector, in favour of expressing a multiplicity of viewpoints in museums. It seems to me that Jowell's remarks here encapsulate that uncertainty.

Walsh recommends a way forward for museums, specifically as public service institutions, in the context of the 'post modern condition'. He suggests that museums should conceive of their purpose as one of educating the public, and helping that public to experience a sense of place; he writes:

The key to a successful future for museums has to be based on the idea of *local* democracy and public service, that is, the development of the museum as a facilitator for communities who wish to learn more about their place, a provision which should be available as an educational service (Walsh, 1992, p. 160).

Ellis's characterisation of TV's current era parallels Walsh's argument; for Ellis, the role of public service broadcasting becomes one of facilitating the public in understanding the society in which we all live:

No longer the agent of a standardizing notion of national unity, public service broadcasting can provide the forum within which the emerging culture of multiple identities can negotiate its antagonisms. This is in many ways the opposite of its former role: instead of providing displays of national unity, it deals in displays of national disunity, the better to bring about ways of resolving them (Ellis, 2000, p. 87).

This is not to argue that the pendulum has swung to a situation where there is an uncontentious emphasis on public sector institutions functioning as facilitators. Rather, there remains a tension over whether the emphasis lies on educating the public or on providing a forum for the public. Thus, in a 2004 paper, Tessa Jowell, Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport, criticised the recent emphasis on only funding cultural practices which are perceived to advance wider social and political aims:

So politicians have enough reasons to support culture on its own merits to stop apologising for it by speaking only of it in terms of other agendas. Yes, we will need to keep proving that engagement with culture can improve educational attainment, and can help reduce crime. But we should also stand up for what culture can do for individuals in a way that nothing else can (Jowell, 2004).

The debate turns on what weight is given to different aspects of public service: should public funding for arts and culture primarily focus on education of, and delivery of 'excellence' (as Jowell puts it) to, the public, or should it focus on encouraging representation of that public, through participation? While the argument has long been that public funding should fulfill both of these aims, and others besides, the relative weight given to representation of, and participation by, members of the public is, nonetheless, contested.

Ordinary versus expert

Walsh recommends that museums should fulfil the role of being facilitators to the public by involving the public in the production of their own representations:

A new museology must concern itself with involving the public, not just during the visit to the museum through interactive displays, but also in the production of their own pasts (Walsh, 1992, p. 161).

For Walsh, museums have a role to play in fostering a sense of place in localities. The key points are that this sense of place should be fostered through enabling the public to produce their pasts *themselves*, that is through self-representation, and that self-representation specifically is linked to understanding history, through personal familial experience (Walsh, 1992, p. 167).

Message and Healy, in their discussion of the National Museum of Australia (NMA), suggest that a 'central focus on emotion is one of the ways in which the NMA marks itself as a new museum' (Message & Healy, 2004, p. 1). In contemporary museums emotional and experiential accounts are offered as trustworthy precisely *because* they do not claim to be objective. Further, emotional and experiential accounts are put together with the representation of 'ordinary', 'everyday life'.

There is, however, tension over this view; referring to key debates facing museology today, Witcomb observes that there are 'arguments about the need for curators to become 'facilitators' rather than experts...' (Witcomb, 2003, p. 4). Thus, one of the ways in which museums have tackled the discrediting of grand narratives is to turn to the representation of a range of personal, experiential perspectives drawn from the public, and so to a representation of so-called 'ordinary life'. But this is a contentious turn.

Today, there are burgeoning numbers of oral histories being displayed in public settings, as evidenced by the theme of the 2004 conference of the UK Oral History Society, 'Putting Oral History on Display', for which the programme states:

Oral history has come of age in the public's consciousness: personal testimony is recognised as a valuable element of contemporary historical interpretation and an incomparable educational and artistic resource (Annual Conference of the Oral History Society, 2004).

But the emphasis on the 'personal' in the above statement is important. As self-representation has proliferated, it has become synonymous with the telling of personal experience, sometimes - and this is the key area for debate - to the exclusion of the link of what is political about the personal.

The figure of the '*ordinary person*' is central to contemporary museum theory and practice, in its attempt to account for (and call for) the general contemporary shift towards representation of the '*ordinary*' in museums (Hemming, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997; Wallace, 1995). Witcomb argues that 'the masses' have always figured as a problem in museums, and suggests that this construction of the public continues to inform debate about the changing purpose of museums. This ongoing debate in museums invokes 'ordinary people' on both sides of the opposition, so that 'ordinary people' are invoked in a denigratory sense, as 'the masses', by those who deplore changes in museums as populist, and as citizenry by those who regard current changes in museum culture as democratic. Witcomb stresses the continuity between nineteenth century and contemporary debates, but notes:

If, in the nineteenth century, the offenders were the people of the street, in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century the offenders are the media

(especially television), postmodernists and the tourist industry (Witcomb, 2003, p. 56).

It seems to me that there is a further continuity here concerning how 'ordinary people' are constructed - so that, while in contemporary debates 'the media, postmodernists and the tourist industry' are constructed as 'the offenders', they are offenders because of how they construct the 'ordinary' museum-going public as consumers, not as citizens. Witcomb quotes a curator, Charles Watkins, and responses to his position, to illustrate how the debate is typically polarised, she writes:

An exhibition which is 'shaped by the visitor's experience, not the show's content' may be 'laudable from a sociological perspective', but 'tends to undermine the authority of museums and suggests that every person can ultimately become his or her own curator' (27-28). (Witcomb, 2003, p. 56).

Watkins' position, as outlined here by Witcomb, resists any break-down in the distinction (and hierarchy) between the expert and the 'ordinary person'. Witcomb notes that respondents to Watkins accused him of being elitist, and attacked him for 'assuming that leisure or recreation and education or learning are intrinsic oppositions'. Witcomb suggests that debates about museum policy and practice frequently accept the construction of a binary opposition, suggesting either that curatorial authority is outrageously elitist, or that the representation of visitor experience is dangerously populist; Witcomb argues that this is an unhelpful binary.

Why represent ordinary people

In broadcasting, the figure of the '*ordinary person*' is central to debate about the democratic significance of talk shows and radio phone-ins, so that the sense of '*ordinary people*' as the public is central to the premise of all of these discussions. Blumler and Gurevitch argue that '*ordinary people's*' participation in phone-ins should be seen as a: 'restoration of the ordinary citizen as a significant point of reference for political communicators and as properly an active participant in public discussion' (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 219). Here '*ordinary*' is explicitly used in the citizenry sense. Coleman argues that '*ordinary people*' are merely used as illustrations of the 'voice of the people' in condescending and limited ways (Coleman, 1997, p. 112). Here also, '*ordinary people*' is used to invoke the citizenry, but their participation is seen as a poor imitation of proper citizen participation.

The 'ordinary person' is central in discussions of contemporary factual television, most notably Reality Television, a kind of programming which today dominates public service and commercial channels alike (Hill, 2000; Hill et al., 2002; Van Zoonen, 2001). Couldry argues that the Reality Television programme *Big Brother* functions to reconstruct the hierarchal distinction between 'ordinary' and 'media' worlds (Couldry, 2002). On the other hand, Van Zoonen argues that *Big Brother's* representation of '*ordinary people*' indicates an exciting shift in terms of which issues are deemed to be of public concern (Van Zoonen, 2001): 'Each of those formats has been subjected to similar criticism: one should not flaunt private emotions, nor does one relish observing these emotions...' (Van Zoonen, 2001, p. 672). Van Zoonen argues that this critique is based on the separation of public and private, suggesting that the popularity of Reality Television indicates that such separation is no longer either acceptable or functional (ibid.). Although Van Zoonen deploys the term '*ordinary*' in the everyday sense to refer to daily experience, 'ordinary daily humdrum experience' (Van Zoonen, 2001, p. 673), she also uses '*ordinary*' in the celebratory sense, whereby '*ordinary*' is equated with the private sphere, and hence with experience that had been excluded from view because of the bourgeois division between public and private. And, for Van Zoonen, Reality Television's representation of 'ordinary people' constitutes an exciting development for democracy; this, then, is 'ordinary people' in the citizenry sense.

Livingstone and Lunt suggest that '*ordinary people*' are given a platform from which to make public their usually marginal/hidden experience, and here '*ordinary people*' are invoked in the celebratory sense. But, in Livingstone and Lunt's account, '*ordinary people*' are constituted as '*ordinary*' at least in part because of the personal, psychological and individual perspectives from which they speak, hence implying that there are limits to what kind of '*ordinariness*' can be represented in the media (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). Personal, private and psychological versions of 'ordinary' invoke the everyday sense of the term: political positions, group formation and difference in social status are not emphasised; rather, our shared individual emotional responses are what make us '*ordinary*'. This emphasis on the emotional and the experiential can be seen in the ways in which the public are invited to represent themselves in museums (see above).

The idea of public culture as something which should be available as a proper part of the lives of all of the public was undermined by the New Right, and this undermining

affected all institutions whose remit was the provision of publicly funded culture, including, of course, museums and public service broadcasting. Contemporary policy in public service broadcasting and public museums can be understood as a response to the shifts in recent history of neo-liberal political and economic policies. Walsh makes a case for linking the politics of the New Right with the ideas of a 'post modern condition', whereby individualism reigns, and there is, in Thatcher's famous phrase; 'no such thing as society'. In terms of cultural policy, this meant New Right governments setting about dismantling, or at least reducing, the welfare state, and attacking and reducing the power of local government. Proponents of New Right philosophy did not see cultural and educational activities as a citizen right for all citizens. The market was brought to bear on cultural institutions and, for example, entrance charges were introduced in public museums, which had previously been free as public services. Museums now competed as institutions in a global leisure market (Urry, 1996, p. 62).

Media histories also observe that the period of deregulation and privatisation ushered in by the Conservative governments in Britain changed and continues to present a challenge to the very idea of public service broadcasting. As Sussman summarises:

In the 1980s, the Thatcher and Reagan governments came to power with a mission to demolish the welfare state, discipline the working classes, and return regulatory power to the market. Conservatives in Britain savaged the media and its unions, first freezing though ultimately failing to eliminate the licensing fee provisions of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)...(Sussman, 2003, p. 111).

But the turn to the representation of the 'ordinary' in public service broadcasting is also explained by reference to economics and the pressure to produce cheap television. Scholars responding to the deregulation in British broadcasting during the late 1980s and early 1990s have used the representation of the '*ordinary person*' in their critique of the quality of representation. Murdock shares the view of many when he puts together the proliferation of material featuring '*ordinary people*' with the need to make inexpensive programmes to fill the hours (Murdock, 1999). In this way, a perceived proliferation of the '*ordinary*' is seen as an example of the populism and exploitation which, it is claimed, characterise contemporary media (ibid.). There is widespread anxiety that experiential forms of factual programming have replaced informative and critical ones, and in this discussion there is a tendency to accept a binary opposition between knowledge and experience. The terms 'ordinary' and 'quality' are often used as

shorthand to describe the commercialisation of programming and this is 'ordinary' in a denigratory sense (see for example, Corner et al., 1994). For example, Murdock writes:

They have replaced paternalism's hierarchies of capacity and insight with the open horizons of populism, which celebrates common sense as the only sense worth having and presents audience size as the only valid criterion of communicative success. This aggressive promotion of ordinariness fits snugly with the political economy of the new commercialism (Murdock, 1999, p. 15).

The New Right policies were followed by the so-called Post-Washington Consensus, whereby the Clinton and Blair administrations attempted to temper the free reign of the market in all areas of life. The Post-Washington Consensus heralded what Mayo has described as the 'return of community' (Mayo, 2003). With the 'return of community', there has been a governmental policy emphasis on encouraging locally-based 'community' initiatives across areas of policy from cultural areas of life to regeneration of urban and rural neighbourhoods. This emphasis on 'community' can be seen in contemporary museums and in contemporary public service broadcasting, for example in the multiple widening access strategies in museums, or the BBC's emphasis on User Generated Content.

Witcomb cautiously notes that some museums are using websites in ways that support the refusal of grand narratives and enable a plurality of accounts (Witcomb, 2003, p. 120). She suggests that the internet can facilitate showcasing multiple perspectives on the museum platform. Similarly, the internet, together with developments in digital television, have facilitated self-representation in public service broadcasting, evidenced by the fact that the internet is the site of most of the BBC's User Generated Content, and more can be found on BBCi. Clearly technological developments have facilitated the inclusion of such content. Indeed the technology of the internet has made content produced by 'ordinary people' a familiar sight, and both public service broadcasting and museums can be seen to be responding to that.

However issues of access and literacy mean that the inclusion of multiple perspectives on the internet might be a way of keeping these multiple perspectives marginal to the other platforms of both public service broadcasting and public museums – television, radio and gallery spaces. Witcomb argues against the view in museum studies that sees it as a necessity for museums to use more multi-media activities in order to compete

successfully with television and other contemporary media. Witcomb proposes a less technology-dependent notion of interactivity, and argues further that interactivity has a history in museums, rather than being a new notion that has only come with new technology. In a parallel history, self-representation and community representation in public service broadcasting also predate the new technology of the internet. The introduction of lightweight video cameras in the 1990s, for example, was key to the work of the BBC's Community Programmes Unit, and in the 1990s this work, in the form of *Video Nation Shorts*, was found on prime time television on BBC2, rather than being content for which one must purposefully search.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter began with two observations. Firstly, I noted that who tells what stories in which settings is always a question of power. Secondly, I suggested that national public service institutions of the cultural sphere have always contributed to the construction and maintenance of the nation through the telling of stories about that nation. I suggested that the period from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era can be understood as a period of challenges to the authority of the white, middle class, western, male to tell the story of the nation (and the world) through national institutions, as well as in other settings. I also noted that part of the challenge to the established ways of telling the nation included disputing the view that there was no place for the personal and experiential in public discourse.

I suggested that, in the contemporary context in which people everywhere are apparently 'speaking for themselves', public institutions of the cultural sphere are also facilitating this activity by members of the public. This chapter traced the histories and contemporary contexts of the two major exhibitory public institutions of the cultural sphere - public service broadcasting and public museums - in order to explore how it is that they have converged on the facilitation of self-representation by members of the public.

The chapter began with the nineteenth century beginnings of national public institutions of the cultural sphere. I explored how the histories of public service broadcasting and public museums can be understood as a history of tension over the place of representations of the public, and their voices, in these institutions.

The first section explored the nineteenth century role of museums in the construction of the nation, and looked at the mid nineteenth century developments which led to a broadening of who was considered a part of the public to whom the museum addressed itself. Museums went from being places from which the working classes were excluded to becoming places in which it was hoped the working classes might be 'civilised', by example. Nineteenth century museums were places where publics should learn the unifying story of the nation from the clear authority of the middle class male.

The following section looked at the early twentieth century and the birth of public service broadcasting. I showed how the development of public service broadcasting led to a broadening of who was included in the idea of a national audience. In this section I showed how, even in the earliest days of public service broadcasting, the attempt to address a wider, national audience that included the working class population led to anxiety and debate about *whether* and *how* to represent the public. I showed how this period also saw the beginnings of debate about what constituted culture and what the institutions of public service should be for. I noted that, while debate took place within the institutions about how and whether to represent the public, developments also occurred outside the institutions, in part constituting critiques of *how* institutions did or did not represent the public. These were questions about representation, but also at the same time these were questions about mediation – how representations are mediated and how this affects their validity. I suggested that early twentieth century debate and critique about how to represent the public can be seen as the seeds that eventually led to calls for *self*-representation within the institutions.

The discussion of developments in public service broadcasting from the mid twentieth century showed that anxiety about whether and how to represent the public in the cultural institutions continued. Again, developments outside the institutions responded to perceived failure on the part of the institutions, notably in Direct Cinema and Cinema Verite. It has been argued that these external developments in how to represent the public contributed to the development of the documentary form and the Access movement within the institution of public service broadcasting. I suggested that this period from the mid twentieth century also saw a new emphasis on the representation of personal experience in public.

By the late twentieth century, I argued, there had been a series of shifts in public service broadcasting and in public museums towards representing multiple publics. I explored the different accounts given for these developments in museum studies and in histories of broadcasting. I sketched the wider political, economic, social and technological contexts in which these developments had taken place. I argued that public institutions in the cultural sphere have not moved neatly to a new position whereby the public are invited in to represent themselves. Rather, I suggested that the question of the place of voices of the public in the institutions, together with the question of what constitutes proper representation of the public, are both topics of ongoing debate.

The chapter has focused on foregrounding the parallels in both the history and the present challenges faced by public service broadcasting and public museums. Undoubtedly, there are many differences between these two institutions but, in this chapter, I have focused on the parallels. A focus on the parallels has shown what these institutions have in common in terms of the wider social forces to which they must respond. Most importantly, there are parallels in the ways in which the two different kinds of institutions are now addressing these present challenges. Both are turning to providing forums for the public, rather than only delivering authoritative knowledge to the public. So that, taking again Message and Healy's discussion of the NMA as an example of a purpose built new museum, the authors point to the way in which spaces for debate and discussion are built into the architecture of the new museum (Message & Healy, 2004).

In public service broadcasting and in museums the move to let the public in continues to be contentious, by no means accepted by all within the institution or by all commentators outside. Furthermore, exactly how the public is represented continues to be debated, and this debate, I suggest, turns on the question of how those representations are mediated. The history presented in this chapter suggests that the notions of 'ordinary people' and 'community' are likely to be key to those processes of mediation.

In the following chapters two contemporary projects that do invite members of the public to represent themselves inside the institutions, one from public service broadcasting and one from a public museum, are explored. The exploration focused on the crucial question of how self-representations are mediated in practice and

discursively. First, in the next chapter, I turn to an exploration of the methodological approach employed to study the two cases.

Chapter 4

Methodological Approach: A Multiple Case Study of Processes of Mediation

Introduction

This thesis seeks to understand what is at stake in the making of self-representations that are produced with public funds - where public bodies solicit, assist in the production of, and then display self-representations by members of the public. To address this concern, I ask how processes of mediation shape self-representations in public sector projects in the cultural sphere and, as noted in Chapter 1, I explore this question through the empirical analysis of two cases, the Museum of London's *London's Voices* and BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*. Thus the methodological approach is that of a multiple case study focusing on processes of mediation.

Van Zoonen suggests that, in analysing qualitative data, and she is referring particularly to interviews, we should 'focus on what has been said, how it has been said and what is achieved by saying it in that particular manner' (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 143). The analyses of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* presented in this thesis take a critical look at how self-representations are mediated by listening to what is said, but also by considering how are things said - what is it possible for subjects to say in the particular circumstances of their role as, for example, a BBC producer being interviewed by an LSE graduate student, or an eighteen year old north-Londoner who left school at fifteen, being interviewed by an LSE graduate student. Further, the question of how self-representations are mediated is explored by looking critically at the form and narrative of what is made: the photographs, poems, memoirs, websites, digital stories - the texts.

This chapter is in four sections. In the first section, approaches to case studies and multiple case studies are explored, and models for a combined focus on production, text and audience are discussed in terms of how they inform this study, as well as how this study departs from them. Following this, ethnographic studies of production process are discussed, and the issues raised by textual analysis are addressed. In the second section, research approaches to audiences who are participating in media and culture are

discussed, and the empirical work of this thesis is situated as a contribution to this varied field of research. In the third section, the research design for the multiple case study of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* is introduced, and followed by a discussion of the issues and challenges encountered in putting that design into practice. In the final section of the chapter, a discussion of the process of data analysis illustrates how the theoretical framework was developed in relation to the data collected in the multiple case study.

Case Studies

Case study design

This thesis focuses on *how* processes of mediation shape self-representations by members of the public. Yin suggests that the case study is a particularly appropriate research design when the researcher is interested in 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 2003), and it has been argued that the same is true when the focus is contemporary events and events over which the researcher has no control, such as ongoing events (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987; Yin, 2003). Therefore, the case study is suitable if the research seeks to address, for example, processes of production while they are taking place (Yin, 2003). For this thesis, the selection of cases to study meant choosing projects that were ongoing and live, in order to be able to pay attention to all parts in the process and to observe activities as they took place. A case study was the most appropriate way to fulfil these criteria.

This research set out to explore *two* cases in order to strike a balance between the wish to collect 'thick description', and the wish to address the activity of self-representation as a phenomenon beyond any one case. I suggest that two cases constitute a multiple case study because the findings concern more than one situation. Stake, referring to Geertz, suggests that case studies call for 'thick description'. He argues that it is preferable to deploy a sole case study because attempts at comparison necessarily lead to 'thinner' description, as the researcher will focus on those aspects of the case which appear to be common to all cases under observation (Stake, 2000). However, Yin suggests that, while there are both advantages and disadvantages to each approach, it is preferable to deploy a multiple case study where possible, because it is likely to produce more reliable findings which might allow speculation beyond the case in question,

although it still may not allow generalisation. Yin writes: 'The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust' (Yin, 2003, p. 46), and also notes that a multiple case study enables the research to consider patterns across cases:

...the contexts of the two cases are likely to differ to some extent. If under these varied circumstances you still can arrive at common conclusions from both cases, they will have immeasurably expanded the external generalizability of your findings, again compared to those from a single case alone (Yin, 2003, p. 53).

The term 'multiple case study' emphasises that each case may have comparative elements, but allows that there may be much that is not comparable: they are different things studied together precisely because they may illuminate each other. In this way, for example, comparative studies have been constructed through bringing together research by different scholars in, for example, different national contexts, in order to draw out differences but also similarities. Thus Livingstone and Bovill's collection explores media in the lives of young people in a range of national contexts, and Raboy's edited collection explores the challenges faced by public service broadcasting in a range of national contexts, but in a shared global context (Livingstone & Bovill, 2001; Raboy, 1996). In these studies the editors point to where the same kinds of issues arise in different national contexts, thereby showing how those issues go beyond the single case.

Generalisation in a statistical sense is not the aim of interpretative methods, as Alasuutari notes:

Indeed it is a distinctive feature of qualitative research that it intentionally concentrates on objects of study where generalization is not a problem. The focus of attention is on explaining the phenomenon, on making it intelligible. To prove its existence is not necessary (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 147).

Of course the case study is a research strategy, not a method; case studies might involve qualitative or quantitative methods, or both (Yin, 2003). Case studies in media studies have employed a range of qualitative methodologies: individual interview, group interview, documentary evidence, participant observation, and visual analysis of content. This study too draws on a range of methods, as is discussed in the section on the research design, below. Now, I turn to a discussion of the methodological

approaches in the field of media studies on which this thesis draws and to which it contributes.

Production, text, audience - case studies in media and communications research

Hall's original notion of encoding-decoding, as discussed in Chapter 2, proposed a continuous interaction between the institutional production of media texts, and situated audience interpretation of those texts (Hall, 1973). However, subsequent discussion, drawing on this work, has sometimes seemed to imply that there are three discrete elements: production, text and reception. The theoretical notion that processes of meaning construction take place, in and around and between these sites, draws on Hall's original argument and suggests a fluid conceptualisation of what takes place.

There are models for case studies which have what we might call a holistic approach, and which explore production, text and reception (Buckingham, 1987; D'Acci, 1994; Hobson, 1982). These were discussed in Chapter 2 in terms of their place in a history of work on media audiences. These studies provide a methodological starting point for the approach deployed in this thesis. At first glance, this seems odd because these studies are quite different from each other, and have different objects of concern from those motivating this thesis; however, they share with each other, and with this thesis, a central focus on how the meaning in representations gets produced.

D'Acci explores the production processes, texts and viewer and public responses as they interact in the making of the American police drama series *Cagney and Lacey*.

Hobson's, and Buckingham's case studies are of British soap operas *Crossroads*, and *EastEnders* respectively, and the interaction between production and reception. These are all studies of popular television drama series, while this thesis is concerned with projects that are marginal within the institutions producing them, and are not exhibited on prime time television. Finally, of course, the projects explored in this thesis are based on non-fiction experiences produced by the audience themselves, in conjunction with the institutions.

The methodological approach employed in these studies of production, text and reception is fundamentally informative to the approach of this thesis for two reasons. First, the studies discussed all use a case study approach looking at specific texts - not

the soap or police drama in general - but specific examples of those genres. Second, and most importantly, the studies discussed are all interested in the processes through which meaning is made and remade in those specific cases and, to address this concern, all these authors deem it necessary to take account of the production context, and the textual outputs as shaped through that context, as D'Acci writes of her case study of *Cagney and Lacey*:

It investigates the “struggle over meanings” – specifically the meanings of woman, women and femininity; the role of television networks, production companies, production teams, and publicity firms in generating and circulating these meanings; the way in which TV viewers, the press and numerous interest groups produce meanings and counter meanings of their own; and how all these meanings clash and compete for social and semiotic space and power. [...] This book is also a “case study” of the U.S. television program *Cagney and Lacey*, because that series provides a crushingly clear illustration of the process I am examining: the cultural construction of femininity and the multifold battles over its definitions (D'Acci, 1994, p. 2).

While the methodology for the present study is informed by the approach of these case studies that have employed the production-text-audience approach, it takes a different approach in two ways. First, this thesis seeks to explore cases from two different contexts – those of public service broadcasting and public museums – and, consequently, this study deals with each single case in less depth than if it were the sole focus of the research. Second, and more fundamental, this thesis does not explore the reception contexts as part of the case study, instead focusing on the audience in its activity as participant in production, a focus to which I return below. First, I turn to studies of production that provide important models for my exploration of the production process and the production of meaning.

Studies of production

Studies of the production of news have been particularly common in this field of research, and other studies have followed the production processes of particular programmes (Dornfeld, 1998; Schlesinger, 1978; Silverstone, 1985). Studies of production have employed participant observation, such as in Tuchman's landmark study of a newsroom (Tuchman, 1978). More recently, Born's landmark ethnographic study of the BBC, rather than focusing on the production of a specific programme, or genre, has focused on the more general shape and state of the contemporary BBC in its political and historical context. Born used interview and documentary analysis, as well

as observation at key events (Born, 2004). The use of the term 'ethnography' in media studies has led to debate, as Lull noted: 'Ethnography has become an abused buzzword in our field' (Lull, 1988, p. 242). Nevertheless, drawing on ethnographic approaches has become a key method in media studies research on the production process and media institutions, in addition to playing a major role in research on audiences, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Texts in context

Burn and Parker call for a renewed place for what they label a *social semiotic* textual analysis (Burn & Parker, 2003). They summarise the histories of media studies, and note that the emphasis has shifted from textual interpretation and speculations about spectators (film theory) to analysis of *how* audiences make meaning. They also suggest that the political economic approaches have facilitated the analysis of how texts are shaped by external political and economic forces, but not of how texts are actually constructed:

The legacy of these histories, we believe, makes it easier to study how media texts are produced and consumed than to study the texts themselves – or how the making of meaning is something that happens in a complex series of interactions between producer, text and reader (Burn & Parker, 2003, p. 3).

Textual analysis has been heavily criticised in media studies, because audience research has clearly shown that different members of the audience understand texts in widely diverse ways, and clearly the researcher is also a member of the audience, so the idea that the expert critic has the authority to say what a text ultimately means is called into question. However, attention to how texts are constructed is a key aspect of exploring processes of mediation. How, for example, does the way the self-representations are displayed appear to shape the meaning? Moreover, when textual analysis is used in conjunction with other methods, the drawbacks are rendered less problematic: we are not relying on an analysis of the texts to say what they mean, but rather adding a consideration of what the texts consist of to the exploration of processes of mediation.

A research design that incorporates exploration of the production processes, attention to the textual outputs, and exploration of audience activity enables holistic understanding

of the projects, and the provision of expanded answers to the research questions, as Van Zoonen notes:

Multiple methods of data collection (and of data analysis for that matter) resulting from the triangulation principle will modify the weaknesses of each individual method and thus greatly enhance the quality and value of the interpretative research projects (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 139).

This thesis is focused on how self-representations are mediated from the different perspectives of the many stakeholders involved in their production. The use of a range of methods will make it possible to address the research focus on *processes* of mediation. Here, the notion of triangulation comes into play. For example, if a particular way of constructing 'ordinary people' can be seen in the interviews, the texts, and in the internal documents, then the claim that this is a dominant construction holds more force.

Atton's argument for a focus on process echoes a general move in media studies (Atton cites Silverstone's *Why Study the Media*, 1999). Processes of production are important to an understanding of all kinds of media, whether or not the boundaries between producer and audience are particularly challenged, as Dornfeld notes:

The capacity to work between producer's interpretations of their behaviour, observations of the work process itself, and the texts (and artefacts) produced offers the researcher a rich, multileveled approach to a given communicative form (Dornfeld, 1998, p. 15).

Where there is an explicit claim that the boundaries between producers and audiences *are* challenged, then exploration of the processes of production enables investigation of that claim. Further, when the finished text is not regarded as *more* important than the processes of its production, then an exploration of these processes is key to understanding the object of investigation. Processes of production are meant broadly here, to talk about media production in the traditional sense, but to talk also about the *productions of meaning* that take place across sites of production, text and reception.

Participating Audiences and Audiences Participating in Production

In the growing body of research that addresses the audience who participates in media productions, the production process is sometimes explored as part of the focus on participation by the audience. This kind of research has most often taken the form of

case studies of participation in specific programmes. As noted in the introduction to Chapter 2, research has explored participants in game shows, talk radio, and reality television, for example. Interviews have been used to explore the motivations of participants in, and sometimes producers of, talk shows and dating programmes, and to address the specifics of the programmes and formats in which participants take part (see, for example, Carpentier, 2001; Gamson, 1998; Grindstaff, 1997; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Priest, 1995; Syvertsen, 2001; Ytreberg, 2004). In a discussion of the motivations of participants in a Norwegian dating programme, Syvertsen suggests that 'the media is increasingly becoming "something to do" rather than just something to watch' (Syvertsen, 2001, p. 19).

Couldry explores three different situations in which 'ordinary people' do come into contact with the media. Couldry's methodological approach is instructive because, although he does not frame his approach as a multiple case study, he is concerned with investigating multiple examples of a particular phenomenon. Further, Couldry's concern is 'ordinary people's' interaction with 'media worlds' and so, while different from a study of self-representations by members of the public, there is some common ground in terms of the interaction of the audience (that is the members of the public) with the media, as actors (Couldry, 2000a).

Scholars in media studies have variously conceptualised practices that appear to challenge the boundaries between the positions of producer, and of audience. For example, Atton suggests that, in alternative media practices, the boundaries between producer and audience have long been challenged, in the figure of the *reader-writer*. Atton argues that a major characteristic of alternative media is to be found in the way that the 'active audience' of media studies research (discussed in Chapter 2) is transformed to become an active audience in a way that moves the notion of 'activity' beyond the ability to understand media meanings according to one's own viewing context:

There is hybridity in audiences, too: the notion of the reader-writer transforms the Fiskean active audience from an individual engaged in a type of everyday social action to a creator and communicator of symbolic materials out of the everyday, at once a media producer, a witness and a media critic. (Atton, 2002, p. 151).

Atton's work on alternative media also provides an important model of the use of a multiple case study that is interested in the production of meaning. Atton employs a multiple case study research design to explore a range of contemporary media projects, and he also focuses on *processes* of production, taking into account production, text and reception contexts, while arguing that these distinctions are troubled in the context of the type of media with which he is concerned (Atton, 2002).

While Atton suggests that the blurring of the boundary between producer and audience has long been a characteristic of alternative media, he argues, with many others, that the advent of the internet and of computer mediated communication (CMC) have intensified this characteristic (*ibid.*). Versions of this same claim are becoming familiar with regard to the activity of the audience as participants in the media (Livingstone, 2005a; 2005b). Audience involvement in media production does not only include their participation in programmes like those discussed above but, of course, also describes audience involvement in the production of media content more generally, and is very often linked to the affordances of new digital technologies (Fornas, Klein, Ladendorf, Sunden, & Svenigsson, 2002; Jenkins, 2006).

Studies have explored the point of view of participants producing media, and this is most often in the area of community media (see, for example, Gunnell, 2002; Rodriguez, 2001), which is unsurprising since there have not been many examples of audiences producing media in mainstream media institutions. Related work explores the participation of the public in community arts (see, for example, Carey & Sutton, 2004; Mattingly, 2001) and museums (see, for example, Hemming, 1997; Macdonald & Silverstone, 1990), through observations and interviews with those leading the projects, as well as with those participating. The BBC's *Video Diaries* and *Video Nation* projects (see Chapter 1) have long been taken as exemplary (and rare) examples of publicly funded self-representation (see, for example, Carpentier, 2003; Carpentier, 2005; Dovey, 1993). Studies of *Video Diaries* and *Video Nation* have focused on the textual forms themselves and on interviews with the producers.

This thesis makes a new contribution to these areas of research that together can be characterised as being concerned with what happens when audiences take part in production. The contribution this study makes is of a multiple case study approach that addresses one kind of participation, namely self-representation, suggesting that where

the audience is involved in the production of their own self-representation it is a specific type of participation in media and culture.

Designing A Multiple Case Study of *London's Voices and Capture Wales*

From audiences participating in production to audiences producing self-representations

As discussed in theoretical terms in Chapter 2, when there is a challenge to the distinction between the roles of audience and producer, then the *production-text-audience* model requires development in order to conceptualise the processes at work. At the same time, the design of an empirical research project requires the identification of sites, persons, and objects to research, and therefore necessitates the elaboration of a working model, however imperfect. While the *production-text-audience* model remains useful, it required modification for the present study. In the context of the kinds of project investigated here, the implied boundaries between the production, text and reception aspects of the mediation of self-representation are explicitly challenged.

Processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation

The notion of processes of *institutional, textual and cultural* mediation that was introduced in Chapter 2 offers a particular view of the audience part of the *production-text-audience* model. To recap, the audience input and point of view is described in this conception as *processes of cultural mediation*. The term *cultural mediation* is used here to indicate that the cultural formations of the audience member, as they are brought to bear on the production process, are the object of the analysis. There are, of course, problems with this use of the term *culture*, since the term *cultural mediation* could be used to describe all the kinds of mediation (and more besides) that are explored in this study. Further, the term *culture* is also used in this thesis to refer to the institutions from which the two case studies are drawn - *the institutions of the cultural sphere*.

Nevertheless this term is used because, despite these issues, the term *processes of cultural mediation* is the most accurate way to describe what is being analysed. The concept of three dimensions of the mediation process (*institutional, textual and cultural*)

takes into account the challenge to the boundaries between production and audience taking place in the projects in question. This change, in the position (and activity) of the audience, is one of the focuses of this research. Thus, the audience that is investigated in this study is the audience that is representing itself by becoming (albeit temporarily) a producer. This conceptual model recognises this fact, and positions it as an important development for media studies research on audiences.

The case study excludes other kinds of audiences

As discussed earlier, an emphasis on process is suitable for addressing research questions which ask *what* has been constructed and *how*. Further, an emphasis on process facilitates a focus on the construction of the boundaries between production, text and reception. Of course, every approach leaves related questions unanswered. The methodological approach taken in this study does not, for example, attend to broader historical and international contexts; neither does it allow the contextualisation of self-representation with regard to representations of the 'ordinary' across other more ubiquitous genres like, for example, soap operas and reality TV. And the approach taken in this study does not allow exploration of the audience *for* self-representations. In this study an under-researched aspect of being in the audience is addressed - the audience who take up the opportunity to represent themselves.

Of course, questions remain regarding other manifestations of the audience. For example, how do members of the audience who see the self-representations explored in this study respond to them? An audience study of this kind is a different project, since a whole set of different methodological issues are involved in recruiting and exploring the audience for self-representations. As discussed in Chapter 2, the last twenty years of debate about audience research has (among other things) challenged the usefulness of studying audiences for specific texts (see Couldry, 2000b). Therefore, research that would want to address audience response to self-representations should, in attending to these criticisms and developments, investigate audience response to a wide range of self-representations. A meaningful investigation of the wider audience for self-representations, or rather the place of such kinds of texts in the lives of people who consume media, would arguably need to go beyond the boundaries of the case study approach employed in the present study.

If we accept Ang's point, discussed in Chapter 2, that programme makers, researchers and the media industries construct 'the audience', then a modest enquiry is one that seeks to investigate what certain audiences are doing in a particular time and place. This also allows us to contribute to the literature that explores what it is possible for members of the audience to do, more generally.

A further manifestation of the audience is invoked by projects that produce audience self-representations, and that is the audience of the future. One could explore how the future audience is imagined, but the actual responses of a future audience are clearly impossible to investigate. What the notion of the future audience makes clear, though, is how all versions of the audience are constructs. How these constructs are invoked and imagined by the producers and the participating audience who are investigated in this study is explored as part of an exploration of the processes of cultural mediation.

Research questions

This research project focuses on current activity in the public domain. Its contention is that public funding is supporting a range of projects, mainly small scale but with the occasional larger scale example, which invite members of the public to represent themselves in a range of media and cultural spaces. In these projects, the *process* by which those people construct that representation is frequently a part of that invitation. Most of these projects are short to medium term and temporary; they culminate in the exhibition of the self-representations that have been made under the auspices of the projects (in addition, the material is frequently archived).

The research addressed a series of questions in order to explore the primary research concern with how processes of mediation shape self-representation in public sector projects in the cultural sphere.

- Firstly, what does the self-representation actually consist of in each case study? That is, who is represented and who is excluded from taking part in the process and, once selected, which aspects of self get represented, which do not and what informs the edit decision-making process?

- Secondly, what do the producers and members of the public who participate see as their gains from the process? That is, what do producers see as the benefits of enabling these self-representations, and what do members of the public say they get out of taking part?
- Thirdly, to what extent, if any, do the points of view of the producers and members of the public who participate converge, and in what ways do they differ?
- Finally, the research will explore what criteria content producers and members of the public deploy in order to evaluate instances of self-representation. For example, do they think in terms of quality, or is this something imposed by commentators about the material, rather than by those involved in its production?

In the course of addressing the primary investigation of mediation processes, the wider research ultimately asks, *why* public funding is being directed towards this activity, and why some members of the audience take up the invitation to represent themselves. The research questions, in the end, address the wider question - *what* is the role and significance (if they are significant) of projects like these? To refer to the broader theoretical context in which this case study is located, the question concerns whether we should understand these projects in terms of their role in democratic terms or alternatively, in governance terms. To address these questions two cases were chosen, as discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, Chapter 1. The two cases were *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* and, as discussed in Chapter 1, they were chosen as exemplary of publicly funded self-representation.

A multiple case study using a range of qualitative methods

The case study design is an appropriate method for addressing the detail of how processes of mediation are made manifest in projects that offer new processes of production, and which challenge the boundaries between production and reception. The focus on the detail of production processes that a case study allows, facilitates attention to what is going on in projects which appear to challenge existing power relations between media and cultural institutions and members of the public. This detailed analysis will also provide directions for future research into the now widespread production of self-representation.

Bearing in mind, as Yin points out, that the case study is not a methodology but rather a research design, this chapter now explores the methods used in this thesis. A range of qualitative methods are deployed in order to explore in detail the processes of mediation shaping self-representation in the two cases, and to look specifically at the processes of *institutional, textual, and cultural* mediation. A qualitative or interpretative approach allows exploration of the detail of how those involved speak about, and carry out, these projects, and these questions could not be explored through quantitative methods. Answers to such questions will be suggestive for considering other public sector projects that fund and facilitate and produce self-representations by members of the public. Furthermore, answers to the question of how processes of mediation shape self-representation in the two cases, *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, will suggest further ways to evaluate and to assess the very broad range of self-representations, produced in publicly funded, commercial, and individual contexts, that are circulating in the current moment. In the Conclusion to the thesis I return to the broader implications of the findings generated in this multiple case study. I now turn to a discussion of the methods deployed.

Facilitating the comparison of unlike data

This chapter has addressed the reasons why a multiple case study is the research design best suited to address the research questions posed in this thesis. However, a challenge arising from a multiple case study is to make meaningful comparison of unlike data and justify the conclusions drawn. How are two projects compared? One project at the medium sized, publicly funded Museum of London is an umbrella project, *London's Voices*, made up of eighteen smaller projects of different shapes and sizes. *London's Voices* involves different levels and kinds of participation by the public, it involves a core team of museum professionals, and an array of activities and outcomes, from displays in local libraries to web exhibitions. *Capture Wales* is run by the New Media Department of BBC Wales and involves a core team of BBC professionals. It repeats one activity – the *Capture Wales* workshop - and produces one kind of outcome - the digital story, which is displayed on the website and, in some cases, on BBC Television. It is certainly a challenge to compare projects from two institutional contexts, producing different kinds of texts through varied processes of production. At the same time these projects share the status of publicly funded projects inviting and facilitating self-representation.

The data collection and storage were designed to facilitate exploration of what is distinct and what is similar about *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Initial meetings were held with the producers of each project in order to identify the key persons involved in the production of the self-representations, who would be interviewed, and to identify what the texts - the self-representations - were in each case. These meetings also included negotiation over the degree of observation that would be undertaken as part of the research. Finally they were used to discuss what kinds of internal documents were produced in the projects, and which documents could be made available.

Pilot interviews with the producers of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, and thematic analysis of the two project websites, were used to refine the research questions and to identify initial themes to be explored in the fieldwork, which were:

- 'Ordinary people'.
- 'Community'.
- Innovation in form and technology.
- Quality of process and of outcome.

This approach follows Boyatzis' description of the standard use of thematic analysis:

The use of thematic analysis involves three distinct stages: Stage I, deciding on sampling and design issues; Stage II, developing themes and a code; and Stage III, validating and using the code. Within the second stage, there are three different ways to develop a thematic code: (a) theory driven, (b) prior data or research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 29).

As discussed above, the multiple case study was the overall design, and a collection system was worked out in order to facilitate the comparison of unlike data and to standardise the data collected in each case, to the extent that such standardisation was possible. This part of the research design is addressed in Boyatzis' Stage I. In this study a combination of theory driven and inductive approaches led to the development of themes, described here by Boyatzis as Stage II. Or, put another way, the theoretical framework and pilot work together led to the identification of the themes listed above, then immersion in the two production contexts drew on ethnographic methods in the collection of thick data.

Hansen et al. describe participant observation as an umbrella term that encompasses interviewing, observing, listening, watching, and gathering any printed material generated by the organisation under observation (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). The present study explores production processes through participant observation: interviews with production personnel and assessment of the documentary materials pertaining to the production. Because the research questions address the production of meaning, with policy as a broader context, the study of the production processes is only one part of the empirical work and, because this part must not be privileged over the others, there are limits to the extent that this study uses ethnographic methods, it does not follow the routines of the institutions, but does involve the observation of key events.

The fieldwork, then, consisted of taped interviews, participations and the maintenance of a field notebook. Throughout the fieldwork, regular supervisions were used to discuss and refine emergent themes. In addition, papers considering emerging themes were written up as the work progressed, in order to keep refining the theoretical framework in relation to the data collection. This process is analogous to what Ezzy refers to as peer debriefings in the case of empirical research projects that are carried out by more than one person (Ezzy, 2002).

The research produced a range of different kinds of data, including transcripts of individual and group interviews, field notebooks, internal project documents, project publicity materials, and self-representations that were displayed in temporary exhibitions and on websites. The self-representations on websites were collected in the form of screen grabs, and notes were made about exhibitions. CDs of digital stories produced in *Capture Wales* were collected from the BBC. The empirical work began with the construction of an overview of the structure of the projects, which provides a framework for comparison by deconstructing the projects under observation into broadly comparable parts. The data collected in each case study was divided into the following seven categories:

- Interviews with institutional personnel.
- Interviews with partner personnel.
- Interviews with participants.
- Observation of production processes.

- Analysis of selected outputs/texts.
- Analysis of internal institutional and project documents.
- Analysis of publicity material.

These categories were designed to be broad enough to encompass the different kinds of data collected in each case study and, at the same time, to facilitate comparison of like data. In addition, this design makes clear any absence of a certain kind of data, thereby highlighting the differences between *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. For example, this structure indicates that both projects use websites as a form of publicity, but that the BBC has also issued press releases about *Capture Wales*, whereas the Museum of London has less often issued press releases about the *London's Voices* projects. The detail of the empirical data that was collected in each of the seven categories listed above is provided in a table at the end of this chapter (Figure 1).

A combination of in-depth interviews and observation was employed, and examples of texts were collected where appropriate; in the *London's Voices* case study, the texts were often temporary and not collectable, such as temporary exhibitions in local libraries. In these cases notes were taken at exhibits. The same interview guide was used for the interviews in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, although this was modified to address obvious differences, such as the fact that *Capture Wales* is a BBC project, while *London's Voices* took place at the Museum of London. Questions for the group and individual interviews carried out in each case study were designed to leave room to explore distinctiveness between the projects, and to enable commonalities to emerge. The interview guides are provided in Appendix B. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in full. Brief notes were made during observations, and full notes were made following a period of observation. Notes were also made following interviews about the role of the researcher and about any issues that arose during the process of data collection.

Researching the institutions

Four months were spent interviewing production personnel in each case study, in turn. During this time, key events, such as the digital storytelling conference hosted by BBC Wales, were observed, and key members of the production team were interviewed. In addition, workshops were attended, as were also assessment meetings, exhibitions and

performances. A full list of the events observed is included in a table at the end of this chapter (Figure 1).

The producers of the two case studies were first approached informally and, following initial expressions of interest, they were given a research proposal. The institutions were asked if the researcher could interview team members, observe production processes, access internal documentation, and resultant texts, and be put in touch with participating members of the public - and if the researcher could follow each of the projects for a period of three to four months.

The institutional representatives were happy to take part in the research. This is perhaps an advantage of the focus on public service institutions, since access to powerful people is often not at all easy to accomplish. Indeed as Gerson and Horowitz note, once access is gained, maintenance of that access does depend on the researcher sustaining good relations with those who have allowed the access, and this can affect the shaping of the research questions as the researcher strives to be critical and yet not to alienate the research subject:

The research could continue, but the research strategy was altered and the research questions reformulated. This is a particularly telling example of how the choice of – and access to – a site shapes the kinds of questions that can be posed and the kinds of answers that can be found (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 208).

Spending time observing team meetings and following production processes meant that it was important, and sometimes difficult, to keep distance from the point of view of the producers of the projects. The producers at BBC Wales and the Museum of London treated the researcher as a peer – middle class professional to middle class professional; this was particularly strong since the producers had a not dissimilar attitude to the researcher, in terms of an interest in both how what they were doing worked, and having their work taken seriously by academics. Indeed, the curators at the Museum of London asked the researcher to contribute a short report for their funding report to the HLF. My standing as a media studies researcher interviewing media and cultural practitioners meant that there were sometimes shared assumptions between the researcher and the representatives of the institutions observed which must, by their nature, be hardest to identify in the analysis.

In the research at *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, team meetings were observed and some internal documents were made available. However, there were some exceptions - for instance, it proved impossible to get access to the budgets of the two projects. This seems strange since the two are publicly funded, but there was some defensiveness encountered in both projects about releasing financial information about projects that were ongoing at the time of the empirical research. Perhaps in retrospect more insistence would have produced results, but I was focused on creating and maintaining a good relationship with the producers and was concerned that, if I argued about the access they were willing to give me, they might have become less inclined to facilitate the research. A fair indication of comparative budgets can be given by looking at numbers of personnel employed, time spent, and equipment used.

Overall, gaining access to institutional representatives and internally produced documents was the most straightforward part of the data collection. Early in the research, dates and times for the interviews were planned and they took place as agreed. However, these were elite interviews and, in carrying them out it often proved difficult to get beyond the story that the interviewees wanted to present to the public, although this did vary according to interviewees. More senior interviewees tended to be more willing to be open and critical about the projects and the institutions, while other interviewees were sometimes more anxious about what they were saying and how it might be used. Many opportunities for observation at both institutions also meant that the research did not rely only on what the interviewees articulated verbally, and interviews with several representatives of each institution meant that individual accounts could be put into a broader context.

Producers did read over their interview transcripts in detail and, on several occasions, rephrasing or omission was requested. This attests to the fact that the institutional representatives were very alert to how they might be portrayed by an academic researcher, and echoes Livingstone et al's recent elite interviews with stakeholders in the current regulation of media and communication. (Livingstone, Lunt, & Miller, 2007). However, most requests for alterations to transcripts were caused by a concern to sound articulate rather than a wish to censor anything that was expressed. Although, on occasion, there was some anxiety about sounding too critical of the institution, even this was usually to do with anxiety that comments might get taken out of context. I was

often told 'well I'll have to trust you, Nancy'. The processes of institutional mediation are discussed in Chapter 5.

Choosing texts for the analysis of self-representation within the case study frame

In this study the focus on process within a case study model provides the logic for the textual analysis, in terms of both which texts are analysed, and of what the 'text' is. The text emerges from the production processes variously as, for example, a website, or a digital story on a website, or word-processed reminiscences on display in a local library. Questions of text are addressed in this study through exploration of what is said about the texts (interviews), how they are made (observation and interviews), and critical textual analysis paying attention to questions of form, genre and narrative (Burn & Parker, 2003; Perkins, 2000). The processes of textual mediation are discussed in Chapter 6.

Researching the participating public

In this study I try to look at the processes of cultural mediation shaping the self-representations that people are making in different settings. The approach taken allows exploration of how producers think of the members of the public who participate, and of the wider audience for the material produced. It also allows investigation of how the people who participate think of themselves: are they still members of the audience, or does the fact of their participation in production alter their membership of the community 'audience'? The methodology employed here allows the research to address what these projects suggest about the analytic category audience. Above all the research addresses how the cultural formations (views, standpoints, experiences and expectations) of the participating public mediate the production of their self-representations. As noted above, there are three conceptual kinds of audience in play here: *participating audience*, *wider audience* and *future audience* (the audience for the archives constructed from these projects). The research focuses on one part of that audience, the *participating audience*. The participating audience is researched through in-depth individual and group interviews, through being observed in the making of the self-representation and, finally, in terms of how these participating members of the audience are conceived of by the project producers.

Requests to observe production workshops in which members of the public made self-representations were initially met with reluctance and involved sometimes lengthy negotiations. The main concern seemed to be whether the presence of a researcher/observer would be obstructive and distracting and would make participants uncomfortable. Producers at *Capture Wales* did not want me to participate in a workshop, and their rationale was that they were publicly funded by the BBC to offer workshops to members of the public living in Wales. The workshops were expensive and had limited places; they did not want to use up a place with someone who was not a member of their target audience. At the same time, the *Capture Wales* producers were unsure whether they wanted someone present at the workshop who was neither a member of the production team nor participating in the workshop. The concern was that an observer would upset the safe and private environment created in the workshop, particularly the storytelling part of the workshop, in which the aim was to create a space in which the individuals would feel free to tell personal stories, make mistakes and expose themselves without feeling self-conscious. There was concern that the presence of an observer might negatively affect this process.

In the event, the *Capture Wales* producers allowed my full participation in a 'training the trainers' workshop for interested parties who might teach digital storytelling to others. These training workshops were to fulfil the project aim to eventually make digital storytelling sustainable beyond the BBC. In addition, I was allowed to attend a full five day digital storytelling workshop with members of the public, and the participants were asked if I could observe every aspect. They decided that I could stay and, during the storytelling circle, many participants claimed they had forgotten I was there at all. However, over the rest of the days, the observer role did sometimes become a participant one, for example, when I was asked for my opinion on the digital stories in progress in the production workshop.

Access to observe the production workshops was also sometimes difficult in the *London's Voices* case. While *Capture Wales* involved the repetition of a standardised workshop, *London's Voices* consisted of a range of different sub-projects with specifically targeted community groups, only some of which led to self-representations. In one instance the challenge to the observation of a workshop came from the participants - while the Museum of London producers were happy to allow observation

of the storytelling and production of self-representations at a South London library reading group, the participants seemed uncomfortable with the presence of a researcher.

This particular observation session was different from those that had taken place at *Capture Wales* because, rather than being a forgotten observer in the corner of the room, I was asked to sit in the circle but not participate, which was awkward. Furthermore, the group was much smaller and, rather than being all white and including a large proportion of middle class people, this group was a mixture of middle and working class Afro-Caribbean British people. It is not surprising that this group were reticent with me, and suspicious of my attempts, as a white middle class woman researcher, to research their experience. As Reynolds writes:

...the research (im)balance between white female researcher and Black female research participant prevalent in much of social research points to the particular way that race, class, and gender intersect and directly impact on research relationships. The commonly held research position of the white female researcher and Black female research participant is indicative of the racial privilege and power that white women possess in relation to Black women at a societal level (Reynolds, 2002, p. 304).

Reynolds, writing about her research on the mothering experience of black mothers, referred to women's reluctance to participate in the research, regardless of the fact that the researcher was a black woman herself. Much of her recruitment relied in the end on gate-keepers:

In my study the 'gatekeepers' wanted to make sure the research would not be used to further pathologize Black mothers and the wider Black community (Reynolds, 2002, p. 301).

The involvement of gatekeepers does not mean there are no problems. The leader of the reading group in question agreed in advance to my presence and claimed the participants were all happy to participate, yet, at the group, there was disinterest, distrust and also annoyance that I had come along to a leisure activity to pursue my own agenda. One woman in this group sighed loudly and commented that she was very busy in her professional life, came here to relax, and now here I was wanting more from her. It is telling that I cannot quote from this participant as she did not sign the consent form even though she did in the end take a dominant role in the discussion about *London's Voices*.

Whenever production processes with participants and producers at either *Capture Wales* or *London's Voices* were observed, the researcher was allied with the producers, because it was they who had invited me along, and introduced me to the participants. If a participant had introduced the researcher to the Museum of London representatives, rather than the other way around, the power dynamics would have been entirely different. In the event, I was a representative of another institution - a university - soliciting participants' stories alongside the representatives of other institutions - the BBC and the Museum of London.

Approaching the institutions first meant that access to the participating members of the public was only available through the institutional representatives, who functioned as gate keepers between the researcher and the participants. Because of this approach the process of interviewing the public was slower than anticipated. An advertisement was placed on the *Capture Wales* website and in the newsletter sent to all previous participants. In addition, three workshops were attended at which contact with participants was established. A group interview was held with the participants from a workshop that had been observed and almost all the participants attended. In addition, individual interviews were held with four of the participants who responded to advertisements.

The *London's Voices* participants were also recruited via institutional personnel. The researcher was invited to meet five groups: two groups who had taken part in *Holidays of a Lifetime*, two who had taken part in *16 - 19* and one group who had taken part in *Lewisham Voices*. In the event, one of the *16 - 19* groups did not work as participants turned out, at the interview, to be under age and so parental consent forms were required. Only one parental consent form was returned so an individual interview was held with that person. In addition, email interviews were conducted with two participants in *Postcards to London*. Lastly, other participants were met informally at events held at the museum.

Attitudes to the researcher varied according to the social characteristics of the researched, and the consequent relationship between researcher and researched. The researcher encountered people who wanted to do their best to help a young woman with her project (the elderly members of a working class South London reminiscence group); who wanted to use the event of being interviewed to explain how participation in

London's Voices helped their visibility as members of the public in the UK (a North London Asian women's group); who were suspicious of, and disinterested in, being researched by another institution (members of a South London Afro-Caribbean reading group, see discussion above); who were happy to explain to the researcher what they got out of the experience – in order to make sure she understood (mostly middle class members of a *Capture Wales* workshop).

The methods used in researching the participants (cultural mediation) were individual in-depth semi-structured interview, semi-structured group interview, email interview, observation and participant observation. The choice of particular method deployed in any given situation was reached via negotiation with participants and, as in the above example of 16 - 19, the choice of group or individual interview was often decided by participants. Group interviews, for example, were employed when after observing a workshop the participants agreed to meet the researcher again, but suggested that they would like to use the occasion to reunite as a group. Carrying out participant observation by making my own digital story in a *Capture Wales* workshop meant I had experienced at first hand both the training and the workshop, and the strange and exposing business of telling a personal story to a group of strangers. The fact that participants knew that I had experienced, as a participant, the process in which they were taking part may have encouraged them to talk more freely.

A serious drawback of the approach employed in this study is that members of the public who had very negative views of their participation in *London's Voices* or *Capture Wales* did not tend to contact me. In addition, previous research has shown that working class people in particular are reluctant to participate in research, due to an increasing suspicion of institutional and governmental agencies (Skeggs, 1997). In the event, these issues may have been more pertinent to the recruitment of *Capture Wales* participants, since the *London's Voices* projects were carried out with already existing groups from minority communities, so that the issue of managing to recruit only white middle class interviewees could not arise in that instance. The approach employed did ultimately mean that the access to the participants was not systematic. In the case of *London's Voices*, access relied on who the producers/gatekeepers contacted and who responded to that contact. In the case of *Capture Wales*, access depended on both which workshops the producers/ gatekeepers invited me to, and which previous participants responded to my advertisement. Despite these drawbacks, the research did manage to

investigate the point of view of a wide range of participants in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Time management

A period of approximately four months was allocated to each case study. During this time the focus was on the case at hand, and only absolutely unavoidable, and minimal, involvement with the other project took place. Thus in the four months focused on each case study the question of comparison and similarity between the cases was left to one side and the focus was on gathering, in Geertz's terms, 'thick description'. September to December (inclusive) 2003 was spent focused on the *London's Voices* case study. Following from this, January to April (inclusive) 2004 was spent focused on the *Capture Wales* case study. In some cases interviews were postponed by the interviewees and therefore took place outside this time frame. In addition, the field work was planned so that return visits could be made to each case study, after the completion of the data collection. In practice this final return interview was carried out with a producer of *Capture Wales* but not with a producer of *London's Voices*.

Finally, after the completion of the case studies, two interviews were used to provide some context. Firstly, a representative of a key funding body, The Heritage Lottery Fund, was interviewed. Secondly, the editor of *Video Nation* in its current online form, was interviewed, *Video Nation* being a key marker in the history of publicly funded self-representation. These interviews sought to locate the emergent themes of the two case studies in the broader context in which they exist, and from which they have been selected.

Ethical research practice

Plummer notes two approaches to ethical practice in social research;

For some time – and at the broadest of levels – two positions have been regularly outlined as baselines for ethical positions in social research: the *ethical absolutist* and the *situational relativist* (Plummer, 2001, p. 226).

Plummer notes that the 'ethical absolutist' position is taken up by professional bodies such as the British Sociological Association, whereby guidelines for how research must

always be carried out are enshrined in professional codes of conduct. Plummer quotes Kirsch's list of the minimal requirements which include:

written informed consent; explaining that participants are free to withdraw from the research; explaining any risks; ensuring confidentiality; protecting well-being, reputations, employment etc; ensuring equitable selection of participants (Kirsch 1999: 41-2 in Plummer, 2001, p. 227).

Plummer goes on to note that the 'ethical absolutist' position can be problematic since it does not allow for any flexibility in the research. He suggests that the other position, the 'situational relativist', while also problematic, does allow the researcher to judge the situation on its merits. Plummer, in the end, rejects 'the false polarity' of these positions and notes:

Individual decision taking around ethical concerns could surely take place within wider frameworks of guidance? (Plummer, 2001, p. 227).

In the research carried out for this thesis, in discussion with the interviewees, personal judgement was combined with the use of standard procedures. The research was explained verbally to every research participant, in terms of the uses to which it would be put, and how it would proceed, for example, when and where tape recorders would be used. Research participants were told that they could withdraw from the research at any time and could request that the tape be turned off. Verbal consent was obtained from each participant.

Written consent was obtained in all interviews with members of the public, and parental consent forms were used for young people under the age of sixteen (see Appendix C). Consent forms were also used with employees of the Museum of London, but the BBC gatekeeper specifically suggested that verbal informed consent would be adequate, so this was used in interviews with producers for the *Capture Wales* case study.

It was explained to all interviewees that full transcripts of the interviews would be provided and that, if any individuals wanted particular quotes unattributed or removed, then this would be done. As discussed above, the opportunity to alter transcripts after the interview was taken up by producers but not by participants. This different reaction to the opportunity to change the transcript reflected a different degree of understanding of how the interviews could be represented in the academic setting and, of course, this

points to an unequal sense of power and entitlement on the part of the institutional representatives as compared with the members of the public. However, at the same time some members of the public deferred completing consent forms. Thus, in the case of the South London library reading group (discussed above), verbal consent was given and the interview proceeded. However, the interviewees had requested that they send the consent forms at a later date as they did not want to spend any more of *their* reading group time on *my* project. It then proved difficult to obtain the consent forms from this group, eventually they were sent but the names on the forms did not all match those who had been at the interview. This was a less direct way of withdrawing consent from participation in the project.

In agreement with the key representatives/gatekeepers at each participating institution, the names and job titles of the employees working on the two case study projects were used in the data collection, and in the transcription. These people's names are in the public domain and associated publicly with the projects in question. Further, in order to write sensibly about a stakeholder's particular perspective, it is necessary to state their job title and, in relatively small-scale projects, it would then be difficult to preserve their anonymity. The decision to use real names and job titles is standard practice in work on media institutions, see for example Livingstone et al.'s recent work on media and communications regulation (Livingstone, Lunt, & Miller, 2007). On the other hand anonymity has also been provided, see for example Born's exploration of the BBC, in which she refers to job positions in general terms, but does not identify speakers (Born, 2004).

In this study the names of the members of the public were all changed by me because discussion in the early phase of the research showed that some people wanted anonymity; therefore all names were changed for the sake of consistency. However, particularly in the case of *Capture Wales*, this has been an odd decision since the names of the people in question are all in the public domain attached to their digital stories. Further some people actively questioned why they were being made anonymous. The anonymisation of interviewees comments was retained even while their names appear might appear in the discussion of texts in the public domain, in Chapter 6.

Within the frame of the multiple case study, the analysis drew on ethnographic methods, textual and thematic analysis, and a concern with discourse. Thus, the coding of the interviews and other document based data focused on the way people spoke as well as

what they spoke about. Attention was paid to the terms people used and equally to those that they seemed to avoid. As is often (usually) the case in social research, a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to the data analysis were used in this study. A deductive approach was employed so that a particular framing of the research meant that, before the empirical work began, it had been decided that mediation, self-representation, and public culture were important. However, a more inductive approach was brought into play as the data collection and analysis developed, and the theoretical framework was refined in relation to the findings.

Data Analysis

Developing analysis across the case studies

As the data collection and coding progressed, themes that had been identified in the pilot stage of the research, namely:

- 'Ordinary people'
- 'Community'
- Innovation in form and technology
- Quality of process and of outcome

were added to with the following:

- Expertise
- Expectations
- Self-representation - recording for the future or participation in the present.

These seven themes were then grouped as follows:

- 'Ordinary people' and 'Community'
- Innovation, Quality, Expertise and Expectations
- Self-representation – recording for the future or participation in the present'

The data collection reached a point where every interview and every observational note appeared to fit into these themes, a stage in the research which qualitative researchers often describe in terms of 'saturation', as Gerson and Horowitz put it:

Over time, as the number of interviews grows, general patterns should begin to take shape out of what once appeared to be unique stories. Collective experiences begin to stand out from interesting but idiosyncratic anecdotes. And it becomes possible to anticipate the answers before the questions are asked. When new interviews are more likely to confirm earlier insights than to spark new discoveries, there is a good chance that theoretical saturation has been reached (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 211).

The analysis then proceeded to develop the idea that the themes found in the data could usefully be grouped into four major areas of tension. Four areas of tension were identified as four ways of thinking about the data:

The construction of 'community'

The construction of 'ordinary people'

Defining quality

Purposes of the projects

These headings signal sites of tension, and the argument was developed that these very tensions constituted the key elements of the processes of mediation shaping self-representation in both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*.

Ordinary people and *community* were key constructs, avoided and used strategically.

These terms were deployed in struggles over rhetorical and symbolic power by producers and participants in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. Further, a whole set of other themes linked to these constructions, for example ideas of emotion as proof of authenticity, was linked with the construction of the 'ordinary person' in such a way that ordinary status was shown through the expression of real, authentic emotion.

Tension over how *quality* is defined and marked in the projects similarly encompassed a whole set of themes about, for example, new technology, resources of both time and money and skills of both teachers and learners. Quality is an *idea* then that signals tension over a whole range of themes that emerged as the data was coded.

Finally *purposes* of the projects encompasses a whole set of tensions between the many different stakeholders over what the projects are for. Tensions around the purpose of the projects included ideas about how to define and produce self-representations. Tension over purpose also pointed to ideas about whether or not self-representation was the most important aspect of the project. For example, self-representation is an expedient way to facilitate participation as part of broadening access policies at the Museum of London.

After the analysis of the interview and observational data, the textual analysis focused in detail on genre, form and narrative in a selection of exemplary texts drawn from the projects. The analysis explored how tension in the four key areas was manifested in the texts, and how these tensions themselves constituted the processes of mediation shaping the self-representations produced.

The final step of the data analysis was the loading of all text based and word processed material into a qualitative software package, NVIVO. The aim was to test the analysis that had been developed to ensure that the whole range of collected data was used, and that the importance of the findings had not been over-estimated through, for example, over-reliance on a small selection of the interviews. Computer analysis packages do not remove the work of selection of what to code, how to name it, and how to make themes of it, that the researcher (a subjective person) carries out, or as Fielding puts it:

Qualitative software is, even now, quite limited in the kinds of support it offers for analysis, and there is no prospect that it will ever excuse the need for researchers to think (Fielding, 2002, p. 161).

Nevertheless this use of NVIVO to confirm the themes and analyses developed was reassuring, especially as there was only one person involved in the process of data collection and analysis. For the use of computer packages does ensure a certain level of systematic analysis across the data set, as Fielding notes:

For researchers its benefits include data management capacities unquestionably superior to paper based systems, facilitation of the orderly and accountable practice of analysis, and features which invite us to extract the maximum from our data (Fielding, 2002, p. 176).

Despite being very aware that as researchers, as May notes, we do not collect but rather produce our 'findings' (May, 2002), it was nevertheless striking to find that there did

not seem to be an alternative way of understanding the data, that is I could not see themes which did not fit into the areas of tensions my analyses had reached.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter first discussed the case study method, and the multiple case study was explored as the best way to research the mediation of self-representation in public culture. It was noted that there are losses and gains in the decision to carry out a multiple case study rather than to focus in depth on one case. Specifically the data generated by this research were quite vast, and it is clear that one could easily have focused on either *London's Voices* or *Capture Wales*. Nevertheless, the aim was to look at the mediation of self-representation across institutional settings, and therefore a multiple case study approach was required.

Next, the empirical work on which this thesis rests and to which it contributes was discussed. It was suggested that a focus on process echoed a general move in media studies, but was also especially called for when the boundaries between producer and audience might be being challenged, and when the process of production might be considered as important as the outcomes - the texts.

I then showed the methodological explanation for the move from production-text-audience to a focus on processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation. It was suggested that this way of thinking about the three areas allowed for the fact that the audience member has temporarily become a producer. I argued that this alteration to the producer-text-audience frame also attempted to break down the idea of discrete and bounded positions occupied by producer, text, audience.

A detailed explanation of how the research strategy was operationalised followed. Questions of access to institutions and participating publics were discussed, and the drawbacks of approaching publics via institutions were noted, specifically the fact that this produced an unrepresentative selection of participants to be researched. It was argued that this drawback was preferable in order to ensure that the research would be able to explore the perspectives of both institutions and participants. The way in which the empirical work in the two case studies was carried out in terms of time management was described. Finally, the ethical issues encountered in the research and the ways in

which they were resolved was discussed. It was noted that the power difference between institutional representatives and members of the public with which this thesis is concerned, was clearly apparent at the point of access, even before the empirical work began.

The final section in this chapter detailed the way in which the analysis developed. The discussion then outlined how the idea of a series of four areas of tensions was developed as a way to frame the themes that emerged in the data analysis. Finally the use of qualitative software to check the analysis was discussed. The combination of inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis feels quite risky when it is taking place, and I think it is also unavoidably subjective. I hope I have addressed this by being clear about how I have made my interpretation.

Ironically, as the discussion of analysis shows, the decision to conceptually separate mediation into three dimensions risks the very same reification that the model institution-text-culture sought to redress. The separate treatment of institutional, textual and cultural mediation in the following chapters does not facilitate comparison across institution, text, and culture. In order to address this drawback, the question of how these dimensions of mediation work together is returned to in the conclusion to the thesis, Chapter 8. But it is interesting that the same separation that I sought to break down in my framing of the research ends up being reinstated. This suggests that the separation between audiences and producers in institutions, even when audiences temporarily become producers, is very powerfully entrenched. It has proved impossible not to reproduce that separation, therefore it is clearly still very much in place.

In this thesis I wanted a methodological approach that would make it possible to address the fact that, as is shown in Chapter 3, museums and public service broadcasting are converging in the facilitation of self-representation by members of the public. The research aim to address this happening in different settings means that in the data collection and analysis there is a privileging of similarities between the two cases. The data collection was organised in such a way as to reveal similarities and differences, but perhaps similarities were focused on more in the course of the analysis and in order to make the argument about what these institutions have in common in their facilitation of self-representation. The following three chapters show what the methodological approach and the analytic approach find about how processes of mediation shape self-

representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Next, in the first of three chapters presenting empirical findings, I explore processes of institutional mediation.

Figure 1. Empirical Work: The Two Case Studies

Empirical Work: <i>London's Voices</i>	Empirical Work: <i>Capture Wales</i>
Interviews with Museum Personnel	Interviews with Production Personnel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Cathy Ross, Head of Department, Later London History and Collections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Department, Access and Learning/Project Manager, <i>London's Voices</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Karen Lewis, Project Producer, <i>Capture Wales</i>.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two interviews with Annette Day, Curator Oral History and Contemporary Collecting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, <i>Capture Wales</i>.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three interviews with Sarah Gudgin, Assistant Curator, Oral History and Contemporary Collecting (previously Project Coordinator, <i>London's Voices</i>) – two general interviews, one specifically on selection of material for 16 – 19 website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Gareth Morlais, Senior Content Producer (responsible for website and for Welsh language workshops).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Chandan Mahal, Diversity Manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Gilly Adams, Director, BBC Wales Writers' Unit – runs the 'story circle' part of the workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Victoria Tremble, External Exhibitions Manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Huw Davies, Trainer/Post Production Supervisor (runs post production part of workshop and is ex-participant).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One interview with each of the two researchers, Carwyn Evans and Lisa Jones.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview, David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone conversation (5 minutes) with Emma Trollope, Audience Research.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales.
Interview with Partner Personnel	Interview with Partner Personnel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Development Worker, North London. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kate Strudwick, Caerphilly Council.
Interviews with Participants	Interviews with Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group interview with participants in 16 – 19/North London group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met potential participants at presentation evening for a workshop in

	a South Wales town. Introduced and spoke to people about whether they do or don't intend to apply to do the workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group interview with participants in <i>Lewisham Voices</i> – reminiscence group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Monmouth Workshop – talked to people about expectations and experiences during workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual interview with participant in 16 – 19/Afro-Caribbean Library Young People's Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group interview with participants in Monmouth workshop after the end of the workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group interview with participants in <i>Holidays of a Lifetime</i> – Asian Women's Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four individual interviews with respondents to advertisements on the <i>Capture Wales</i> website and in the <i>Capture Wales</i> newsletter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group interview with participants in <i>Holidays of a Lifetime</i> – Afro-Caribbean Library Adult Reading Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant in a truncated workshop with a combination of BBC associates and members of the public – spoke to people there about the experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email interview with individual participant in <i>Postcards</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended part of May Welsh Language workshop – talked to participants during workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at Tea event with invited participants from the various projects. 	
Observation – Production Processes	Observation – Production Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two <i>London's Voices</i> team meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team morning discussing issues arising from project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One <i>London's Voices</i> Steering Committee meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant in three day Cardiff workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One project evaluation meeting with partner organisation (16 – 19). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at five day workshop in a South Wales town.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One planning meeting with partner organisation (<i>Hospital Radio</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at three day May Welsh Language workshop in North Wales.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two days observing selection of material for <i>Hospital Radio</i> project. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two evenings spent observing workshops for collection of material (<i>Hospital Radio</i>, Wandsworth, pilot work). 	
Outputs/Texts	Outputs/Texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three performances and one associated workshop attended – <i>Colour Contacts</i> artist commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final day of three workshops included screening of the stories made during each workshop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One visit to the Linked artist commission installation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes from screenings during the November Digital Storytelling Conference at BBC Wales, and notes of the way the stories were talked about in terms of the text.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One visit to <i>Holidays of a Lifetime</i> touring exhibition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad analysis of website content.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of various website content: <i>Lewisham Voices/16 – 19/Voices Online Year 3.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected stories subject to detailed analysis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hospital Radio</i> - notes of broadcasts. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Soundspace</i> exhibit notes. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of the postcards from the <i>Postcards</i> project. 	
Document Collection	Document Collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original project proposal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3 Quarterly Reports to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of all documents given to and filled in by potential and actual participants including feedback forms and consent forms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of Team Meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of <i>Capture Wales</i> Newsletter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of Steering Committee Meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They did not have official regular team meetings – hence there are no Minutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation Reports on a range of projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of press cuttings about <i>Capture Wales</i> collected by Press Department (January 2002-October 2003).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents summarising outputs, years 2 and 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capture Wales</i> PI articles and press releases, 2002-2003. (Press Information booklets that are sent weekly to newspapers all over Wales.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document: ‘Contributing to the Museum of London Oral History Collection’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of BBC (2004) <i>Building public value: Renewing the BBC for a digital world</i>. London: BBC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Consent Forms used. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum of London Annual Report 2001-2002. 	
See also Appendix D for full list of documents cited.	See also Appendix D for full list of documents cited.
Publicity Material	Publicity Material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>25 Years of Museum of London: 1976-2001</i> (brochure). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional fliers from the BBC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fliers for a range of London’s Voice sub-projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website as platform for promoting museum’s activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website as a platform for promoting the project.
Observation – Public Events	Observation – Public Events
Oral History Society Annual Conference, 2004, Putting Oral History on Display – included presentations by Curator of <i>London’s Voices</i> about <i>London’s Voices</i> .	International Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, November 2003 – included presentations by members of the project team about BBC Wales’ <i>Capture Wales</i> .

Chapter 5

Processes of Institutional Mediation

Introduction

I now turn to the empirical findings concerning how processes of institutional mediation shape self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The empirical analysis of the data collected in the two cases suggests that *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are produced out of a series of tensions. The idea of tensions as constituting the processes of mediation that this thesis seeks to explore was reached through the analysis described in the previous chapter. These tensions, as I shall show, can be productive and creative and also challenging and problematic. In this chapter, I suggest that mediation in practice is located in precisely the way that tension in specific areas informs and shapes the production of the self-representations that are finally produced in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. In what follows, the ways in which processes of institutional mediation are constituted through four key areas of tension - namely purpose of the projects, defining and achieving quality, the construct 'ordinary people' and the construct 'community' - are explored. The four areas of tensions are then revisited from the perspective of textual mediation and cultural mediation, in the following Chapters 6 and 7.

The present chapter addresses parts of two of the research questions, which were originally addressed to the case studies in the data collection phase of the research, as discussed in Chapter 4. Firstly, what do producers see as the benefits of enabling these self-representations? Secondly, what criteria do the producers working for the institutions deploy in order to evaluate instances of self-representation? The following account draws on a range of data: public speeches, interviews with production personnel, funding proposals, press coverage, internal documents, and two interviews from the broader context in which the two projects exist (an interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research at the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which funded *London's Voices*, and an interview with Carole Gilligan, Editor of *Video Nation* online). Thematic analysis is used to explore the ways in which the projects are

understood and defined by the many stakeholders involved in their production and delivery to audiences.

Producers

In this chapter the term 'producers' is used to refer to staff members at the Museum of London and BBC Wales who are involved in various ways, and to various degrees, in the production of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. The project teams are those most closely involved in the day-to-day production of the projects. In addition, personnel from different levels of the institutions are involved in the funding, production, marketing and display of the self-representations and, in the case of *London's Voices*, the Heritage Lottery Fund is a further stakeholder in the project. For the various stakeholders, the purpose of the self-representations produced is understood differently. It is, of course, hardly surprising that there will be a range of views of projects that take place under the auspices of large institutions like BBC Wales and the Museum of London.

Within the broad context of a range of stakeholders, both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are produced by project teams. Nearly all of the *Capture Wales* team are Welsh and a number are Welsh speaking. A large full-time production team produces *Capture Wales*. The team do not have conflicts with other commitments, and are trained within the aims and intentions of the project.

Very differently, the *London's Voices* team consists of one full time project officer and a number of part time personnel: the Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting and other people drawn from different departments in the museum, all of whom bring to bear on the project the priorities and points of view of those departments.

The project teams producing *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* include people with community arts backgrounds and people with professional skills, as museum curators, or as media professionals. In addition, both projects also work with partner organisations in the community regeneration, community arts, and education sectors. Leaders of the two project teams refer to their team's experience of community and youth work as a strength, but making this point does have the effect also of making a

distinction between these project teams and the rest of the people working in the institutions. The comments suggest that experience in community and youth work is a strength being brought into the institutions, but also that it gives a kind of validity to projects that are doing work with members of the public:

Daniel Meadows: ... the team is almost entirely not BBC, you know, if you look at our regular team. Carwyn who started right at the beginning as a trainee, Welsh speaker came on a traineeship, which is a government financed traineeship for Welsh speaking broadcasters. Karen, although she was here working at the BBC, her whole history has been in the community [...] Gilly, although she's full time BBC now, she had a long history working in the community; she and I both worked at different times for a fabulous theatre organisation called *Welfare State International: The Engineers of the Imagination* which is ... kind of, oh I don't know, make your own celebrations, your own art events, and they've been very successful, going since the early 70s.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

The suggestion, made explicit in the Curator of Oral History, Annette Day's comments below, is that the involvement of people with a community background may even affect change in the institution itself:

Interviewer: And I remember you talking to me about that before, that was interesting, that you wanted, that you had a museum background and you wanted to recruit someone from a more community background, did you say?

Annette Day: Yeah. Yeah that was the idea, someone who could bridge the gap between us as curators and the Access and Learning department as liaison with communities. So Sarah actually came from a non museum background, she'd done a lot of youth and community work. And for projects like Lewisham Voices and Holidays it was really valuable. And she's now become the assistant curator of oral history, so in a sense maybe Voices has changed the way in which we see the role of the oral history section.

Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

Capture Wales and *London's Voices* are both relatively small-scale and quite marginal projects that are taking place in large institutions. This marginal status notwithstanding, the project teams consist of middle class, media and museum professionals; expertise and statuses that often distinguish them from the public they work with. For a detailed discussion of the projects see Chapter 1, Introduction. For the purposes of the present chapter, it is important to note both who the project teams for *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are, and the broader contexts in which these teams operate. I now

explore in turn how tensions in each of four areas - purposes; 'ordinary people', 'community', and quality - constitute the processes of institutional mediation shaping the self-representations produced.

Tension over the Purpose of Facilitating Self-Representation

Shifting institutional priorities?

Self-representations by members of the public emerge out of struggles over what they mean and what they are for and whether they even matter. The existence of a range of understandings about the purpose of self-representations exposes tensions over the purpose of the institutions of public service broadcasting and public museums early in the twenty first century. The self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* are understood by some involved in production as one way to facilitate participation by members of the public. For others, self-representation constitutes an intervention in the way in which the public is represented by the institutions. Two kinds of cultural institution are producing forms of self-representation by members of the public, begging the question of whether the remits of public museums and public service broadcasting are converging. This is the practical aspect of a philosophical and a political question, that is, is it now understood to be the case that public service institutions should provide a forum for communication by the public, with each other, as much as they should be used to educate and inform? Further, how best should each of these goals be fulfilled today? Whilst it is clearly possible for activities addressing each of these aims to be carried out, nonetheless there is a tension in terms of what is seen as the priority role of the institution.

Museologists have noted that the role of museums has become so broad that, as noted in Chapter 3, 'The truth is, we do not know any more what a museum institution is' (Sola, 1992, p. 106) (Macdonald, 1996, p. 1). At the same time, policy debate about the role of public service broadcasting questions how far the BBC should concentrate on providing content for the audience, and how far it should diversify into other activities, such as, for example, media literacy skills training. Both institutions must continually justify their public funding. But while this justification of funding has been central to debate about the BBC since its inception, the focus on justifying public funding for museums is perhaps a more recent consequence of New Labour's increased funding for museums

and the subsequent increased interest in justification for that funding. When I spent a day shadowing the project officer for *London's Voices*, she spoke about the workload and the pressures in museums in precisely these terms. I noted in my field diary:

Catherine says whole new radical change in the way museums are funded and whole new pressures for working in museums. She says it is good in a way because making museums be 'more dynamic'. But she says it is also taking the 'fun out of' some of the work because there is so much pressure to meet targets and so on. Before, she says, as a museum you could pretty much do what you wanted, not do as much and of course that was not as good. Under Thatcher there just wasn't this emphasis on museums as important. And with the museums being in the spotlight much increased pressure for those working in museums.

Notes from observation, conversation with Catherine Speight, Project Officer, *London's Voices*.

And the Diversity Manager at the Museum of London spoke in interview about how the accountability to a diverse public is 'government led' and increasingly integrated into museum policy:

I'm sure you're aware of how much it's become much more government led as well. But there are more requirements for the museum's galleries to adhere to certain expectations of how many ethnic minorities audiences they're getting, how projects are being consulted with those audiences. So I am involved in various committees and steering groups and all sorts of things internally and externally.

Interview with Chandan Mahal, Diversity Manager, Museum of London.

But as Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Access and Learning and Project Manager, *London's Voices*, notes in interview, challenges to the role of museums also comes from within the museum profession. In museums it seems that it is the coming together of government agendas with the views of the museum profession that makes a powerful force for shifting priorities:

So it's coming from the government, but it's also coming from a general movement in the museum profession as a whole. And I think museums that are not responding to that agenda are not going to be well respected within their own profession. I think, you know, museums have got to move on. ...

Interview with Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Department, Access and Learning/Project Manager, *London's Voices*.

And there also appear to be some shifts inside the BBC to do with opening up to participation and providing skills training; for instance, in the Open Centre initiative,

BBC community centres delivering media literacy skills training, and encouraging people to take part in the production of content for things like *Video Nation* or *Where I Live* or shorter versions of digital storytelling – *Shoe Box Stories*. Gilligan, Editor of *Video Nation* online notes a change in the BBC in terms of opening up to the public, but also an opening up to other professionals, a move which resonates across public service in the idea of partnerships:

The Open Centres have obviously accelerated all that in terms of removing a barrier. And connecting more, but there's even more we can do. So there are a lot of moves at the moment to make the content far more, all the ways of getting involved, far more accessible, but also looking at ways of offering people better learning opportunities to come in obviously and learn. And lastly there's a greater, It feels quite funny having come from the independent sector anyhow and been a freelancer, it's quite refreshing to see now that there's a huge value upon partnerships and outside experience.
Interview with Carole Gilligan, Editor, *Video Nation* online.

Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales, notes the controller of BBC Wales' particular focus on encouraging audience involvement and the production of content by audiences:

So Community Studios, cyber café function but alongside that we're developing, I think it's, you know, it's taking time, but to try and develop as many different kinds of tools as possible, to engage the public with programme makers more directly, in discussion, in contributing to programmes, and to engage people in projects around media literacy and creativity. So, for example, you know, simple things like internet taster sessions, but also things like, we're beginning to do *Video Nation* through the studios in Wales.
Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales.

It is in a context of shifting the priorities for these public institutions that self-representation by members of the public are produced, and it is in this context that the different understandings of the purposes of such representations take shape.

Facilitating public participation

The interviews with the members of the Access and Learning Department at the Museum of London make clear that the invitation to members of the public to take part in a project like *London's Voices* is just one form of participation. From the perspective of this department the priority is to involve members of the public in the museum in as

many ways as possible in order to address the urgent need to broaden the profile of the museum's audience, as the Deputy Head of Department, Frazer Swift, notes:

Yeah, and that's been one of the purposes of *Voices*, to find ways of representing and involving people through their stories and their voices. And that's why we wanted to try out different ways of presenting them, so those two strands about presentation and engagement.
Interview with Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Department, Access and Learning/Project Manager, *London's Voices*.

It seems as though public participation in museums is being encouraged as a way of working to ensure the relevance of museums to all of the public that they exist to serve. Participation, therefore, is used as part of widening diversity strategies, to redress the fact that the museum's visitors do not reflect the population, but rather consist of a minority of that population. The Museum of London is embracing this trend towards encouraging participation⁹.

The interviews with producers and the observation of events showed that activities that seek to encourage audience participation might include, for example, performances held at the museum and targeted at specific sectors of the audience; outreach work in London schools, the existence of exhibition steering committees that include members of the public, and a whole programme of events that are laid on to accompany exhibitions at the museum. Encouraging diversity is understood as the most important aspect of *London's Voices* by some of the personnel involved in its production. Further (and for similar reasons) several interviewees attested to the fact that the funding bodies actively encourage various kinds of participation, for example, Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund, notes:

Karen Brookfield: .. I suppose what happened in '98 was a whole shift in political thinking towards people.

Interviewer: Do you think it was the election?

Karen Brookfield: To do with a new Labour agenda, to do with, I suppose, the increased recognition that quality of life in Britain is about engagement and having people involved in things as well as just having the things. We're just looking at telling that 10 years story of HLF.

Interviewer: Mm.

Karen Brookfield: And it is very much a shift away from designated heritage, which you are told by an expert is heritage

Interviewer: Mm.

⁹Interview with Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Department, Access and Learning/Project Manager, *London's Voices*.

Karen Brookfield: to something, which you can participate in, enjoy and you can decide.

Interviewer: Mm.

Karen Brookfield: And I think that's just got, it has increased since '98 so that when we came to the strategic plan for 2002, it's absolutely central, and I think there'll be no way back.

Interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director, Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund.

Self-representation appears to be used as a particularly successful means of encouraging participation, or 'engagement'. However, in this view, it is not the fact of self-representation that is important but rather active participation in whatever form it might take. And this is specifically a matter of public accountability, as Brookfield notes:

Karen Brookfield: So I suppose it's a kind of coming together of some of the sector's own desires plus a very strong agenda of .. accountability.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Karen Brookfield: And accountability particularly in terms of groups who

Interviewer: To the public?

Karen Brookfield: Yes, to the public. In answer to people who buy Lottery tickets.

Interviewer: Right.

Karen Brookfield: And it's perfectly true that all sorts of people buy Lottery tickets, but very many of those people would have looked at heritage and said 'that's nothing to do with me'.

Interviewer: Right.

Karen Brookfield: That's a stately home, that's a castle, nothing to do with me, whereas actually this is to do with everybody now.

Interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director, Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund.

Within public service broadcasting there is also a similar move to encourage participation by the audience in order to show the relevance of the BBC to all of its audience and, ultimately, to justify the licence fee. And the production of content is one of the ways in which members of the public are encouraged to participate; thus in 2004 the BBC had around forty 'user generated projects', according to Carole Gilligan, then Editor of *Video Nation*, who observed:

... but also the importance of user generated content is growing in the BBC. It's actually, we've come full circle in that it's suddenly got a really huge place because .. there's a feeling that we actually don't connect with our audience. The fact that there are people out there that have just got great stories to tell.

Interview with Carole Gilligan, Editor, *Video Nation* online.

The way in which the development of user generated content is primarily framed here in terms of ‘connecting’ with the audience is analogous with the encouragement of participation in the museum and heritage sector. Thus, it would seem that in both museums and public service broadcasting self-representation is embraced as part of the enthusiasm for user-generated content which, in turn, is embraced as a form of participation, and participation is seen to be the way to justify public funding. And typical of this discourse are words like ‘participation, engagement, connection’.

Just as participation does not equal self-representation in the museum context, in the BBC participation might mean uploading local area information to the BBC *Where I Live* websites, or taking part in a studio audience, or sending texts in response to programmes, or joining chat-rooms on the BBC web pages, or taking part in phone-in programmes on radio and television. Clearly, self-representation functions as one way among many to involve the audience.

Improving representation

On the other hand, self-representation, as well as being understood as a form of participation, is also seen as a way of improving how the public, the audience, is represented. At the Digital Storytelling Conference at BBC Wales in 2003, Pat Loughrey, Director of BBC Nations and Regions, said: ‘sometimes you get the sense in the BBC that authentic, real voices, need to be interpreted to be communicated’.

Loughrey went on to locate *Capture Wales* in a history of the BBC. He suggested that Lord Reith’s BBC was a paternalistic institution, which understood its role as educating the audience by giving it access to great ideas. Loughrey then suggested that another key aspect of the BBC has been that of the voyeur, suggesting that often at the BBC ‘real lives’ are observed, told and shaped by BBC professionals. He claimed that digital stories reverse this trend and are therefore rightly understood as ‘revolutionary’.

Loughrey also spoke of the ‘validity’, ‘truth’ and ‘extraordinary emotional power’ of the stories produced by *Capture Wales*.¹⁰

Loughrey’s view of *Capture Wales* is that it provides the audience with access to the real, and that this is a more authentic reality than that delivered by documentary,

¹⁰Pat Loughrey, Director, BBC Nations and Regions, Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003.

because people are making their own representations. A similar view was evident when Dai, a *Capture Wales* participant, was given a standing ovation when he stormed the stage at the International Conference on Digital Storytelling in Cardiff in 2003. The standing ovation, and the talk of a breath of fresh air at the BBC, attest to the consensus that *Capture Wales* delivers unmediated, real, people to the BBC audience¹¹.

Pat Loughrey's speech, and the way in which Dai was greeted at the Digital Storytelling Conference, are two instances that highlight the ongoing debate about the purpose, and indeed relevance, of the BBC and public service institutions in the cultural sphere in the twenty-first century. In claiming that these are exactly the kinds of projects in which the BBC should now be engaged, and in locating them in a particular historical account of the BBC, Loughrey effectively supports the view that public service institutions should provide a forum for the public to communicate with each other themselves. However, the marginal status of these projects within their respective institutions suggests that there is no consensus on this view of the role of public service institutions.

But those working on the day-to-day production of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* emphasise the opportunity for under- or unrepresented people to be represented in a public setting; for instance Sarah Gudgin, Assistant Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, commented:

You asked me about what the aims of *Voices* are, I mean for me whatever the other aims are, a really big aim for me is that we are working with people that aren't represented, that haven't had a voice, that haven't had a chance to tell their stories, that we haven't told their stories. And it is about inclusivity and diversity. And I feel really passionately that, you know, these things need to be addressed. That history is, in London, God! It's such a multicultural place, we should be telling these stories. That people should come here and feel like it's about them. ..

Interview with Sarah Gudgin, Assistant Curator, Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

And for Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales*, the opportunity to 'speak for yourself' is explicitly a political project. For Meadows, enabling self-representation within the BBC, and in broadcasting more generally, constitutes a significant contribution to the health of the democracy:

¹¹Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003.

No one has ever given people the tools of production, they've only eked them out, little by little. Oh yes, well you can take a Handicam and film yourself, you know, crying over the loss of your boyfriend but we're going to edit it. You know, that's gone now and it's fantastic, you know. And that we've managed to achieve that is for me, that's where the ground's been broken, that's the difference we've made.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

Self-representation has the potential to support a more radical political view than other forms of participation, precisely because the aim is to allow people to represent themselves, rather than to be represented by others. Huw Davies, one of the Trainers on *Capture Wales* workshops, articulates another point that was often made in interviews by the producers involved in the day-to-day running of *Capture Wales*. In this view, the digital stories provide a welcome opportunity to *lessen* mediation and, at the same time, to challenge the usual way in which the media represent people, as Davies puts it:

Like Saddam Hussein, you only ever saw him shooting a shot gun off a balcony, it's like, doesn't he ever play with his kids, he's forever shooting his shot gun. You know, the press is so manipulative, the media is manipulative. And this project allows people to just say it like it is, from their own point of view, without any manipulation. We just assist them to be able to do it their own way and, this is sounding really grand isn't it. And it's punk because it's allowing 'ordinary people', in inverted commas, to make television, and just make a document, a record of the time. This is another lovely upshot of this: Wales is stereotypically coal resin miners, rugby players, stuffed sheep, daffodils, all that kind of thing, male voice choirs. We've got 260 odd films and most of them things are either not being represented or have only been represented once. We're not stereotypical.

Interview with Huw Davies, Trainer, *Capture Wales*.

Between self-representation and participation

At the same time, however, it is clear that support for self-representation does not necessarily require the wish to challenge conventional media representation. Other stakeholders in the production of self-representation in the institutions support projects like *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* for other, less radical, reasons. As discussed above, *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are excellent ways to develop innovative forms of participation; and the facilitation of participation provides legitimacy to publicly funded cultural institutions.

For some, finding new ways to facilitate participation is today a proper part of innovating. So, for Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales, *Capture Wales* is an exciting project which shows how innovative the BBC is, and it does not matter whether it continues in exactly its present form or not - the point is that it happened and it pushed the boundaries of what is brought about by public funds:

I mean the important thing for me is that we've done it, we've done it really well. It continues to be valid. As long as it continues to be valid, we'll continue to do it. But, you know, it may be that this has sparked off a new idea and we should be doing the new idea.

Interview with Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales.

In a similar tone, Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research at the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), notes that the HLF is focused on promoting innovation:

Karen Brookfield: .. I think we're going to go on funding a reasonable number, maybe a significant number, of projects which encourage people to tell stories, and I would like to think that we're going to fund more of them that use those stories as well.

Interviewer: Meaning?

Karen Brookfield: Well perhaps that people came along with creative ideas for new style exhibitions or new style presentations in a historic setting.

Interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund.

And it does seem as though participation is key to the legitimacy of public institutions today, as Brookfield notes:

Karen Brookfield: ..And it's true that where we're now at with DCMS is that they want to set up this great big study of participation across cultural, heritage, sport, all the bits that belong to DCMS's policy area.

Interviewer: Which would cover arts?

Karen Brookfield: Arts, sport, museums, historic environment, heritage, film .. royal parks, a whole load of things. The real difficulty is trying to decide what participation is.

Interviewer: Mm.

Karen Brookfield: Is going to the theatre enough? Is walking in the park enough? Or is it actually being used as .. a way of moving again, back into giving your time and doing something.

Interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund.

The issue then, perhaps, becomes how to maintain a radical politics for self-representation, at a time of increasing opportunities for self-representation as simply one among many forms of participation.

What place in the institution?

There appears to be some distance between those running the projects and the wider institutions. Thus Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales*, and the rest of the production team have an identity which, to some extent, seems to be based around distancing themselves from the wider institution whose aims and purposes and priorities they do not always share. For example, one of the researchers said that, if another funding source emerged, she was certain that the team would happily all leave the BBC; *Capture Wales* is more important than the BBC affiliation¹².

Well the BBC is a funny institution, it is sort of run on this cross between the army, public school and the civil service, in that everybody has a rank, you see. And it's terribly respectful of rank and, I mean I could never work in it if I wasn't doing digital storytelling.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

Digital storytelling has its history as a grassroots activity, and it seems as if the project team try to maintain that independence while working within the BBC. In both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* there is a sense of doing the project against a background of institutional constraints. Yet the institutions have funded these projects and employed a particular type of personnel, those with backgrounds in community work; it should follow therefore that the institutions support the projects.

At the end of the three year project, the *London's Voices* project team produced a best practice guide for other museum professionals and community groups who might want to carry out their own oral history projects. In a similar vein, the *Capture Wales* team presented their working methods to an audience of interested professionals at the International Conference of Digital Storytelling. Here, the Creative Director, Daniel Meadows, showed the audience how the *Capture Wales* team deliver the skills training

¹²Interviews with *Capture Wales* team members.

in the workshops, and Gilly Adams who runs the storytelling part of the workshop presented the 'storytelling circle' process¹³.

There was some criticism from conference delegates, who felt that the capitalisation of digital storytelling by the BBC suggested an inappropriate kind of ownership by the BBC. At the same time, these initiatives show that both project teams are opening up their working practices because they explicitly want to encourage the wider facilitation and funding of self-representation by members of the public.

This enthusiasm is championed in higher levels of the organisation. Digital Storytelling features in one of the many reviews that were carried out by the BBC leading up to charter renewal, *Building Public Value* (BBC, 2004). Digital Storytelling is highlighted in this report as an example of precisely the kind of project in which the BBC should be engaged:

'Telling a story' is something that millions of people enjoy doing. The BBC has launched a range of initiatives that have shown that many people want to cast off their role as a passive audience and broadcast for themselves. From *Voices* through *Video Nation* to *Digital Storytelling* and *Telling Lives*, hundreds of people with no previous broadcasting experience have taken the opportunity to tell their stories. For some, it has given them the skills and confidence to change their lives.

Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a digital world, BBC, June, 2004, p.72.

Similarly *London's Voices* is championed by the HLF as a successful, exemplary oral history project, and as Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, at the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) notes, it was also the biggest oral history project funded by the HLF:

Karen Brookfield: The Museum of London [project] has to be one of the biggest ones though, I think it might actually be the individual largest one that was principally telling stories. Sometimes you get a lot of money but it's part of a bigger project.

Interviewer: Right.

Karen Brookfield: But I think that probably was the largest grant we've given. Interview with Karen Brookfield, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund.

¹³ Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003; London's Voices Oral History Department pamphlet.

However, if we look at other measures, we get a sense of the scale of these projects amongst all the other outputs of the institutions, which shows their marginality in the institutions. They thus start to look less like an indication of a radical shift in the roles of the BBC or the Museum of London and more like a public relations exercise, not by the project teams, but by senior management¹⁴.

The scale of these projects is made clear by the fact that there are no measures of website hits for *Capture Wales*, because it is simply too small for the Audience Research Department at the BBC to take an interest¹⁵. But, as well as being an issue of scale, this is also an issue of how these projects are understood or not understood across the institutions. So while an important aspect of the whole plan for *London's Voices* was its web presence, Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, spoke about how promoting the website as a museum activity was difficult:

Annette Day: I wish I could do more promoting it, because it's not that easy to promote websites.

Interviewer: No. Have you got much about number of hits and all that?

Annette Day: Well the IT department are working on that, to try and get information about that readership.

Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

These remarks suggest that the museum is in the process of making web projects an integrated part of what it does, but that this process is not yet completed. *London's Voices* was funded externally, and it is likely that it was funded because it was forward-looking (see the HLF focus on innovation, above). The HLF wants to encourage the use of new technologies as part of strategies for reaching wider audiences.

Running through the interviews with the producers of *London's Voices* is the sense that development into the internet is where museums are going, and should be going, as part of making them accessible in new ways, and a kind of discourse of keeping up with the modern developments in technology that are 'the future'. But, unsurprisingly, the museum does not reach that place neatly and at the same time, and all staff do not agree on that destination as an aim of what museums should do in this era. A key part of the innovation involved in *Capture Wales* also concerns innovative use of new technology,

¹⁴ Annual Reports, BBC Wales and Museum of London.

¹⁵ Emma Trollope, Audience Research, BBC Wales, notes from a phone call.

and keeping up with wider technological developments, as the original funding proposal makes clear:

We now know enough to be able to design a major project to make the tools and skills of digital story telling available to people in Wales. The aim is to work with local communities to generate material capable of being displayed on local web-sites, BBC web-sites and, selectively, on broadcast television, including on BBC 2 Wales, as the freedom to opt out of BBC 2 is extended on digital platforms.

Internal BBC document *Welsh Lives* – original *Capture Wales* proposal.

Capture Wales and *London's Voices* are quite insignificant projects if we think in quantitative terms. However, they have both become well known in their respective institutions. Indeed, both *Capture Wales* and the Californian Center for Digital Storytelling, whose model of digital storytelling it builds on, are both well known, having become celebrated in academic circles as well¹⁶.

It seems as though particular individuals in the institutions hold the view that the role of public service is and ought to be shifting and therefore, to some extent, support for these projects depends on individuals. In this way several of the producer interviews at the Museum of London mentioned that the (then) new Director of the Museum of London, Jack Lohman, was vocal about his support for projects like *London's Voices*.

Interviewees suggested that *London's Voices* was not understood within the museum at first, people did not know what the project was, or why the museum should be doing this kind of thing. More recently, the status of the project has transformed so that it is now an award-winning project which the new director is proud to mention, and which everyone in the museum knows about¹⁷. The importance of individual support comes across in many of the interviews, as Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, makes clear in her comments about the (then) new director of the museum:

¹⁶There are several books in process about digital storytelling; see, for example, *Digital Storytelling. Mediatized Stories*, in the Digital Formation series at Peter Lang Publishing (edited by K. Lundby). *Story Circle. Digital Storytelling Around the World*, to be published by Blackwell (edited by J. Hartley and K. McWilliam at Queensland University). And see also: Kidd, J. (2005). *Capture Wales: Digital Storytelling at the BBC*. *Wales Media Journal*, 2, 66–85; Burgess, J. (2006). Hearing Ordinary Voices: Cultural Studies, Vernacular Creativity and Digital Storytelling. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Culture Studies*, 20(2), June, 201–214.

¹⁷Interview with Cathy Ross, Head of Later London Department, Museum of London.

He is very committed to oral history I think, which is great for us, committed to contemporary collecting and representation of contemporary history in the museums and working with the community and representing diverse communities in the museum's galleries.

Interview with Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

These remarks suggest that a way of thinking about how marginal or how important participation and self-representation are in museums is political and up for debate. It is not taken for granted that all museum directors everywhere would support this kind of work. In this way, the struggles discussed in Chapter 3 over the relative weight given to self-representation in museums can be seen as actively taking place now in the Museum of London as it produces *London's Voices*.

The interviews suggest that *Capture Wales*' production team have struggled with getting the shorts onto Network television, and have struggled with getting the projects understood by the rest of the BBC. It seems that there is a gulf between senior management's enthusiasm and the inability of the *Capture Wales* team to achieve a higher profile for the project¹⁸. At the same time when I met Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales*, a year after I had completed the field work, the importance of individual support emphasised in the comments about the Director of the Museum of London were echoed, as Meadows suggested that without Greg Dyke's support *Capture Wales* could be in a precarious position:

Meadows: And of course with hindsight, looking back over the last year, we're very closely identified with Greg Dyke, we're a Greg Dyke project. We're also a Greg Dyke type of project. You know, it's not just that the current regime are looking at us and going 'not made here'. You know, Greg stood for a number of things that the current regime doesn't stand for. You know I think we're quite identified with that. Well, I mean, the first evidence we have is that the English project has been wound up.

Interviewer: Yes.

Meadows: Telling Lives is over.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

In the event, at the time of writing, April 2007, while the English digital storytelling projects have indeed ended, *Capture Wales* is continuing, although Meadows has returned to Cardiff University School of Journalism, from where he had been seconded to the BBC to run *Capture Wales* for its first three years.

¹⁸Interviews with *Capture Wales* team members.

It seems to me that the precariousness about the status of the projects, felt by the producers of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, may in part result from ambivalence within the institutions about the value of self-representation by members of the public. This ambivalence may result from the fact that there is no clear understanding in the institutions, beyond the project teams, of what exactly self-representation by members of the public is for.

What constitutes proper self-representation?

At the 2004 Oral History Society Annual Conference, *Putting Oral History on Display*, the contemporary ubiquity of accounts of personal experience by the public was taken as given.¹⁹ The history of oral history was invoked as that of a political movement, which challenged both dominant versions of history and established power structures. In this view, oral history was understood as offering members of the public the opportunity to participate in the public record by contributing their own versions of their lives, in their own time, that is to speak for themselves. At the 2004 conference the important question facing oral historians was understood as being - is oral history still a political force? That is, now that members of the public are participating everywhere by representing their own experiences, is the political necessity for the oral history movement diminished²⁰?

The way that first person accounts of personal lives by members of the public are used in museums, and what they are used for, has become a heated issue in the oral history field²¹. Annette Day, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting at the Museum of London, notes in interview that there are few-full time oral historians employed by museums²². This leads to a situation, which was discussed at the Oral History Society Conference, in which museum curators who have not been trained in oral history are interviewing members of the public and using extracts from these interviews in museum displays.²³

There is a view that de-contextualised sound bites by members of the public used to illustrate an exhibition goes against the ethos of oral history because it takes power and

¹⁹Notes from Oral History Society Annual Conference, 2004.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Interview with Annette Day, Curator, Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London.

²³Notes from Oral History Society Annual Conference, 2004.

agency away from the interviewee. This view was evident in some of the debate at the Oral History Society Conference, and Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Access and Learning at the Museum of London and Project Manager of the *London's Voices* project, was one of several interviewees who raised this issue. Swift said that he understands the point of view of very strictly adhering to long established practices of collecting and displaying oral history but, at the same time, noted that widening participation means that it is good to be able to invite people to tell their stories and speak for themselves in a range of ways, not limited to traditional oral history methods²⁴. The ubiquity of representations of members of the public's lives are seen by some museum staff as positive since, they argue, such accounts are now legitimate rather than marginal parts of the historical account, even where those accounts might not be excerpts from traditional full length oral history interviews.

Clearly, a wider public than ever before has the opportunity both to participate themselves, and to listen to other people's first person accounts. In debating these issues the oral history conference did not reach a consensus, but rather agreed that these are now contentious issues. These issues echo, for example, longstanding debates about the democratic role of the talk show and, in particular, the argument that, as for example Coleman puts it, talk shows showcase 'the voice of the people' in condescending and limited ways (Coleman, 1997, p. 112).

The debate about whether or not self-representation has been done properly can be seen in terms of a wider question: what constitutes self-representation? Several questions arise from the 'mainstreaming' of self-representation. Is the increased ubiquity of sound bites at the cost of the member of the public's control? Is an oral history interview a valuable form of self-representation, even though the interviewer asks questions of the interviewee? Is a self-representation compromised if museum personnel edit the accounts? These questions follow from debates about the status and use of personal stories by members of the public in museum displays, and they parallel questions about members of the public giving personal accounts in public, in public service broadcasting.

²⁴Interview with Frazer Swift, Deputy Head of Access and Learning/Project Manager, *London's Voices*.

Changing what public service institutions in the cultural sphere are for

That these projects are seen by those involved in marketing as challenging to market suggests that they do not fit the regular view of what these institutions do and, by implication, should be doing. David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity at BBC Wales, spoke in interview about this marketing challenge:

The BBC Wales' press office is set up to promote its television programmes and radio programmes. We're rather good at that on the whole. But we're set up almost to talk to the people who put together television supplements in papers in Wales, about our programmes. When you're trying to get across to them .. a rather more wide ranging concept about something, and what we're really trying to get is people to get personally involved in the BBC and to use the BBC to get their own personal messages across really, then we have press officers, who are not used to doing that, speaking to journalists who have never come across this before.

Interview with David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity, BBC Wales.

These comments suggest that, while all these new initiatives involving participation and self-representation are taking place in the institutions, there is some way to go in terms of making clear to the public (and indeed to others working in the institution) that this shift is taking place. Cartwright also discussed the difficulty of coming in on a project after it has been named. He suggested that the name *Capture Wales* does not successfully communicate to the public what the project is, and is therefore a lost opportunity in terms of the potential to reach wider audiences²⁵. Illustrating this point is the fact that the BBC's own internal research into its user-generated content and community projects, found that the wider public, beyond those who participate, do not know about these projects at all, and local press coverage attests to this fact²⁶.

Victoria Tremble, External Exhibitions Manager at the Museum of London, emphasised similar issues to those raised by David Cartwright at BBC Wales. There is a strong sense in which *London's Voices* is not one project, so one marketing person did not work on the project. However, Tremble asked, what is *London's Voices*? How do you communicate what that is to a wider audience when you do not know what it is because each project is to be defined as it goes along by those members of the public who participate? Tremble spoke of this also in terms of the goal of the External Exhibitions

²⁵Interview with David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity, BBC Wales.

²⁶Sparkler Report (2004), internal report about BBC user generated projects; press articles copied and collected by David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity, BBC Wales.

Manager being to ensure a strong brand presence for the Museum of London in any projects that take place outside the museum. Tremble saw this as a challenging job in terms of *London's Voices*, precisely because members of the public were involved in shaping the project, which meant planning ahead and branding were particularly difficult. Tremble suggested that successful projects, from her point of view as External Exhibitions Manager, would require the marketing perspective being intrinsic to the design of a project from its inception. The need to integrate marketing into a project that is devised as it goes along creates a tension, as Tremble recognised, because the imposition of a strong brand is not easily compatible with the idea of opening a space within the museum that people can run, and define, themselves.

Perhaps a broad cultural shift towards the view that public service institutions should be providing forums for the public to communicate with each other via their own self-representations is beginning. Nonetheless, the shift has clearly not taken place to the extent that it might seem to outsiders. There is, as Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales* puts it, 'a gap between rhetoric and practice'²⁷. This gap is illustrated by the fact that the sister project to *Capture Wales*, the English Regions' *Telling Lives*, was discontinued in March 2005, despite senior BBC management's apparent enthusiasm for digital storytelling. It is out of this conflict over whether or not self-representation matters, that the self-representations in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are produced.

Tension over the Construct Ordinary People

The theoretical account of the contradictory and overlapping uses of the construct 'ordinary people', provided in Chapter 2, is brought to life by the data analysis in which the notion of the 'ordinary person' emerges as a key area of tension in the processes of institutional mediation shaping self-representation in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. The four senses of the construct 'ordinary person' that are provided in the theoretical account in Chapter 2 were found to be important constituents of the processes of institutional mediation shaping the projects. The four senses of the construct 'ordinary people/person' are: celebratory, denigratory, everyday, and citizenry senses of the term 'ordinary people'.

²⁷Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

The construct 'ordinary people' is strategically invoked, and strategically avoided, by those involved in the production of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. I suggest that this strategic use takes place because the celebratory, citizenry, and everyday senses of the term are called on by the invocation of 'ordinary people', giving the term rhetorical force. At the same time, strategic avoidance takes place because 'ordinary people' is ambiguous precisely because of its multiple meanings; in particular, it is avoided because of the negative connotations invoked by the denigratory sense of the term. It is even the case that for some the everyday, celebratory and citizenry senses of 'ordinary people' carry negative connotations. It is a risky term to invoke, carrying as it does so many associations.

Avoiding the term ordinary people

Participants in *Capture Wales* are understood as being ordinary people. But, as soon as the term 'ordinary people' is uttered, it is questioned by being qualified. For example Gilly Adams, leader of the storytelling circle for *Capture Wales*, and Head of the Writers' Unit, BBC Wales, in describing who the project participants are, said: 'ordinary people, quote unquote if there is such a thing'²⁸. Adams' qualification can be understood as an attempt to make clear that she is not using the term 'ordinary people' in a denigratory sense. Her qualification also suggests a contradiction, invoked in the everyday sense of the term, between the perceived uniqueness of individuals, and the notion that they are all ordinary. Indeed Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales*, is explicit about his avoidance of the term 'ordinary people', because he says it disallows that people's stories are extraordinary. Adams' and Meadows' qualification and avoidance of the term 'ordinary people' illustrates Ben Highmore's observation that there is a paradox at the heart of the ordinary, because the extraordinary is central to the ordinary (see Chapter 2).

Avoiding and invoking ordinary people

At the same time as avoidance seems to be called for, the emotive power of the term 'ordinary people', in the citizenry and celebratory senses of the term, means that it does get used in the rhetoric surrounding *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. For example, this term is used when the projects are being promoted. Indeed, in describing *Capture*

²⁸Gilly Adams at the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003. Notes from the conference.

Wales to an audience of professionals in the digital storytelling field, Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales* said, 'for the first time.. members of the public, ordinary people, that is'²⁹. Here, Meadows uses 'ordinary people' in the celebratory and citizenry senses. Presumably Meadows used this term because, despite the problems with it, he was aware that it holds meaning for the audience of media and digital storytelling professionals at the conference.

For similar purposes, the term 'ordinary people' is employed in both the celebratory and citizenry senses to describe who it is that the Museum of London is supposed to be for. A promotional pamphlet produced in 2001 to commemorate 25 years of the museum features a quote on the first page from one of the original directors, in which the museum's mission is said to be to attract 'the ordinary working man':

I think some academics make a great mistake in assuming that the ordinary working man is not interested in his own history and background. I say firmly that if within five to ten years of opening we haven't got families from Golden Lane and other parts of Islington coming in for a look, we shall have missed out.

Tom Hume, first Director of the Museum of London, quoted in the Evening News, 26 October 1976.

Ross, C., & Swain, H. (2001). *Museum of London: 25 Years 1976-2001* (Brochure). London: Museum of London.

At the same time, in discussing the term 'ordinary people', a member of the team at the Museum of London commented that they found it insufficiently inclusive and, would therefore probably avoid it in favour of terms such as 'Londoners', 'everyone', 'you', 'we'.

The simultaneous avoidance and use of the term 'ordinary people' suggests that it is seen as problematic but, at the same time, 'ordinary people' are the people whose lives oral history projects, like *London's Voices*, set out to record. The anxiety that 'ordinary people' might exclude some people, and the emphasis on 'everyone', suggests that the producers of *London's Voices* want to elicit first person accounts by Londoners from a range of socio-economic groups. The project invites the public to talk about 'ordinary life' and 'daily life', and it is this focus that makes people ordinary. Here, the everyday sense of the term 'ordinary people' is invoked. But, at the same time, the oral history focus on excluded voices remains and so, while the producers might talk about the

²⁹Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003.

project being for 'everyone', actually project participants are those who are the museum's target, and often excluded, audience, that is the working class and ethnic minorities, and here the celebratory sense of the term is, I think, invoked even if the term itself is not used.

Clearly the invocation of the notion of 'ordinary people' raises the question of power. In the case of the *Capture Wales* invitation to members of the public to represent themselves, because people are invited to participate in a project that is devised by the professionals, they must fit their story into a shape that has ultimately been decided by the professionals. At the same time, however, the *Capture Wales* team use their position and status to open up a space for people who do not have that status, and do not therefore have access to equipment, skills, and a platform for display. It might be that the power relation between producer and public implied in Couldry's 'ordinary worlds/media worlds', as discussed in Chapter 2, is an unavoidable aspect of projects like *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* which must be acknowledged, but which does not necessarily undermine all the project aims, such as, for example, improving the media literacy of members of the public, and shifting the balance of who gets to represent themselves.

Tension Over the Construct Community

In Chapter 2 it was suggested that the meaning of 'community' is ambiguous, and that the term has become ubiquitous in contemporary policy rhetoric. The data analysis of the processes of institutional mediation also finds community to be both ambiguous and ubiquitous. The question of what 'community' means emerged as a key area of tension in the processes of institutional mediation because of a fundamental contradiction that is highlighted by Roger Silverstone's suggestion that community is 'lived but also imagined' (Silverstone, 1999, p 96). In *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* tension emerges between two contradictory senses of the term 'community'. On the one hand, community is understood as always already present; it describes the location(s) where members of the public are to be found, as in the phrase 'in the community'. On the other hand, community is understood as lacking, as something desirable that the projects seek to bring into being, as in the phrase 'building community'.

Connecting to already existing community or building community

A Greg Dyke era policy for the BBC nations and regions is entitled 'Connecting With Communities'. According to the interviewees at BBC Wales, Menna Richards, the Controller of BBC Wales, saw in the *Capture Wales* project the potential to fulfil this goal. For example, Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales, said in interview:

Menna saw that money as really important in her attempt to get, for BBC Wales to get out there, become more connected with the community and, as part of her connecting community strategy, she allocated a substantial portion of the money that Wales got, to New Media. [...] And in particular to some projects within New Media that were about getting much more local, getting into a much more direct relationship with the public and facilitating the public in having a voice on BBC platforms.
Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales.

The decision to give the green light to funding *Capture Wales* suggests that the BBC management clearly understands *Capture Wales* as an opportunity for the BBC to fulfil its public service remit. In the wording of the 'Connecting With Communities' policy, this public service agenda is described in terms of 'community'. The public are being described as the community in the period that Mayo has described in terms of 'community as policy' (Mayo, 2006) (see Chapter 2).

Capture Wales is described in the funding proposal as 'Welsh Lives', and is linked to the BBC policy 'connecting with communities' which refers to plural communities. 'Community' operates at the national level, but also as the location where people live, that is at the regional and local level. At the same time, 'community' is used to describe ethnic or language groups - the Welsh language community, the English language community, and ethnic communities in Cardiff. Finally, community is understood as being absent, so that *Capture Wales* is understood by members of the production team as a project which is about 'community building'³⁰, and the intention is that community will be built across groups, across difference. Thus, the aim is to have a broad range of participants in each workshop.

Simultaneously, the *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* participants are understood as actually being 'the community', so that working with 'communities' is understood as

³⁰Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003. Interviews with members of the *Capture Wales* production team.

self-explanatory; this use of the term community is ubiquitous in internal documents produced by the projects, for example:

The outputs planned for year 3 were developed through a very fruitful community consultation process. Ideas for year 3 were initially discussed at a meeting of the *London's Voices* steering group. This group includes people who have previously been interviewed for the collection together with people experienced in community-based work, with many of the members coming from communities targeted by the project.

Internal *London's Voices* documents: Documents summarising outputs, years 2 and 3.

An original and sustainable contribution to community self-expression. A new way for the BBC in Wales to connect with communities, not in a top-down corporate manner but through a project which depends for its delivery and success upon action within communities

Internal BBC document *Welsh Lives* – original *Capture Wales* proposal.

If it is first qualified, 'the community' can have wider usage, as in the phrase 'the business community', but, on its own, 'the community' means the working class/poor/ethnic minority residents of London, or Wales. Thus, 'community' is both naturally there - it is the site where the 'ordinary people' can be located and, at the same time, the lack of community is perceived to be a social problem that the institutions are hoping to redress through workshops which aim to bring about this amorphous thing, community.

London's Voices is also understood partly as a project whose aim is, to borrow the BBC policy phrase, to 'connect with communities'. In *London's Voices*, the Museum of London seeks to represent London's famously international communities. Like the *Capture Wales* producers, the *London's Voices* producers focus on communities in the plural which, in the case of *London's Voices*, are the discrete international and ethnically diverse 'communities' that inhabit London.

In interviews with the producers of *London's Voices* there sometimes seemed to be a sense of anxiety about meeting the challenge to represent all the ethnic groups in London. While some of the sub-projects are addressed to a London-wide constituency, many work with distinct groups - for example, the website for the *Lewisham Voices* project appears to show a locally based, ethnically diverse community, through the graphic combination of images from the groups who participated. Indeed, Lewisham is

a typically ethnically diverse London borough. However, the interviews and workshops were carried out with already existing groups, and their shared experience was brought out more by the way the website is designed (see Chapter 6), and less by any actual interaction between them, although there were attempts to bring the groups together, for example in the event at the Museum of London to launch the project.

Like the producers of *Capture Wales*, the producers of *London's Voices* seem to be trying to build community across different groups by emphasising people's shared experience as inhabitants of London. The observation that this is difficult, sometimes apparently illusory, and not always possible is not a criticism or a cynical view of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, it is an observation about the separateness and difference that seems to fracture the project of a national community, an idea that was discussed in Chapter 2.

It might be that the textual display of diverse members of the public, brought together as a community, in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* represents a continuation of the ethos articulated by Rose when she was producer of the original *Video Nation*:

You have to contend with and .. find ways of working with .. and across what may feel like, kind of fissures or fractures or deep divides, at worst, within a society. And actually ..*Video Nation* .. can perform an important function within that, which is just to kind of keep in mind that those people who you may see but never actually encounter in a day to day way as people, you know, that whoever they are, whether it's .. not just about race, but I think race and cultural difference is a very important aspect of it. But that you keep on being reminded that actually they share a lot of ..things in life, about life, about humanity, *with you*.

Mandy Rose, Producer, *Video Nation*, Interview with the author, MSc research, July 1999.

In this view, the role of public service institutions in providing a forum for members of the public to represent themselves to each other is a political one. 'Community', here, as articulated by Rose, is a more politically conceived version of 'community' than that articulated in the BBC's Connecting Communities policy. It acknowledges the serious challenges in terms of communication between groups in a differentiated society. The Connecting Communities policy is different, being explicitly about the BBC connecting with its audiences, defined as a range of communities.

Thus there is a tension between the building community across difference which we see happening in the texts of the projects, and the connecting with different communities that is articulated as a management goal. This is not to say that any of the many stakeholders involved in the production of *Capture Wales* or *London's Voices* see the projects in exactly the way that Rose spoke of *Video Nation* (above), but simply to suggest that these projects might also be functioning in this way.

Tensions Surrounding Quality

There is a discourse about 'quality' running through the interviews with the producers of both *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. And the different scale of the projects - in terms of resources of money and time and personnel - really becomes clear in this discourse about quality. For example, the *Capture Wales* producers are adamant that what they have delivered is a project that has a high quality process of production and a high quality outcome. For the producers at *London's Voices*, on the other hand, there was clearly more tension felt between quality of process and quality of outcome, and this often came down to a question of time and budget constraints.

Process and outcome

The *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* producers share the aim to deliver 'quality' in the process of production and in the outcome – the finished self-representations. But there is tension because of the different requirements and ingredients by which quality of process and quality of outcome are evaluated. Cathy Ross, Head of Later London Department, Museum of London, points to the two priorities:

I think that they are two different sorts of things, working with the community where the process of doing it is the key thing, and the sort of, the collections development where, you know, you've got to keep your eye on what the outputs are and you know.
Interview with Cathy Ross, Head of Later London Department, Museum of London.

Across the interviews, this does seem to be a tension between where the emphasis should lie, in the individual sub-projects that make up the whole and in *London's Voices* overall.

As we have seen in the discussion of purpose (above), the workshops and production process are of the utmost importance to the project teams. And, at the same time, the participants are members of the audience, and it is vital that they have a positive experience of working with the institution. Outcome is important because the self-representations that are produced under the auspices of these projects are produced by the institutions and must meet both the standards of those institutions, and the expectations of their audience for a certain quality of text, as Mandy Rose, Editor of New Media, BBC Wales, notes in her interview:

The license fee essentially is about content, so we felt it was really important that the workshops produced the kind of content that we could publish.

Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales.

‘The kind of content we could publish’ means high quality content. Others involved in the production of *Capture Wales* also emphasise the high quality of the finished texts as part of what is distinctive about the *Capture Wales* digital stories as compared, for example, with other examples of digital storytelling where the outcome does not have to be published³¹. Maggie Russell’s comments on this subject show how the BBC views the *Capture Wales* digital stories:

and I think one of the things the BBC has massively been able to do, in a way that none of the other stories I saw at the conference from all over the world had done, is massively been able to inject a level of quality. You know, we have delivered the very best to the people who’ve made them in terms of our editorial experience, our teaching experience and our technical experience. That matters, the benchmark is high. People don’t make crap digital stories when they work with us, but they still feel they’re their stories.

Interview with Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales.

But, as is discussed in the next chapter, the idea of a quality outcome is also actually complicated since the outcome, the self-representation, is always framed as a self-representation by a member of the public, so it is not as if the high quality content means the quality will be judged alongside professionally produced content, and certainly no producer would claim otherwise.

³¹For example: Interviews with Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales; Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*; Gilly Adams, Head of Writers’ Unit, BBC Wales, and leader of the Capture Wales Story Circle.

The Director of *Capture Wales* understands the project as explicitly political. The aim is to train people in a visual and verbal storytelling language, so that they have the opportunity to represent themselves well in the form that they are learning, and thereby communicate successfully rather than only being communicated to. In this way, the aim of *Capture Wales* is to deliver quality of process and quality of outcome and, from this perspective, these are inseparable because the idea is that a high quality process involving highly skilled practitioners running the writing workshops and the production workshops, coupled with the use of the highest end professional standard computers and programmes, will inevitably produce high quality outcomes.

For the Assistant Curator of Oral History at the Museum of London, Sarah Gudgin, the priority was the quality of process. Gudgin echoes members of the *Capture Wales* production team when she speaks of the necessity of taking time, when working with the public in this kind of community led project. But again the implication here is that quality of process and quality of outcome are inextricable, the one will produce the other:

And that's been a major drawback throughout *Voices*, that we have these really mad deadlines and we have to work at top speed and there's not enough time to just take stock sometimes, let it sink in, tie up the ends, and move onto the next thing. You know it's ongoing quick, quick, quick, quick, quick and I think that's. .. If we were doing *Voices* again we wouldn't say six outputs a year, definitely not, because we'd want to do things to a higher quality.

Interview with Sarah Gudgin Assistant Curator, Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Project Coordinator, *London's Voices*.

The data suggests that there is tension between the two goals of quality of process and quality of outcome, even when the aim is to deliver both. The requirement for quality of process means that the outcome must be risked because the process is an open one, and even that the institutional brand must be resisted to some extent. The requirement for quality of outcome must mean that the process cannot be left entirely to run its own course and lead where it may, because there is some emphasis on completing a text that bears some of the professionalism of the host institution. Different criteria for judging quality are deployed depending whether the focus is on quality of process or quality of outcome.

Capture Wales has its roots in community arts practice, as one of the founders of the Digital Storytelling Center in California put it in a speech to the Digital Storytelling Conference in Cardiff in 2003: 'we shouldn't know what we're doing'³². Indeed, Meadows distinguished the aims and remit of digital storytelling in the BBC context from the California Center for Digital Storytelling model in terms of this openness:

I mean they were earning by it, but a lot of the time they would work in a community context. And digital story telling as, you know, in this gap that exists somewhere between therapy and skills building. You know, these things weren't intended for publication.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

Projects funded and run by public service institutions, like the BBC and the Museum of London, are, however, absolutely intended for publication. Therefore practitioners of digital storytelling within the BBC must produce a 'quality' outcome, as Meadows notes:

But you know, the trick was to try and take this sort of art therapy practice and use it as a tool for people to be able to ... make their own television. Achtle's was so ... elegant ... and that's the thing that I've always kept in my head, the elegance of his editing, his storytelling, use of pictures ..

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

But it is also vitally important to those working on *Capture Wales* to focus on the quality of the process of production – the workshop, and, in particular, members of the team talked a lot about their special relationship with the participants³³. Karen Lewis, Production Manager of *Capture Wales*, commented in her interview that this was 'crucial' and was what distinguishes *Capture Wales*:

Whatever else happens, the experience of the people in the workshop, and their relationship with us, is crucial. And once they start doubting that, and once they start feeling that they are just fodder for TV and will be treated like every other TV contributor, then I think the project is doomed, personally. Because that's what makes it special, that's what makes it different and the relationship between the team and the people in the workshops is crucial. And that's why picking the team is very important.

Interview with Karen Lewis, Production Manager, *Capture Wales*.

³²Notes from the Digital Storytelling Conference, Cardiff, 2003.

³³Indeed this relationship was seen to be at stake in the discussions held about my gaining access to participants, see Chapter 4.

And, certainly, the feedback from the workshop participants does suggest that the emphasis placed on the workshop pays off:

But it's *quite* extraordinary on the feedback forms, you get this kind of, you know: how much experience have you got with computers to date? And you know, on a scale of one to five, that's often a kind of one or two, and then all the questions about the value people put on the experience are all, kind of, up at five, I mean really it's extraordinary.

Interview with Mandy Rose, Editor, New Media, BBC Wales.

Feedback for *London's Voices* also focuses on a range of quality indicators, but it is in thinking about quality that the difference between the aims of the two projects becomes striking. *London's Voices* set out to experiment with new ways of collecting and displaying oral histories, and extending oral history to include other kinds of self-representation. On the other hand, *Capture Wales* honed the delivery of one form: the digital story produced in workshops. As a result of these divergent aims, quality is marked quite differently in the two projects.

Where quality resides

Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales, speaks specifically about the quality of the people running the workshops, the *Capture Wales* team, which is amusing considering her job title:

Maggie Russell: Now what is fantastic is, I haven't heard one story in four years of somebody having a bad experience making a digital story.

Interviewer: Yeah, I find that bizarre [laughs].

Maggie Russell: Which is, well I think it's to do with the quality of the team that are delivering it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Maggie Russell: It's not bizarre, it's to do with, we are probably one of the highest quality community media teams anywhere in the UK.

Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales.

The understanding of quality as the quality of the personnel themselves did not emerge so explicitly in the data from *London's Voices*, but I suggest that this is more to do with the fact that the BBC has a Head of Talent whose job is specifically to recruit 'quality', and there is no equivalent staff member in the museum to sing the praises of the *London's Voices* team. This is not to belittle the *Capture Wales* team, but just to point to

a difference in the scale and glamour, actually, of the two projects, which says something perhaps about the glamour of media versus museums. Finally, members of the production team also spoke about the quality of the stories as raw material, a perspective on quality that arises even more in the participants' comments, discussed in Chapter 7.

Quality was also repeatedly invoked in reference to the technological hardware and software used by the projects. Thus Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales*, and other members of the team, spoke in their interviews of the relative benefits of different kinds of computers and different packages for the display of the digital stories, in terms of their quality. And members of the *London's Voices* team at the Museum of London spoke about the quality of the computer programmes used for collecting, which were being tested through the *London's Voices* project, and the financial costs which impacted upon choices in terms of technology.

It might be that these various tensions around quality are productive ones, which shape the self-representations. In the next chapters, Chapters 6 and 7, the ways in which quality is marked in the texts are discussed, and the ways in which discourses of quality arise in the participants' views of the projects are considered. In the concluding chapter, I bring together how tensions around quality shape the processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter offered an examination of how the processes of institutional mediation shape self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. In order to address this broader question, the research explored what producers see as the benefits of enabling self-representation, and the criteria they deploy in order to evaluate instances of self-representation. It was found that the term 'the producers' is an umbrella which covers a variety of stakeholders, whose different views are central to the processes of institutional mediation that take place. I suggested that the processes of institutional mediation shaping *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* can be divided into four key areas of tension that emerged strongly from the data: purposes, ordinary people, community, and quality.

First, tension surrounding the very purpose of self-representation was explored. It was suggested that self-representation is one form of participation in public service institutions in the cultural sphere, and that there are tensions over the questions of what constitutes self-representation and what self-representation is understood as being for. These tensions form part of the processes of institutional mediation. Practices of self-representation are inheritors of the Access tradition in broadcasting and, for some of those involved in producing *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, self-representation is understood as a radical political project. However, for others, self-representation is a useful way to encourage participation and, in this way, self-representation functions as a useful tool in arguing for the relevance of public service institutions in the cultural sphere.

Therefore, questions about the role of self-representation lead to wider questions about the role of public service institutions in the cultural sphere, and this turns on whether these institutions should educate or provide a forum for debate. While many would argue that they should fulfil both these roles, there is still tension about where the balance should lie. *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, and the practices of self-representation that they invite, are shaped by this wider debate. Thus, tensions over the role of participation in public service institutions in the cultural sphere are key to the processes of institutional mediation shaping self-representation in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*.

The second and third areas of tension that are key components of the processes of institutional mediation are the meaning and use of the constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community', in the producers' discourse in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. Both of these terms are seriously troubled in and by these projects. 'Community' is troubled because it is used to mean so many contradictory things. 'Community', as used in Communitarianism, was employed in the service of arguments that suggested that the social categories of class, race, and gender difference, and the associated conflicts, have become less important in contemporary western democracies (Etzioni, 1997; Giddens, 1991). However, when we examine the ways in which the producer discourse in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* invoke 'community', it becomes clear that the use of the term in fact highlights the very issues of race, class, gender, and difference that it may have sought to suppress.

While the term 'community' has long been used to elide issues of difference, the term 'ordinary people' has been used in the opposite way, as a rhetorical tool to foreground class identity in the service of a political argument. In *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, this celebratory meaning of the term overlaps with the other meanings – denigratory, citizenry, and everyday. In the producer discourse, the term is both avoided and employed very carefully in different contexts. The term 'ordinary people' is troubled in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* because of anxiety about what it might mean, coupled with the desire to invoke it because of its rhetorical power.

The two terms 'ordinary people' and 'community' are intertwined in a relation of absence and presence in the producer discourse in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. 'Ordinary people' are invited to represent themselves but, because of the varied, and often overtly political, connotations of this term, it is often avoided. However the term 'ordinary people' is never completely avoided, it is never far away, always implied, and sometimes actually spoken. 'Ordinary people' then, in its absence, has a powerful structuring role in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. While 'ordinary people' is avoided, 'community' is used incessantly. The term 'community' does not cause the anxiety that 'ordinary people' does, and often is actually used to mean the same as 'ordinary people' in the celebratory sense. However, when we examine the contradictory uses of the term, its meaning also becomes troubled.

The fourth area of tension that is one of the processes of institutional mediation concerns the ways in which quality is evaluated in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. There is a tension between quality of process and quality of outcome because different criteria are called upon to evaluate quality in these two areas. Different stakeholders in the production of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* emphasise either quality of process or quality of outcome but, at the same time, the production teams must strive to deliver both. I argued that this tension can be understood as a productive one, which is itself key to producing the self-representations in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* that are distinct in their processes of production and in their textual form.

The points of view of partner organisations are revealing in terms of the question of struggles over the meanings of these projects. These organisations operate as go-betweens between members of the public and the institutions, the BBC and the Museum of London. For these partner organisations, the projects are seen as an opportunity for

self-development for the groups and individuals who take part. While the BBC project might reconfirm notions of 'community' and 'ordinary people' as governing structures (see Chapter 2), at the same time, and pulling in the opposite direction, the BBC is involving partner organisations whose aims are wider and, of course involving members of the public who have their own, potentially contradictory, ways of defining themselves (Mayo, 2006).

It is useful to understand the institutional processes of mediation, which shape the self-representations taking place in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, as struggles. We can see struggles over making the space available within these institutions, struggles over how to define what self-representation is, and what it is for, and struggles over whether and how to contain self-representation by members of the public. These struggles are taking place in the context of possible shifts in the role of public service institutions in the cultural domain. It seems to me that what we are seeing here is actually a struggle to make such a shift happen.

The following chapters will revisit the questions and findings discussed in this chapter. I will explore the self-representations from the point of view of the members of the public who take part, the participants, and through an analysis of the texts themselves - what gets represented and how? First, I turn to explore the representations themselves, and to the processes of textual mediation.

Chapter 6

Processes of Textual Mediation

Introduction

In this chapter, the four key areas of tension constituting the processes of mediation are approached from another perspective. Here, I explore how these four key areas of tension are manifested in the textual self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. In this chapter, 'text' is understood as a constructed artefact made by the use of particular technologies, as Burn and Parker put it in a discussion of multi-modal analysis:

Its aim is to understand how we communicate with each other in many different ways, some of them mediated through the human body, such as speech, gesture or dance; others mediated by various technologies, such as writing, visual design, film, the internet and so on (Burn & Parker, 2003, p. 4).

This understanding of technology means that any analysis of texts must address form. And, because this thesis is an enquiry into the processes of mediation, an analysis of form means attending to the technological as part of the textual. The question addressed in this chapter is what are the processes of textual mediation shaping the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*?

In this chapter, I show how tension over the four key areas discussed in Chapter 5 (purposes, 'ordinary people', 'community' and, quality) constitute the key processes of mediation shaping the texts. But the way that these tensions appear in the texts, and in the researcher experience of conducting the textual analysis as well, show, unsurprisingly, some different emphases and different tensions in these areas from those that arose in the last chapter on processes of institutional mediation, as well as some similar issues.

The following discussions of the four tensions that constitute the processes of primarily textual mediation employ detailed analysis of examples of self-representation taken

from *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The final section of the chapter takes a critical look at the issues raised by subjecting these kinds of texts to textual analysis.

Purpose

Representation and self-representation

Mr Transitional (Figures 2 and 3) is the title of a poem by 'Harry', a participant in a South London Library Services Afro-Caribbean Teenage Reading Group, who took part in the *London's Voices* project, 16 - 19. The titles *Mr Transitional* and *Miss Transitional* are given to several of the poems produced by this group; other poems have titles such as, *Who Am I*, and *My Urban Landscape* (Figure 4). Maybe the museum used these titles as a way to group the poems, or maybe the writers were asked to write a poem addressed to one of these themes. 'Harry's' poem is a form of self-representation and the title 'Mr Transitional' functions to frame that self-representation, for the audience. In this way, the self-representation is framed by a more traditional representation of a member of the public, by the museum. This is perhaps unavoidable because the self-representation was made to appear on a platform provided by the museum, meaning that the self-representation (micro-text) appears within a wider (macro-text) textual space.

The juxtaposition of the self-representation with the representation highlights the tensions surrounding the facilitation of self-representation by public service institutions in the cultural sphere. By 'tension', I mean that, in the text that the web user comes across, we see conflicting messages about representation. Here is a teenager representing himself, and having chosen to do so through the technology of writing. This is being displayed by the Museum of London, a fact which suggests that the notion of self-representation is considered valid and important by that institution. At the same time, however, this self-representation is framed by a title, and a web page about the project, all of which help the audience to understand and to make sense of the poem. That this framing is considered necessary, suggests that it is assumed that self-representation must be explained as such to the audience. The explanation that accompanies the self-representation functions to contain it by identifying it as different from the more usual type of representation by members of the public, which audiences view in the media or in museums. The explanation alerts the audience that this is a

particular kind of content, implying it is to be read in a particular kind of way. If we consider self-representation as a generic form, then the museum's framing alerts the audience to the kind of genre they are viewing - representation of personal experience by non-media professional members of the public.

The title 'Mr Transitional' takes us from the particular extremely personal experience expressed by Harry in the poem, and encourages the reader to understand the poem as yet another example (like the other poems titled 'Mr' and 'Miss' 'Transitional') of a universal experience of those people passing from teenagehood to adulthood. Thus, the framing encourages the reader to think about what teenagers have in common with each other, across their difference; 'Harry' might be a teenager from a South London Afro-Caribbean Teenage Reading Group, but his experience is about that transition from teenagehood to adulthood, which must resonate with audiences from anywhere - with anyone who has made that transition, or is in the process of making that transition. However when we go on to read the poem, whose title has encouraged us to make the links to universal experiences, we are immersed in the particular experience of this individual.

The poem is presented as typed text on a white background, very simply as if a typed poem has been scanned and placed on a website. The poem is written in the third person. The first line introduces the characters of the piece: 'boy', 'parents', and 'lover'. The self-representation gives this teenager the opportunity to present himself as he views himself, as a boy, but with a lover. This poem fits into a stereotype of working class, African-Caribbean teenagers as having children at a young age. But, at the same time, it powerfully dispels the stereotype by showing this situation from the boy's own point of view, and expressing his feelings about telling his parents that his girlfriend is pregnant. Harry's own character and references and images make this poem about him in particular, rather than about young people in general: 'Heart beating like a boxer pounding a punch bag'. This is not any 'Mr Transitional', rather it is a particular person's experience.

The poems in *16 - 19* appear on a website and in this sense they are digital. The web user arrives at the poem through clicking on a synopsis of it, next to synopses of all the other poems in the group. The clip for this poem is taken from the first line and states:

The boy suddenly decides it is time.

Again, the juxtaposition of the clips from the poems draws our attention to a kind of community of teenage experiences that might resonate with us, the audience although, of course, there are limits to how far this might be the case as has been shown in the many studies into particular readings by audiences from different national contexts (see, for example, Liebes & Katz, 1990). The individual self-representation, the use of the boy's own words to tell a story in the third person, is in tension with the universal framing of the story. This puts self-representation by the individual member of the public in tension with the wider representation of members of the public on the museum's website, as put together by the museum professionals (curators, web designers). This tension is played out in the technology through which the text is made and presented. There is the poem; Harry uses writing to make his self-representation. But this writing is scanned and fitted into a designed website that presents the collected self-representations by young people who participated in the *16 - 19* project. The opening page of *16 - 19* (Figure 5) states:

The Museum of London collaborated with six groups of young people to represent their lives in London today. The young people involved shared their stories and opinions and reflected their lives through photography, poetry, fashion, music and oral history. Based on their own experiences and addressing issues that are important to young people in the city today, *London 16 - 19* highlights the talent, diversity and creativity of those who took part.

(Retrieved from the Museum of London website, 29 June 2005, <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/>).

This frames the self-representations - they are there to be shown as a group.

The awkward self-representations troubling the wider historical account

The *Holidays of a Lifetime* touring exhibition took place between September 2002 and April 2003 (Figure 6). The *London's Voices* project officer (and, on occasion, the Diversity Manager), worked with members of the public at a range of local London libraries. Storytelling workshops were held at each location, in which the participants talked as a group about their holiday memories. Group members' memories were recorded, transcribed and displayed in an album along with photographs. In addition, the participating public were invited to bring objects and memorabilia relating to the memories they had contributed, and these were displayed in a display case dedicated to this purpose. The self-representations were a part of the touring exhibition in which a

more traditional museum display was installed in each location to which the exhibit travelled. So, for example, the *Holidays of a Lifetime* display stands were installed in the reference room within the library. The exhibition included objects from the Museum's collection, as well as printed text, which provided a history of holidays in Britain. I am referring to this display as traditional only in the sense that in it the representation of the story of the British public's holidays was constructed by museum curators, who also used excerpts from the already existing oral history archive to give illustrative memories of holidays. Self-representations formed an additional part of this exhibition. As the exhibition toured the libraries, the self-representations by members of the public at each library were added to, and travelled with, the exhibition.

When one reads some of the self-representations presented in *Holidays of a Lifetime*, it is clear that they fit awkwardly under the heading 'Holidays of a Lifetime', which they are intended to illuminate. For example, when members of a North London Asian Women's Group began to reminisce with the *London's Voices* project officer about 'holidays', what emerged were stories of travel, but not exactly stories of holidays, as defined in the museum display, which provided a history of the emergence of traditional English seaside holidays and the beginnings of travel abroad, by Britons, for leisure purposes. For example, the memories which members of this North London Asian Women's Group talked about included painful memories, and longings for home in other continents. This example highlights how, when individual members of the public take up the opportunity to represent themselves, one effect is to trouble the broader, universalising representations of the public - in this case holidays are shown to trigger moving individual stories, that escape the categorisation of 'Holidays of a Lifetime'. When self-representations are juxtaposed with more general representations, the resultant tension highlights the difficulties inherent in the representation of a group, the British public. This tension is a productive outcome of such a project; the museum's goal is to deliver social history and the use of self-representation in this endeavour makes clear, to the audience, the complexities (and shortcomings) of any one historical account.

Keeping self-representations in place as amateur or keeping self-representations distinct with a 'scrapbook aesthetic'

The process of working with the members of the public to gather their holiday memories for the exhibition was a key part of the *Holidays of a Lifetime* project, in terms of the resources of time and money put into this aspect of the project. However, in terms of the outcome, and the place of the textual self-representations in the exhibition as a whole, the self-representations by members of the public appeared quite marginal. There was one small display case containing objects collected from the participants in the location where the exhibition was at that moment, so that, for example, in Wandsworth, the display case contained objects contributed by the members of the public who had participated there. The transcribed memories and photographs collected from the participants at the various libraries to which the exhibition had travelled were displayed in a kind of scrapbook. In this exhibition, the professional display was very slick and designed whilst, in contrast, the self-representations by members of the public were very amateurish in look: word-processed transcripts accompanied by snaps taken from people's family photograph albums.

The self-representations by members of the public in this exhibition were marked as different from the authoritative account of history that is provided by the Museum; they were first person reminiscences in the participants' own words. They were recognisable as self-representations because they contained what we might see as the generic conventions of self-representation: a first person narrative about personal experience, memory, or daily life by a person speaking as a member of the public, as an 'ordinary person'. In addition, the generic conventions of self-representation also include an amateurish look; Thus, in the *Holidays of a Lifetime* exhibition, an actual scrapbook is used to display the self-representations. The unequal distance between the two accounts, of the history and of the experience of holidays, is visible in the technologies used to record and to display the representations and the self-representations. The self-representations are low-tech and amateurish in look, the representations by the Museum, on the other hand, are sophisticated and constructed by experts. This tension is interesting when we consider *Holidays of a Lifetime*, and the other *London's Voices* projects, alongside *Capture Wales*, wherein the decision was taken to use professional standard equipment, in order that the self-representations would be of an approximate quality to the rest of the media representations. In *Capture Wales*, while more

sophisticated, digital, technologies are employed, nonetheless the Creative Director, Daniel Meadows, has said that digital storytelling employs a 'scrapbook aesthetic' (Meadows, 2003b).

Meadows' aim to teach people to use professional standard tools in order to make their voice more effective is, in some senses, weakened or contradicted by the insistence on first person narrative, and by the location of the digital stories within the wider textual spaces in which they appear, on television, and on the *Capture Wales* website (Figure 7). There is clearly a need to mark self-representations as being different. This undermines the ability of these self-representations to have the same authority as representations produced by experts. In the macro-text of the television programme *Wales Today*, the *Capture Wales* stories are marked as material produced by non-professionals, thereby alerting the audience that they should be read differently. Here, then, there is a tension between, on the one hand, the political intention of making an intervention in the way in which members of the public are represented in the media, by facilitating them in representing themselves (experts on their own experience) and, on the other hand, the fixing of the members of the public in their place, as not speaking with the same authority as professional media producers. And this tension can be seen in the texts in which people speak for themselves, and yet are framed by the wider text, the platform on which they appear, and how they are described.

However it seems equally true that it is desirable that these self-representations should look different, and be made differently etc; since it is this difference which makes them distinct from the rest of the mediated representations of members of the public that audiences view. In *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, there are different attempts to resolve this tension and these differences can be seen as part of the processes of mediation, visible in the technological choices that make up the processes of technological mediation, which shape the resultant texts. The argument for teaching members of the public to use professional standard equipment espoused by Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of *Capture Wales* is a convincing one; at the same time, the focus, in *Holidays of a Lifetime*, on the process of reminiscence, and on providing a space for that reminiscence, without seeing the need to make it technologically the same as the museum's representation, is also, in another way, a challenge to the authority of the museum's representation, and therefore makes a strong point in favour of the significance of self-representation on the museum's platform.

Do self-representations have to tell the truth?

'Harry's' poem, *Mr Transitional*, is written in the third person; are we, in this distancing from the first person, invited to imagine that this might be fiction? Does it matter? The same question is posed (and played with) on the *Capture Wales* website, where speaking in the first person is a prerequisite of self-representation. On the *Capture Wales* site, there is a page where questions and answers about the project are presented, on which the producers state:

Are all the stories true?

We publish these stories in all good faith but, as Alys Lewis hints in her *History or Mystery?* story, it's sometimes difficult to tell where the border between fact and fiction lies.

(*Capture Wales* website. Retrieved 29th June 2005 from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/about/>).

In *Capture Wales*, self-representations show themselves as such, in part through the rule that first person voice-over is a defining feature of the digital storytelling form. Self-representation takes place within the strict rules that have been constructed by the producers as to what constitutes digital storytelling. And yet, as the above quotation signals, there is no certainty that what we are hearing is in fact truth; this recalls an ongoing discussion about truth and the documentary form (see, for example, Bruzzi, 2000; Dovey, 2000; Nichols, 1991; Rabinowitz, 1994), and debates about how self-representation and the representation of experience may make possible a more real representation, as discussed in Chapter 3. In *London's Voices*, a similar notion is central to understandings of what self-representation is: the opportunity for members of the public to represent their lives, that is, their reality. Here the project is about experimenting with ways of doing this, rather than the perfecting of a particular form of self-representation. Either way, in both projects, the notion that we are hearing the truth is central but, at the same time, the existence of the texts, and the content of the texts, makes clear that whether or not this really is the truth cannot in fact be determined. Projects that facilitate self-representation actually foreground the fact that the idea of 'truth' is subjective, and yet these self-representations are justified as having a place on the platforms provided by these institutions, precisely because they are meant to give the audience access to a true(r) representation of the lives of members of the public.

Ordinary people

Contradiction: ordinary and extraordinary

The participants are constructed as 'ordinary people', and this is visible in the texts produced in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Because 'ordinary people' is a construct, it follows that, when we analyse the texts in which that construction is made and displayed, we can see the work that has gone into the making of the construction. In the case of 'ordinary people', the contradiction that Highmore has pointed to, and that I have referred to in earlier chapters - that is the paradox at the heart of the ordinary where the extraordinary is central to the ordinary - is highlighted by the texts produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* (Highmore, 2002). In this way, the very thing that is being constructed, the 'ordinary person', is, at the same time, necessarily being undermined as a possibility. This then is the tension over the ascription 'ordinary person'. In an analysis of the texts produced by *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, the questions are: How is 'ordinariness' signified? Are the contradictions which this construction exposes contained and, if so how? And are there examples where this containing fails? Textual analysis enables us to consider the meaning of these texts, and the contradictions they expose, in the broader context in which they appear, so that it becomes possible to speculate as to whether the struggles revealed over the construction of the 'ordinary person' have significance, or implications, beyond the texts, or whether the platform on which they are displayed, that is, their framing, diminishes the potential implications of the contradictions that are raised in the texts.

Destabilising the category ordinary

Dai Evans' digital story (Figure 8), *My Two Families*, plays knowingly with the construction of the 'ordinary person' that Evans knows he is being invited to contribute to. Yet, at the same time as this self-representation destabilises the construct 'ordinary person', it also constructs it.

The web user reaches the archived digital stories on the *Capture Wales* website by various routes; one can search by geographical area, or by theme:

Challenge
Community
Family
Memory
Passion

(*Capture Wales* website. Retrieved 25 July 2005 from:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/>).

If the user clicks on the hypertext linked theme 'Family', they are taken to a page of thumbnail still images of all the digital stories that have been categorised by the *Capture Wales* producers as being about Family. Each thumbnail image is accompanied by the name of the participant, and a quote from the digital story itself. The *Capture Wales* producers selected the thumbnail images and quotes, which function as trailers for the digital stories.

The trailer for Dai Evans' digital story shows a photograph of two faces looking at each other; one is a man, and the other is the green head of a female shop mannequin. The text accompanying this image reads:

I have two families. One in the house and one in the garage.
Dai Evans
(*Capture Wales* website. Retrieved 25 July 2005 from:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/tg/family.shtml>).

The choice of trailer and image for Dai Evans' digital story shows how both the participant, and the producer, are troubling the construction of the 'ordinary person'. The producers have chosen the quote with which to exemplify the digital story. In the still photograph thumbnail we see two faces; one belongs to someone who could be an 'ordinary man', the other belongs to a mannequin, which immediately suggests that the man who is looking at the mannequin is a funny or unusual man, that is, precisely *not* an 'ordinary man'. The accompanying text begins with a sentence about family. And this calls on the audience knowledge of family - family is 'ordinary'. Even having two families is nowadays 'ordinary'. But the sentence, 'One in the house and one in the garage', immediately undercuts what we thought we were going to hear about, an 'ordinary' family tale. One of the families is in the garage; this is not likely to be what we had thought, and that is the intention of Evans', the member of the audience who has

produced his self-representation and, it would seem, of the *Capture Wales* team who chose to highlight this as an intriguing start to this digital story.

Clearly, the construction of the 'ordinary person' in *Capture Wales* is complex. It is not, as we have already seen in Chapter 5, a case of the producers constructing the 'ordinary person', and the participants resisting that definition. The interaction between producer and participant is not linear, but instead is completely entwined – and these entwinings are the processes of mediation with which this thesis is concerned.

Framing the ordinary person: the genre of self-representation

When we click on the thumbnail image of the man and the mannequin, we are taken to a page where this image is enlarged; we are given the place and date that the digital story was made, as well as information about the title and author name. There are two hypertext links, which offer the chance to 'view the movie' and to 'read the transcript'. In addition, alongside the image and this information is a column of text, which tells us who Dai Evans is and presents questions and answers with him in a standard interview format. This interview functions to frame the story. The first part states:

Model artist?

Dai Evans is a photographer and his story reflects his love for his family that lives in the house, and his second (rather odd) family.

This text tells us that the domain of this digital story is family life, even though it might be family life with a twist. In this way the digital story on offer is located within the generic conventions of self-representation: someone telling a story about his own experience and feelings about his family, and something else in his daily life. But, at the same time, 'oddness' is placed at the heart of the ordinary, and destabilises the ordinary, just as it is being constructed.

What's your background Dai?

I was a miner when I was 14 years old, and a coal lorry driver before I retired in 1989. I am married with two children. I have a lot of interests, such as photography, gardening and enjoying being a grandfather. I am a member of 'Amman Valley Camera Club' and I'm also an active member of 'Swansea Camera Club'.

(*Capture Wales* website. Retrieved 25 July 2005

from:<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/background/dai-evans.shtml>).

The next question locates the participant in their daily life, and constructs the 'ordinary person'. This is not a professional media producer; if it were, arguably, the question 'What's your background Dai', would be answered differently, and would reference a career background in the media. Here we are being shown that Dai is a member of the public, an 'ordinary person', with a working background, a family life, and creative hobbies in his retirement. This information tells the web user who the people are that take part in *Capture Wales*. 'Ordinary person' is not mentioned, but I would argue that it is evoked by this contextual information that locates Dai Evans.

Following the interview there is a place for feedback from visitors to the website. This feedback becomes a part of the text as it is encountered by the web user, and also functions to locate the author as a member of the audience, and as 'ordinary', like the rest of the audience, of which he is a member. In the example of Dai Evan's digital story, there are feedback comments from members of his own family, as well as from other members of the audience. A particularly interesting feedback comment for the purposes of this discussion states:

I was intrigued by the title, but at first I thought it was going to be another (rather boring) family memoir; but Dai was full of surprises and his warm, wry, mischievous sense of humour came across very effectively in the voiceover. Great pictures too!
Nick Passmore, Llandrindod Wells, Wales. February '03.
(*Capture Wales* website. Retrieved 4 July 2005 from:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/background/dai-evans.shtml>).

This comment works to undercut the construction of the 'ordinary person': 'I thought it was going to be another (rather boring) family memoir; but Dai was full of surprises'. This suggests that there is a recognisable genre - 'ordinary people' speaking about family life - recalling two of the senses of 'ordinary people' that were discussed in Chapter 2: the *denigratory* sense of 'ordinary' as inferior, and the sense of 'ordinary' as conjuring *everyday* shared experience. At the same time, the comment makes clear that the construction of the 'ordinary person' cannot hold, and is not what is interesting about people. So, again, we see in the text the simultaneous construction and deconstruction of the 'ordinary person'.

Constructing and deconstructing the ordinary person in the micro-text

Dai's digital story itself also constructs and deconstructs the 'ordinary person'. It begins with a typical family photograph which fills the frame, and a voice-over in a strong Welsh accent which says 'I have two families. One in the house, the other in the garage'. While this is being said, we pan out from the photograph to a wider view of the family and the setting in which the photo is taken. We see a typical domestic photograph of a family group at a celebration. In the foreground, there is a table laden with a cake and several bunches of flowers. We see a television, living room furniture, a framed picture on the wall, and open windows. This is a domestic interior. The slight pan out provides some movement to accompany the way that the story is moving forward in the voice-over. The voice-over continues 'I am seventy seven years young'. As we cut to a very different kind of photograph, a black and white profile of a man in some kind of hat and carrying a lantern, which is as much a focus of the shot as the man's face, the voice-over continues, 'Left school at fourteen. Worked down the mine at fifteen.', and we know we are looking at a miner. As we fade from the photograph of the miner, to a typical black and white and well-worn wedding photograph, the voice over continues, 'Courtied my wife for four years'. As this sentence goes on, we zoom into the photograph so that we see more clearly the faces of the newly married couple, and the voice-over continues, 'married her, and have been together for forty-six years'. While this is being said, we fade from the old married photograph, of two young, serious, and 'old fashioned' people who look as though they are on their wedding day, to two old people who are sat close together, side by side, looking, again quite seriously, at the camera. In this photograph, the couple are seated at a table, which is in the forefront - it looks like the end of a meal, maybe a special occasion. Here is an 'ordinary' couple in their family life together, and there they were, in the previous image, starting out. This is 'ordinary' in the everyday sense, while the photograph of the miner invokes 'ordinary', in the celebratory sense. Next, we pan into the photograph of the couple seated side by side behind a dinner table and the voice-over continues. 'We are now, on our own, both children having left home'.

Here we cut to a photograph of a woman on an outside bench in what looks like a type of nurse's uniform, and the voice-over continues, 'our daughter is a radiographer', 'is married with two sons' and, as this is said, we cut to a photograph of the same man we saw in the photo of the old couple, in the foreground looking at something we can't see;

in the background is a tree, and two boys are in it, looking to camera. This is a black and white, untraditional photograph, which looks as though it could be a professional photograph. Yet, the voice-over works to emphasise that we are looking at a family and, I suggest, at an 'ordinary' family. The story then cuts to a black and white photograph of a young man in a graduation gown and mortarboard looking at the camera, not smiling, as if he doesn't love having his picture taken on this occasion. The voice-over continues, 'we have a son, unmarried who is a chartered accountant. As this sentence goes on, we zoom into the face of the young man in the photograph.

The tone of the digital story thus far is matter of fact, almost as if to say, 'I am telling you what you would expect to hear, a typical tale of a man like me'. Again here we are told the stuff of everyday life, 'ordinary' (everyday) experience. At this point, the voice-over states 'This is my first family', with an emphasis on the word 'first'. As we fade to black, the voice-over continues '.. who I really care for'.

Now we cut to a different, more intriguing kind of photograph - it is a close up of the man in the older couple, looking guiltily, or sneakily, to the left, out of frame, at something we, the viewers, can't see. The voice-over comes in again: 'I have an unusual second family', and there is a distinct change in the tone of voice. It becomes less matter of fact, and more playful, as the word 'unusual' is emphasised. The voice-over continues, 'that help me out', and as it does so we pan out to see that what the man in the photograph is looking at is a dark green female shop mannequin. Now we see the whole still, and see that it is a photo of two faces, the man, and the mannequin. It is the photo we saw in the thumbnail on the main website, under the theme Family. Over this photo the voice-over continues, 'that help me out in my photography'. And suddenly we are in territory which is out of the 'ordinary', which does precisely what Highmore suggests, by showing that the extraordinary is within the 'ordinary'.

We fade from the photo of the man and the mannequin to another photo where the man looks as though he is playing the part of 'artist'. We see a mannequin's head from the back, in the foreground, and behind this we see the artist, this same, ordinary family man, wearing black rimmed (other than the ones we've already seen) glasses and a back to front hat, and intensely looking and gesturing at the mannequin, in an intense, artist-like way. This parodies the audience's shared knowledge of the image of 'the artist at

work', at the same time highlighting how we have, thus far, been calling on our shared knowledge of the cliché of the 'ordinary' man.

The voice-over continues, 'They are my shop models'. Then the voice-over tone changes and the now theatrical voice-over (in contrast to the earlier mild, 'ordinary' voice-over of the retired family man) continues, 'Standing and waiting for hours', and on this word cuts to a photograph of another mannequin, legs akimbo in a tin bath, as the voice-over continues, 'even days', and we cut to another photograph of an outdoor scene, with a rusty ruined old van, and a mannequin in a staged scene, abandoned-looking in a field. The voice-over continues, 'cooperative, never complaining, *my* request is *their* command'. This in contrast to the live family, for whom this is not the case, nor would you (or he) expect it to be. This sentence is accompanied by quick cuts through these various photographs of mannequins in unusual places, from the field photograph, to a naked mannequin in the middle of a waterfall, to a darkly lit photograph showing only a mannequin's legs emerging from a tin bath. Over this photograph the voice-over continues, 'They have a downside', again in the milder tone used earlier in the digital story. 'They don't cook for me, or wash my pants' (here we cut to another photograph of two models in wigs, and then to a model on a park bench in the snow covered in newspapers, with only bare feet showing, and a pair of shoes on the snowy ground). 'And they have cold feet in bed'. This said in a mournful, dramatic tone. Then, in a matter of fact tone, 'They are my stress un-ravellers and un-winders'. All this to a visual accompaniment of many photographs of mannequins in various poses (one posed as what looks like a miner). The voice-over continues, to an accompaniment of more and more bizarre photographs of mannequins in various scenarios, and says, now in an explanatory tone:

Time with my models and photography I feel creative and refreshed. When people laugh at my pictures it's a real bonus. Go out there and create, anything, get off the couch and live a life.

Finally this last part of the voice-over speaks over a shot of part of a toilet (homage to Duchamp?), and is accompanied by a flushing toilet sound effect. The sudden appearance of a toilet at the end of the digital story seems to emphasise a linking of the bizarre and the banal.

Everyone is ordinary and no-one is ordinary

Dai's story ends with a fade to black and the *Capture Wales* logo comes up. The final remarks seem to deliver a message to the audience, about not spending your life viewing media representations made by others: 'Go out there and create, anything, get off the couch and live a life'. The words 'off the couch' invoke the passive, TV viewing, 'couch potato', and also suggest that this 'couch potato' is 'ordinary', in the sense of *everyday*. But then the inclusion here, of Dai Evans' self-representation, and the responses to it, highlights the fact that no-one wants to be that mythical 'ordinary person', and even implies that when you look at self-representations you find that, in fact, no-one is. At the same time, the story constructs the 'ordinary' because the first half dwells on that common experience, and the ending suggests that everyone, that is every 'ordinary person', can make and produce, rather than only receive media representations.

The whole digital story is two minutes long and sits on the website alongside many other individual self-representations. Each digital story could be subjected to the same close reading that I have given here to Dai Evans' story. In each one, the detail provided leads to a deconstruction of the notion of the 'ordinary person'. At the same time, the collection of these stories highlights commonalities (as well as differences) between members of the public and, in each digital story, as well as in their collection and display on this website, the notion of the 'ordinary person' is reconstructed, variously in the *everyday*, *citizenry*, *celebratory*, and *denigratory* senses.

It seems to me, that at first glance, the macro-text, the *Capture Wales* website, imposes the construct of the 'ordinary person' - this is who we hear from in these self-representations. And the BBC frames and presents them, just as the Museum of London frames and presents the self-representations in that project. Yet this broader framing is contradicted by the varied content of the self-representations. There is tension because of these contradictions, which the very evocation of the notion of the 'ordinary person' brings to light, and this tension is unavoidably at the heart of what these self-representations are. Paradoxically, what takes place in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* is simultaneous exposure and containment of these contradictions. But it is never fixed and stable and, since audiences make meaning, maybe it is not possible to say one or the other successfully wins out, as it were. This takes us beyond textual analysis into

questions of audience research, and beyond the scope of this research project. What seems likely though, is that there will not be one answer as regards the implications, beyond the text, of the exposure of the contradictions in the construction of the 'ordinary person'.

Community

Community is present

Community is singled out on the web pages for *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The webpage for *London's Voices* lists the sub-projects that made up the *London's Voices* programme of projects (Figure 9). Above the title and synopsis of each of these projects, a short paragraph summarises *London's Voices* as a whole, and is accompanied by a graphic rectangle made of eight faces of different ages and racial origins, images that serve to make the point that London is made up of a diverse range of people, and that this is celebrated here on this site, and by this project. The juxtaposition of these faces, combined with the texts about the *London's Voices* sub-projects, with repeated references to 'Londoners', invokes a community of Londoners. The paragraph summarising *London's Voices* as a whole reads:

London's Voices explores, reflects and celebrates London's great diversity through the voices, memories and opinions of Londoners. It opens up the Museum of London's rich oral history collection.
(*London's Voices* website. Retrieved 5 July 2003 from:
<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/MOLsite/londonsvoices/>).

At the same time as this diverse London-wide community is invoked, the idea that London is made up of a range of separate (although perhaps overlapping) communities is also suggested on this page; both through the juxtaposition of summaries of the different projects that work with different groups, and sometimes also explicitly in the text. For example, the summary for the *Voices Online* sub-project reads:

Access full oral history interviews and explore the connections that we have within our families, our communities, the city and the world.
(*London's Voices* website. Retrieved 5 July 2003 from:
<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/MOLsite/londonsvoices/>).

On the top right hand corner of the homepage, the Museum of London logo sits above two hyperlinks, one which reads 'Home' and leads to the main Museum of London page, the other which reads 'Community', leading to a page about the museum's community activities. The hyperlink to the 'Community' page leads to a page where *London's Voices* is summarised alongside the Museum's other community-based activities. The summary of *London's Voices* on the Community page reads:

London's Voices is a three-year programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund that aims to engage London's communities through oral history. Listen to Londoners' stories in Voices Online.

(Museum of London website. Retrieved 5 July 2003 from: <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/frames.shtml?http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/MOLsite/community/>).

Here, engaging 'London's communities' is presented as the aim of the project, and it is assumed (and true) that the audience knows what the expression 'London's communities' describes. It is presented as uncontentious common knowledge that Londoners exist in a series of communities.

London's Voices and Capture Wales build community

The existence of communities is a given in the texts of *London's Voices*, despite the fact that a project which encourages community awareness and community building actually suggests that 'community' is considered to be lacking and it is something we want back, recalling Silverstone's observation, noted in Chapter 2, that 'Ideas of community hover between experience and desire' (Silverstone, 1999, p. 97).

In the homepage of *London's Voices*, community is presented as something that we all know exists. Community in London is plural though; in London, as we all know, it seems to suggest, Londoners inhabit a range of communities, we live in communities. At the same time, the existence of a project - '*London's Voices*' - seems to seek to bring Londoners together, through emphasising shared experience; so that there is a wider and less explicit notion of London community hovering here, as well as the suggestion (and assumption) that we all live in communities. Building community seems to be an intended outcome of the project, which returns us to the paradox: that something is being built, which, it is suggested, and assumed, we all know already exists.

The *Questioning London* project was a *London's Voices* sub-project, which invited visitors to the museum-based *London's Voices* exhibition to complete a questionnaire described as the 'Voices Alternative Census'. 2,600 visitors completed the questionnaire and the results are presented on a website available in Flash or Text. The website is divided into themes expressing Londoners' views on London, on themselves and on their lives (Museum Document, Day et al., June 2004). The *Questioning London* website emphasises individual experience and individual point of view. However, the summaries are presented as statistics in the form of statements such as: 'X number of respondents said if they could change something about London it would be the transport', and exemplary quotes such as:

We asked ... how would you label yourself?

'When I was in Northern Ireland 'British', but now in London 'Irish'.

'A rebellious, ponderous, socialist'.

'They are labelling me: 'illegal immigrant''.

'Afro-centric and eclectic.'

'East London and common as muck'.

This presentation of individual experience collectivises that experience and serves to bring together the separate opinions and experiences of individuals who make up the population of London. Here, those individuals are shown to each other and this has the effect of creating a feeling in the audience/web user - that a civic community, of Londoners, does exist.

Thus, in the website presenting the *Questioning London* project, an actual building of community takes place; community is built by the *London's Voices* producers out of the responses of individuals to the questionnaire. At the same time, the showcasing of the responses to this questionnaire actually exposes the fact that, when we look into the individual texts, the idea of the London community kind of moves beyond reach, and is shown to be ephemeral. The community presented here is clearly constructed from individual experiences that are not experienced as communal. These individuals might experience community in the temporary moments when participants are invited by the producers to consider themselves in this light, as a group, for example, when the different groups who participated in 16 - 19, were brought together for the launch event.

Community does not exist after all

At the same time as it is used to build 'community', the detailed presentation of individual experience actually serves to undercut the idea that community exists at all. In this way, *London's Voices* contributes to a thought provoking understanding of London's history. Such an understanding of the history of London is opposed to a snapshot view in which individual 'ordinary' experience is used only to illustrate an expert account of history. These two approaches to how members of the public's accounts are used in museums were raised at the 2004 Oral History Society Annual Conference: *Putting Oral History on Display*, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The producer's explanation of the project sits on the top of the *16 - 19* website. It reads:

The Museum of London collaborated with six groups of young people to represent their lives in London today. The young people involved shared their stories and opinions and reflected their lives through photography, poetry, fashion, music and oral history. Based on their own experiences and addressing issues that are important to young people in the city today, *London 16 - 19* highlights the talent, diversity and creativity of those who took part.

(Museum of London website. Retrieved 5 July 2005 from: <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/frames.asp?http%3A//www.museumoflondon.org.uk/MOLsite/londonsvoices/web/mainmenu.asp>).

Photographs taken by the young people, who participated in one of the groups, are displayed among the thumbnails beneath this explanation. In one, a young woman scowls at the camera. Her light brown hair is scraped back in a tight ponytail (Figure 10). She is wearing a red hooded top, a studded belt and black jeans, and her long-nailed hands are on her hips. In the background a scaffold-covered, boarded-up building blocks out most of the sky. Big trees contribute to the darkness of the scene, and behind more houses contribute to a hemmed in inner city atmosphere.

This was taken by one of the project participants, of her friend. Her friend wants to be a model, and 'Kimberley', the photographer, became very interested in professional photography, as a result of taking part in *16 - 19*, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. With the photograph of the girl in red, amongst others, 'Kimberley' was fulfilling the project remit of representing the lives of young people in her local area.

This is a striking and yet 'ordinary' photograph. There is the familiar anger of the teenager, and then there is the combination of this angry defiant glare with the inner city background, the grimness of which is emphasised by the lighting. 'This is where I live, this is who I am', or, 'this is where we live, this is who we are', the photograph seems to say, in response to the text above which tells us how to understand these images - as young people's own representation of their lives in London today. This is self-representation, representation that no one else could have produced. This is particular because a friend, of the subject, who also lives here, who also has this life, has taken it. The photograph invokes the kinds of photographs you might see on hip-hop record covers, of the hard inner city girl. Her portrait tells us a lot about the identity the girl in red wants to present. The tight pony tail and long American style nails locate her in a particular style group, that of 'street style', drawing on black working class style, that has been adopted by white working class young people and become a sign of cool - a phenomenon that Skeggs discusses, drawing on Diawara (Skeggs, 2004). At the same time, the girl in the photograph looks vulnerable; the defiant look could be read as a sad look and she is hemmed in by an overbearing background.

Above the thumbnail photographs the following text is dominant on the page

Growing up around ***** estate in *****, this group of young people have captured local life through photography to show what it's like to be a teenager in a tough urban community.

"You've got to know about the street to live our life, you've got to know road. If you don't know road, then you can't survive, because road is the main way"

*** ***, aged 19.

But the phrase 'what it's like to be a teenager in a tough urban community' is somehow at odds with the power, humour, and complexity of the photographs. The explanatory text tells the web user what this material is: these are self-representations about X. And yet the notion of community is strange here, in the context of the phrase 'tough urban community', because 'community' so often has such positive connotations (Bauman, 2001; Silverstone, 1999). 'Tough' and 'urban' sound as though they might be being presented as cool, and yet the photographs - the photograph of the girl in red - for example, are not simply cool, but say more.

The above quote from the interview with *** ***** presents a kind of cool, but also presents it as if living here, you have no choice about the kind of life you might want to live as a young person. This is the feeling of being dominated and defined by the environment that comes across in the photographs, including the photograph of the girl in red. But, at the same time, the defiance might suggest also defiance towards the environment.

There is knowingness and humour in the photographs presented in 16 - 19: a photograph of a pet dog, looking through some bars; a photograph of lads posing in front of scooters and graffiti, and next to bin bags of garbage; a photograph of an old man sitting on a bed, holding in his hand an old black and white photo of a boxer (himself as a young man); a photograph of a high rise (this is where we are); a photograph of kids play fighting; a photograph of kids against the railings of what looks like a concrete sports field; and a photograph of a boy posing in the street on a scooter.

The girl in red is very alone in the photograph, so this does not conjure images of community, and the rosy glow of which Bauman has written (Bauman, 2001). This image presents a challenge to the idea of community that is presented overall by the *London's Voices* website. Again, in the tension between the micro-texts (the self-representations) and the macro-texts (the *London's Voices* websites on which they appear), the project both builds and destabilises this notion of 'community'. What is the community that these photographs, selected and displayed together, present? Is there one? There is shared knowledge of an area, and a view on the locality. But there is a refusal of the romanticism of the inner city - the group also took photographs of garbage bags that had not been cleared from the streets, hoping this might lead to an intervention from somewhere to improve the physical environment. The young people's hope that their photographs might lead to material change is discussed in the following chapter.

Quality

A quality framing, or showing the quality of the skills training taking place

The photograph of the girl in red in the 16 - 19 project is displayed as a thumbnail with the other photographs taken by that particular group of young people. They worked together, as a group, to carefully plan and take the photographs. This photograph was

taken knowing who the audience for it would be. It did not randomly end up at the Museum of London. It was selected by the young people to contribute to those displayed on the *16 - 19* website, but also the curator, Sarah Gudgin, selected it from that selection to reflect the lives of these young people in London. These are self-representations. They are framed by the white, clean background of the Museum of London website. There is a sharp contrast, of kinds of spaces and places, and tastes and aesthetics, between what we see in the photographs, and the look of the website on which they are displayed. This background imposes an ordering on the self-representations, in terms of the taste and quality of where and how the images are displayed - they are in a sense branded by the museum, and the particular quality of the aesthetic of the museum platform. But, at the same time, *London's Voices* gives space to images taken by participants who were learning photography. There is a sense, therefore, in which the notion of quality is a different one, one that is about enabling members of the public to learn skills, in order to have a more effective voice, through making these images.

The *Capture Wales* digital stories are recognisable as digital stories that have been produced by the *Capture Wales* project. They are of a uniform length (between two and three minutes). They all use first person voice-over and this is encouraged to be about personal view or personal experience. They mostly use still photographs, and sometimes a very small amount of video. While these digital stories are all made by different individuals, they share many similarities, which make them recognisable as *Capture Wales* digital stories. There is something in their pace and tone and the combination of elements that marks them. There is a seriousness, or perhaps better, a thoughtfulness, in these stories which marks them. They are considered and carefully constructed. Meadows calls them 'multimedia sonnets from the people'. This is illuminating if we think about sonnets as carefully constructed pieces of writing. The *Capture Wales* stories are also carefully constructed pieces of writing. From an initial idea, group discussion and games in the story telling circle, the stories are honed down so that they can be spoken as voice-overs in two or three minutes. The individuals hone (edit) their stories in the workshop. They take each other's advice and also the advice of the *Capture Wales* team. Finally, the voice-overs are recorded with the sound recordist, privately in a sound booth. Here, the participant-producers have several takes to get the voice-over to sound as they want it; they are guided, but not imposed on, by the sound

recordist, who also discusses with them whether they would like a little bit of music, and what kind of thing.

Quality and an amateur aesthetic

In my experience of observing workshops, participants were incredibly happy with the music that the sound recordist produced to accompany their stories, having discussed with them the kind of thing that they might like. So I do not want to suggest that a sound is imposed on people. Nonetheless, the use of sound, and the way sound is often brought in at a certain point in the stories (the timing of the sound), does also work to unite the stories as *Capture Wales* digital stories, and as also recognisably following in the tradition of digital storytelling as set out by the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California. The sound in these stories supports the aesthetic of these as a kind of poem.

The *Capture Wales* digital stories generally use family photographs, ‘family archives’, sometimes people’s own drawing or works, and sometimes some video as well. Meadows uses the term ‘scrapbook aesthetic’ to describe the look of these stories. These self-representations are purposefully and clearly marked as constructed from the family albums of ‘ordinary people’. But they are beautifully crafted, as if to give weight and value to those family albums, and to the memories that are spoken in the voice-over. So, for example, the way in which the photographs are reproduced digitally, and lingered over, and panned in and out of, gives weight to their value.

Val’s story *Hiraeth* (Figure 11) begins with the word ‘Hiraeth’ in green curly letters, and her name beneath in white letters. There is a photograph of a tree in silhouette against a dramatic blue stormy sky. The story starts with a proper title page as it were, and all of the *Capture Wales* digital stories begin with a title page of this sort, giving the name of the digital story and the name of the author. This makes the stories fit together as a group: they have the same form. And a title page marks this as a complete, properly finished product that we are about to view.

We cut from the title page to a black and white smiling group family photograph of adults and children in front of a house in a rural setting. Val’s voice-over begins: ‘I know the meaning of the Welsh word, Hiraeth, it has called to me all my life’. An

interesting, but anonymous, family photograph now gains meaning - we can guess that Val is a child in this photograph, because of the words, 'it has called to me all of my life'. As the sentence 'all my life' finishes, we cut to the next photograph, a landscape with a setting sun, over a valley with some trees in the foreground. The voice-over continues, 'I would happily travel west, but north, south or east were *so* difficult'. The voice-over is slow, carefully enunciated, and clear, and is like telling a story; this is the style in all these digital stories: even when the story is of a completely different tone, like some of the more comical stories, there is still a distinctive, 'storytelling voice' that marks them.

A quality process of production

There is no glitch in the transition from one photograph to the other, and the voice-over carefully accompanies the pictures. By this I do not mean that the voice-over necessarily fits each picture in a boring sentence and illustration way but, rather, that the juxtaposition of image and words has been carefully considered and constructed. These are not so amateur that we might have a blank space where someone had put a fade to black in the wrong place, or a transition that went in the wrong direction. In the same way, we do not have any voice-overs where the person stumbles and begins again. They are carefully constructed to make the voice-over perfect in terms of quality. For example, when I made my own digital story as a participant observer, I was unhappy with the tone at the end of my story, carefully re-recorded it, and then in the end, the team were able to cut together parts of my voice-over from different takes, in order to produce a seemingly whole version that I was more happy with. In this way, perhaps Val may never like how her voice sounds (this is apparently a common view of participants on hearing their own voices), but for web users (the audience for these stories) the voice-over is clear, and mistake free. This is a sign of the quality in the finish of the BBC product, and is seen by users, but also commented on as part of the pleasure of the participants, when they talk about valuing the formal display of their films at the end of the *Capture Wales* workshop, a point that is discussed in the following chapter.

The production team have spoken repeatedly of the whole workshop process being about giving people the opportunity to 'tell their story' to the greatest effect, as is noted

in Chapter 5. In the storytelling circle part of the workshop, this means helping people to tell a story effectively – that is, drawing on expert experience of storytelling techniques. In the production part of the workshop, this means giving people the best quality tools with which to produce their stories. This meant, as Meadows explains, using the highest quality equipment available, the equipment that professionals use, rather than using something which might, for example, be simpler to teach, such as a programme with some of the same abilities as Photoshop, but less complex (Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, Capture Wales).

A quality outcome for a wider audience

The photographs used look as good as they can, that the sound and picture quality is as good as it can be. Further, the quality is defined as ‘broadcast quality’. This might suggest that digital stories look the same as other (professionally produced) programmes on broadcast television, whereas in fact digital stories are visually marked as self-representations by members of the public. Nonetheless, as discussed in earlier chapters, they must also be marked as BBC produced, digital stories, and as distinctive in quality terms.

Three ways in which questions of quality arise in the texts produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* have been discussed. Firstly, quality is signalled in the macro-texts of the websites and television programmes by which the self-representations are framed. Here, quality is about the authority of the institutions and this is indicated by a particular serious, ‘tasteful’ institutional aesthetic. Secondly, quality is located in the proclaiming of an amateur aesthetic. Thirdly, quality is signalled in the making of the self-representations (the process): the use of professional standard equipment in *Capture Wales*, and the provision of assistance from expert photographers, storytellers, writers, in the making of self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Finally, this quality in the production process is intended to lead to a ‘quality’ outcome for the wider audience, as well as to provide satisfaction to those who participated. The ‘quality’ of outcome is more central to *Capture Wales* than it is to *London's Voices*, where the emphasis is on experimentation rather than perfecting a particular form of self-representation. There is a tension over the designation of quality when this amateur aesthetic is employed, between, for example,

what someone might see as a 'bad photograph', or a story that is in 'bad taste', and the careful designation of the photograph, or the narrative, as constituting a quality digital story in *Capture Wales*. This is the quality of amateur content, the best that self-representation can be made to be, but absolutely necessarily marked (and kept) as such always.

Textual Analysis of Self-Representations and the Problems it Poses

There is something very discomfoting about treating these self-representations to a critical analysis as a literature student might read and analyse a poem or a film studies student might critique a film. And finding this weird gets to the issue of the status of self-representations like those explored in this chapter and the many other self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Firstly, how are the self-representations which will be analysed selected when there are so many? A group of several teenagers participated in the workshop that produced the poem *Mr Transitional*; indeed, other poems produced in that workshop appeared on the *16 - 19* website under the same title. Furthermore, the writing workshops were just one of the kinds of activity that participants across London took part in as part of the *London's Voices 16 - 19* project. Two groups of young people produced photographs, and the photograph by 'Kimberley' that is discussed in this chapter was just one of the photographs that 'Kimberley' took that were displayed on the project website.

Moreover, *16 - 19* was just one of eighteen sub-projects making up *London's Voices*. Dai Evans' digital story *My Two Families* and Val Bethall's story *Hiraeth* are just two among hundreds of digital stories produced and displayed on the *Capture Wales* websites. And, of course, *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are just two examples among many in which members of the public are producing self-representations.

Traditionally, literary criticism has analysed literature that was deemed to be of high cultural value, and film criticism looked at films deemed to be of high quality as well, such as films made by a particular director, or auteur. Of course, debates about the distinction between high and low culture led to a troubling of the designation of some works as literature worthy of sustained critical attention. At the same time, the idea that the critic can pronounce on the work from an objective position distinct from the usual reader or viewer, has been subject to critique from a range of directions. The critic was

traditionally a man and therefore this position was attacked from a feminist perspective. Moreover, the traditional critic was middle class and white; only a middle class white man could speak from this objective position, and this idea was attacked as well by the other people in the world. In media studies, the argument that texts that were popular should be taken seriously from a critical perspective is central to the field; but, as discussed in Chapter 2, the idea that only a critic could make the correct and proper reading of a popular media text itself became an untenable position with the growth of work on audiences and how audiences read texts differently depending on their own standpoint.

The research conducted in this thesis does not allow us to suggest that the self-representations produced in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are popular with audiences to consume – audience response to the self-representation produced has not been explored. And the numbers of people participating in the projects is small, as compared with the whole population of the nation, or even the world, that potentially makes up the audience for the self-representations displayed. Therefore, we cannot take the idea of the popular as justification for sustained critical attention to a handful of these textual self-representations.

And, on the other hand, in the light of the sustained attack on the position occupied by what Morley recently referred to as ‘the critic Himself’ (Morley, 2006), it seems odd to subject self-representations to an analysis that takes them seriously in terms of form, content, and narrative. Are not these just snapshots of daily life, do they warrant being treated with the same seriousness as the work of professional artists, writers, and filmmakers?

Thus, the question is: what is the use of textual analysis such as that presented in this chapter? It seems to me that the discomfort raised, the very oddness I encountered in producing these textual analyses, is itself important. This discomfort is actually revealing about the four areas of tensions that I am arguing constitute the mediation of self-representation: the question of what these self-representations are for – the purpose, the construct of the ‘ordinary person’, the construct of the ‘community’, and tension over how to define and achieve quality.

Firstly, my discomfort shows that I take on the division which situates these self-representations as 'amateur', not professional, content, and that this division is a hierarchical one - professional content being deserving of critical attention, whereas the *purpose* of amateur content is something else and that content is therefore not supposed to be read in the same way. Yet, analysis of the way in which there is tension visible in the texts as to their purpose tells us that tension over purpose is part of the processes of mediation shaping *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Secondly, the idea of the *ordinary* is raised by this discomfort; if these self-representations are by, and of, 'ordinary people', then the implication is that they must be interchangeable and it does not matter which are chosen to be looked at in detail; and yet, a sustained analysis highlights how these self-representations are each unique and so troubles the categorisation 'ordinary', but, at the same time, their framing by the institutions shows them as representations of 'ordinary people' – of whom there are many more.

Thirdly, the idea of community is raised: Should these individual self-representations be plucked from their framing as part of a community? Do they make sense on their own, out of that context? The discomfort I encountered in producing these textual analyses suggests that some of the sense of what these self-representations are is lost when they are taken out of the communal context in which they are always displayed. And yet, the analysis of micro- and macro-texts, and the relationship between them, shows that tensions about the idea of community are present in the processes of mediation shaping the self-representations.

Fourthly, how can the fact that these individual self-representations are moving – that is why they work – be conveyed and understood, without a detailed exploration of what they consist of in terms of form, content and narrative? And here the question is about quality – look at too many of these self-representations at once and you are overwhelmed; they start to feel sentimental and even repetitive, but viewed individually, they start to feel powerful. How the self-representations are made, how they seem to work, and how the issue of quality is implicated in these questions, suggests that tension over quality is a key factor in the processes of textual mediation shaping these self-representations.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown how the four key tensions that constitute the processes of mediation which shape the self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, are manifested in the textual self-representations produced. This chapter focused particularly on the processes of textual mediation shaping the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Firstly, tension surrounding the purpose of self-representation was explored. Tension about the role of self-representation in public service institutions in the cultural sphere, and the corresponding tension created by the gap between rhetoric and practice, are both visible in the texts themselves, and contribute to making the texts what they are. It was suggested that these tensions are visible in the contradiction between the existence of the self-representations, which suggests these experiences are considered valid and important, and the framing of them, which suggests that their meaning must be explained to the audience, consequently undermining their ability to speak for themselves. It was further suggested that there is a tension between the suggestion of commonalities across individual experience, and the exposure of the incommensurability of individual experience. Finally, it was shown how these self-representations suggest and, at the same time, undermine the idea that truth is obtainable through the presentation of personal experience.

Next, it was shown how tension over the construction of the 'ordinary person' is central to the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. It was suggested that the notion of the 'ordinary person' in the four senses of the term (celebratory, denigratory, everyday, and citizenry) is invoked in the self-representations produced by *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. It was further shown that this construction is undermined in the same texts in which it is constructed. It was argued that the contradictions over the notion of the 'ordinary person' are exposed and contained by the self-representations as they are displayed in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. It was suggested that this simultaneous containment and exposure of the contradictions over the notion of the 'ordinary person' raise the important question of the implications of this exposure of contradiction for society, more generally. I suggested, perhaps disappointingly, that, while this question is raised by this research, it is not answerable here, but rather calls for research with audiences of self-representations. However, I should also add that a different, but related, question as to how the participating

audience understand, and respond to, the notion of the 'ordinary person' is addressed in the next chapter.

It was then suggested that a range of contradictory understandings of the meaning of community - as singular, as plural, as naturally there, and as in need of construction - are found in the self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. So that these texts, because they purport to be for, and about, community, actually serve to show the complexities and problems inherent in the notion of community.

Next, it was suggested that a range of understandings of 'quality' are visible in the texts produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. It was suggested that tension over what are conflicting understandings of quality make the texts what they are in the two projects, and perhaps leave the audience with a conflicting message about what constitutes quality.

Finally, the question of the discomfort produced in the researcher in carrying out sustained analysis of a selection of self-representations was explored. It was suggested that this discomfort itself is revealing about the processes of mediation shaping the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The researcher is not immune to the tensions over purpose, 'ordinary people', 'community', and quality that are raised by, and found in, these texts: the researcher is a critic and a member of the audience.

The tensions that constitute the processes of mediation shaping the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* have been dealt with separately for the purposes of analysis but, of course, as is clear from the discussion in this chapter, they are in fact entwined and work together to create the self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The analysis provided in this chapter shows self-representation in public service institutions in the public sphere to be a provocative and challenging form, particularly because of how it cannot, by definition, be the same as other mediated representations of members of the public.

However, research such as this does call for audience research because, if audiences ignore this genre, and pass it by, its importance comes into question. At the same time, if audiences do dismiss material that is quite ubiquitous, this would itself be of interest. Does the importance of self-representation depend upon the views of a wider audience?

This is a question which is faced by the public service producers involved in making this material, as discussed in Chapter 5, and it is a question that confronts sociologists. But it is actually a political and epistemological question about how the importance of a phenomenon is decided. Perhaps self-representation is important because of how the members of the audience who participate view it, views that are discussed in the next chapter. Or, perhaps, self-representation is important because it is taking place and being funded, and is therefore a contemporary phenomenon. Or perhaps the detailed study of self-representation is important, because it shows what the audience can do, and how those productions are shaped when they do take place. In the next chapter, I turn to an exploration of those audiences that have participated, and investigate processes of cultural mediation.

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Mr. Transitional

*The boy suddenly decides it is time for his parents to meet his lover.
As he reaches for the steaming doorknob, his heart starts to pound with nerves.
Placing the key in the lock,
sweat pours from his hand as if he was melting with fear.
He accomplishes opening the door and forceful winds fly through the frame.
As he introduces her to his family,
his teeth start to chatter like an army of trotting horses,
while his knees soon weaken and he falls to the wooden floor.
Heart beating like a boxer pounding a punch bag,
slowly, yet fearfully, he moves towards the trembling girl.
With icy cold fingers he takes off her jacket,
then places his sub-zero hand on her belly.
In a quite, chilly voice, he announces to the silent room:
"Mum, Dad... she's pregnant."*

By

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Figure 2

Mr. Transitional

*The boy suddenly decides it is time for his parents to meet his lover.
As he reaches for the steaming doorknob, his heart starts to pound with nerves.
Placing the key in the lock,
sweat pours from his hand as if he was melting with fear.
He accomplishes opening the door and forceful winds fly through the frame.
As he introduces her to his family,
his teeth start to chatter like an army of trotting horses,
while his knees soon weaken and he falls to the wooden floor.
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then places his sub-zero hand on her belly.
In a quite, chilly voice, he announces to the silent room:
"Mum, Dad... she's pregnant."*

By

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MUSEUM OF LONDON London 16 - 19
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Library Services African Caribbean Community Library Teenage Reading groups

Taking an autobiographical approach to their writing, and revealing the secret workings of the teenage mind, these teenagers record their experiences through the written word.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"Am I an adult? Am I a child?"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"As I looked out of the window"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"As I awake, I hear the angry roar"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"I am a child of two cultures"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"On my way to carnival, I close my eyes"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"Outside my house"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"As I grow, everything changes"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"As far back as I can remember"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"I am in a state of change"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"My body is much like smoke"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">"The boy suddenly decides it is time"</div> <p>Poem by _____</p>	

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MUSEUM OF LONDON London 16 - 19
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The Museum of London collaborated with six groups of young people to represent their lives in London today. The young people involved shared their stories and opinions and reflected their lives through photography, poetry, fashion, music and oral history. Based on their own experiences and addressing issues that are important to young people in the city today, **London 16-19** highlights the talent, diversity and creativity of those who took part.

With thanks to Frances Kearney, Anthony Lam, Matt Jackson, Aoife Mannix and Fatimah Kelleher, who supported the young people by sharing their skills in photography and poetry.

 "Hands on, hands on deck" 'A' Team Arts in Tower Hamlets	 The Bridge New Deal for Communities Seven Sisters	 Fitzrovia Youth In Action
 Create part of Croydon Youth Development Trust	 Poetry and Performance Group Southwark Summer University	 Teenage Reading Groups Wandsworth Library Services African Caribbean Community Library

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Figure 5

Featuring local people

Holidays of a Lifetime features Londoners just like you. Everyone has a holiday tale to tell, and in this exhibition Londoners from many different walks of life share their stories. Many of the memories and mementoes featured come from the Museum of London's collections, particularly its growing oral history collection. Other stories come from local people, gathered through workshops linked to the exhibition.

The Museum of London is working with local community groups in each of the boroughs to which **Holidays of a Lifetime** is touring. The views and experiences of the workshop participants will be reflected in the exhibition, through the display of their own personal souvenir and stories. In this way the exhibition will grow as it travels around London's boroughs. Visit **Holidays of a Lifetime** to learn more about how other people see the world.



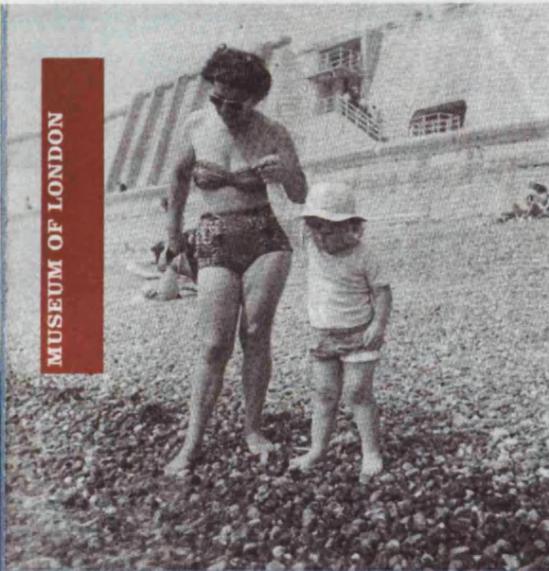
Mr & Mrs Sood and family, 1967.
The Taj Mahal, Agra, India.
Courtesy of Raj and Krishna Sood

Holidays of a Lifetime is part of **London's Voices**, a programme of oral history related activities organised by the Museum of London and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Heritage Lottery Fund



MUSEUM OF LONDON



Holidays of a lifetime

A Museum of London touring exhibition

Figure 6

6 June 2006
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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

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Like this page?
Send it to a friend!



CAPTURE WALES

Digital Storytelling

New to this site?

This is a site where you can watch RealMedia movies made and edited by people at digital storytelling workshops around Wales. (More...)

To watch the stories, install Real's free player for Win 98/XP/2000 or Mac/Win 95. Get help with the player or with watching video online.



GARRAD DAVIES
SURPRISE!

Digital Storytelling

"I couldn't get to sleep when I overheard my father on the telephone." - Garrad Davies.

LATEST: d:1 festival, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, June 2006... and Digital Storytelling Workshop in Haverfordwest, July 2006.

If you've got a story to tell and you live in the area of one of our forthcoming workshops in Wales, please let us know.

NEWS: You can now watch digital stories every day on BBCi Your Stories on digital satellite TV in the UK.

Links to digital storytelling sites around the world and the International Digital Storytelling Conference Archive...

Your comments...

"What did you think of this story and what did it make you think of?"
Please let us know."

THE STORIES BY THEME



CHALLENGE



COMMUNITY



FAMILY



MEMORY



PASSION



BY AREA

Figure 7

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- COMMUNITY

- FAMILY

- MEMORY

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- BROWSE BY AREA

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

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CREATE

"I have two families. One in the house and one in the garage."

DAI EVANS
DAI DEILU

Two Families
Dai Evans, Brynaman, June 2002
[View movie](#)
[Read the transcript](#)

BBC Media Player

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Paused 225Kbps 0.23 / 2:07

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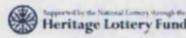
MEMBER OF CANICA **London's Voices**
Home - Community



London's Voices explores, reflects and celebrates London's great diversity through the voices, memories and opinions of Londoners. It opens up the Museum of London's rich oral history collection.

<p>London's Voices</p> <p>This downloadable booklet offers London's Voices as a case study for others planning oral history projects.</p>	<p>LRxRD</p> <p>Find out more about this soundscape by Graeme Miles that stretches along the route of the M11 Link Road in east London.</p>	<p>Colour Contacts</p> <p>This performance piece shared personal memories through dance, music and voice.</p>
<p>"Women talk"</p> <p>Visit this online exhibition to hear memories of women in the home, the workplace and the community.</p>	<p>Questioning London</p> <p>Visit this online exhibition to see what Londoners have to say about themselves and their city – and voice your own views.</p>	<p>"Women talk" installation</p> <p>This installation at the Museum of London explored the experiences of women in 20th century London through their own voices.</p>
<p>"you cannot forget VE Day"</p> <p>Visit this online exhibition to listen to memories of VE Day.</p>	<p>London 16-19</p> <p>Visit this online exhibition to discover more about the lives of young people in London today.</p>	<p>Holidays of a Lifetime</p> <p>This touring exhibition looked at the history of holidaymaking through the eyes of Londoners.</p>
<p>Stage and Silver Screen</p> <p>Visit this online exhibition featuring stories of cinema and theatre going in London.</p>	<p>Levensham Voices</p> <p>Browse the memories and peek into the family albums of people who live and work in Levensham.</p>	<p>Postcards to London</p> <p>Look at postcards featuring extracts from the Museum's oral history collection.</p>
<p>Voices Online</p> <p>Access full oral history interviews and explore the connections that we have within our families, our communities, the city and the world.</p>	<p>Memory Bags</p> <p>Meet some of the stallholders at Ridley Road Market and discover how shoppers took a bit of history home with their shopping.</p>	<p>The London's Voices Exhibition</p> <p>This exhibition showcased the Museum's oral history collection and explored different methods of presentation.</p>

The Museum is delighted that London's Voices was shortlisted in the website category for the 2003 Race in the Media Awards.



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Figure 10

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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

OTHER SITES

CAPTURE WALES
Digital Storytelling

"One day as my material life allowed I was able to obey the call."



VAL BETHELL
HIRAETH

Hiraeth
Val Bethell, Dyffryn Ardudwy,
March 2003
[View movie](#)
[Read the transcript](#)

BBC Media Player

Launch this in standalone player



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Figure 11

Chapter 7

Participants and Processes of Cultural Mediation

Introduction

The previous two chapters demonstrated the ways in which processes of institutional mediation and textual mediation are constituted from tensions, tensions that can be productive as well as challenging. These tensions were grouped into four areas: Purposes; Ordinary people; Community; and Quality. In the present chapter, the investigation continues through a focus on processes of cultural mediation: the ways in which the participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* understand, view, evaluate, and speak about their participation in the two projects through which they produced self-representations. This discussion draws on interviews with a selection of the participants, after their participation in the projects, and on observation of the processes of production; see the table at the end of Chapter 4 for a detailed list of the empirical work.

Purposes

Their own purposes

Interviews with the participants in the two projects reveal a range of reasons why people participate in the projects – what the purposes are for them, and a range of views on what the purposes might be for the institutions. The differing understandings of the purpose of the projects co-exist within, as well as between, individuals. These views show that there are tensions over the purposes of the projects. Tensions are not the result of incompatible points of view of the participants, since *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* are open enough to allow different purposes to coexist. Rather, tensions emerge from the pull in different directions exerted by participants who are motivated to take part for different reasons, and who get different things out of participating. A singular notion of the purpose of the projects - already shown to be non-existent for the producers – as discussed in Chapter 5, is further pulled apart by the wide array of different individual participants, and their insistence on getting what they want out of

the projects, and understanding the projects as they want to. Productive, and sometimes problematic, tensions over the purpose of self-representation constitute a key part of the processes of cultural mediation that shape the self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Some people were interested in producing self-representations for *London's Voices* or *Capture Wales* because they simply thought the whole process looked interesting. These people were interested because the opportunity arose for them to do something they had not done before. They took part not because they had an urge to represent themselves in media or cultural exhibitory spaces, but because the whole activity that they were being invited to take part in was attractive.

Reminiscence

Some participants take up the opportunity to represent themselves because the process on offer fits well with something they are already doing, or want to do. For example, the members of a Lewisham reminiscence group were already in the habit of meeting to discuss their memories and then were invited to take part in *Lewisham Voices* as part of *London's Voices*. *Lewisham Voices* was a project that collected photographs and memories from a range of groups of people in Lewisham, and these were displayed on a dedicated project website. One of the groups that took part in *Lewisham Voices* was a group of elderly, mainly working class, white participants; and this group were interviewed for this thesis. The people in this particular group found that the process of producing self-representations for the project helped to prompt their memories and to discover shared commonalities. I met the group of women (and one man) in the community centre in an area of Lewisham where they regularly held their reminiscence group. The very large focus group of fifteen people, some of whom joined in the discussion and some of whom just wanted to listen in, was not an ideal number for a focus group, but the group had invited me to their regular meeting and this was the number present that day. They enjoyed talking about what they had done as part of *London's Voices*, and how the project had fitted in with their own purposes as a reminiscence group. To some extent, the attempt to run a focus group was taken over by the group's own purpose which was to talk about their memories. It was hard to keep the reminiscence group focused on the particular research questions. But this actually

served to show how they had used *London's Voices* for their own purposes, as they used my research interest in a similar way:

'Madge': You had quite forgotten. And when you talk about things, seeing how, erm 'Mandy' said 'oh yes I used to live there', we found we'd lived in the same road in just a little sort of square but we both, there were only about thirty houses there, yet you didn't know, you see. Lots of things came up, that was very interesting to us.

Interviewer: So that was an advantage of the actually talking all together?

'Madge': In the group, in as much as that was yes. You see and then you found out where people had been born or married which we had no idea about so it interested us all everybody else's story. ..

Focus group interview with a Lewisham reminiscence group, composed of elderly, white, working class women and men, participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *Lewisham Voices*.

Learning new skills

Similarly, members of one of the groups of young people that took part in the *16 - 19* project as part of *London's Voices* were encouraged to do so because their youth worker saw it as an opportunity to get those particular young people engaged in an activity that he thought (rightly) would appeal to them. For *16 - 19*, the museum invited a range of youth groups from across London to do projects that would involve producing different kinds of self-representation for the dedicated *16 - 19* website. The group I met had done a photography project in which they took photographs to represent where they lived. The youth worker's comments in interview showed how the project was used to fit in with his purposes of finding ways to engage this group of young people:

Youth Worker: 'Cause they were drifting at the time so they weren't doing anything, you know, they weren't at school, they weren't at college, they weren't really engaging in .. many activities. Although they were still, occasionally still visiting their youth club. But apart from that, most of their time was not, erm, you know they weren't looking for a job, they weren't looking for college, it was just spent floating. So it was just trying, you know, it was really just to see whether or not this would sort of get them re-engaged...

Interview with Youth Worker of a North London group that participated in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *16 - 19*.

This particular youth group did not become partners with the Museum of London primarily because of the opportunity for the young people to represent themselves but, rather, because of the opportunity afforded by the photography project for the young

people to take part in an interesting activity, and to learn a new skill. Indeed, the group interview with the young people echoes the youth worker's emphasis on learning photography as being what the group took from the project:

'Vijay': Basically you learn how to take proper good pictures, how to print them and everything.

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices' sub-project, 16 - 19*.

'Kimberley': I'm going to. My cousin is getting me work experience with one of his friends with photography and I want to go to college to do it now.

Interviewer: And that's since you did this project?

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *16 - 19, London's Voices*.

These young people were excited about learning photography, but disappointed by the one day launch event at the museum, and the website, which were the outcomes, an issue to which I return later in this chapter. In a similar way, many of the *Capture Wales* participants that I spoke with were motivated, in part at least, by the opportunity to develop specific skills. So, for example, participants were interested in learning how to use the computer programmes, Adobe Photoshop and Premier, either for themselves, or, in some cases, also because they intended to teach these skills to others.

The promise of 'new technologies'

London's Voices participants did not use 'new technologies', rather new technologies were used by the museum curators to collect self-representations and to display them. In *Capture Wales* participants are trained in the use of new technologies, as well as new technologies being used to display the self-representations. *Capture Wales* is, after all, explicitly about using new media, and exists in the New Media department of BBC Wales. Nonetheless, both projects do employ new media technologies in some way and, despite these fundamental differences in the role of new media technology in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, vague notions about the promise of technology are present in interviews with the participants in both projects, and seem to inform participants' understandings of the purpose of the projects.

Capture Wales participants expressed a desire to use the newest technologies, and this taps into familiar discourses about both the promise and the inevitability of new technologies. Skills in using computer software packages are vaguely seen as necessary skills for the contemporary age, a lack of which will increasingly put people at a disadvantage:

'*Sylvia*': I think more, for me, the key word is it's 'new media'. This is a, we are going through a digital revolution, we may not be noticing it, but it is happening and it's the future.

Group interview with participants in *Capture Wales* workshop, South Wales town on border with England. Sylvia is a young, white woman in her early twenties, employment status not known.

'*David*': Yeah I think it's a good thing. You can't stop technological progress anyway, can you? Really it's unstoppable isn't it, you know, that technology is going to take place anyway. ...

Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

Further, for some participants, facilitating the public's use of new technology is seen as a fitting role for the BBC in its role as a public service institution:

'*Sylvia*': And I think because, looking at the future now it's, it's not just TV and radio anymore. I mean the internet is probably the most powerful communication device we have since the invention of the telephone and that this is just the beginning of, it's looking towards the future as well, they're setting a great foundation for the future. Because I believe that this is the way broad, public broadcasting is going to go. Because it's still broadcasting, it's just with a different media. So, to me, it's new media and the BBC have to be pioneers in that because they always have been.

Group interview with participants in *Capture Wales* workshop, South Wales town on border with England. Sylvia is a young, white woman in her early twenties, employment status not known.

And for some elderly participants in *London's Voices*, *Lewisham Voices*, new technology is spoken about almost as if it is the stuff of science fiction:

'*Pam*': He's taken a copy of what I've, you know, VE day, what I said about VE day. But he could do the rest.

'*Poppy*': Can he bring it up on the website and get it?

'*Pam*': Yes. Yes.

'*Poppy*': Yes, cause you've only got to tap in that number haven't you, the w w w dot, if you've got the proper equipment. And that's all over the world isn't it?

Interviewer: mm.

'Poppy': I mean I was in New Zealand and I mean they could've done it there. It's absolutely extraordinary how once it's on that website it's there for eternity it seems. ..

Focus group interview with a Lewisham reminiscence group composed of elderly, white, working class women and men. Participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *Lewisham Voices*.

These comments from participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* foreground the question of whether, and where, 'new' characteristics of digitisation are actually experienced, and commented on, by participants. As the above excerpts illustrate, participants did use the discourse of the onward march of technological development; however, in general, people had more to say about aspects of the process that did not have to do with using new technologies.

New technology, in the form of the internet, provided the exhibition space for the *London's Voices* projects, *Lewisham Voices* and *16 - 19* among others, but, in their interviews about their experience of the projects, the participants in *Lewisham Voices* were more focused on the process of speaking to each other about their memories, and the participants in *16 - 19* were more focused on learning photography, or practising creative writing. Some participants in *16 - 19* were completely uninterested in the internet as an exhibition platform for their self-representations.

New technology does feature as an important purpose of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, but what is valuable about it is not clearly articulated, and shifts between different emphases. There is the notion that it is increasingly important to have the skills to use new technologies. There are vague notions that new technologies make it possible for there to be audiences for the self-representations who are separated by space or by time. Audiences are imagined on a global scale - some participants mentioned the pleasure of hearing from people around the globe who saw and related to their digital story. And audiences are imagined that do not yet exist – future audiences. The ability to imagine these future audiences rests on the (familiar) assumption that the promise of digital technology is that these self-representations will be 'there' forever.

The experience gained through the process

While some comments conjured up imaginary audiences in the future as an important reason for representing oneself, others viewed the projects as private and individual:

'*Maria*': Ask how people, on the workshops experience, rather than the motivation of the BBC. I think, for me, I haven't even questioned that, I've just focused on how it's impacted on me and my experience of it. You know, rather than you know, you know, the most obvious thing would be to, you know, portray anyone who takes part in a workshop as being some sort of victim of some .. agenda of the BBC, it's just.

'*Danielle*': I didn't feel that.

'*Maria*': No, no I'm not saying you did but, you know, you should ask how people experience it, you know.

'*Sylvia*': Well that's something you can't pay a journalist to do, to experience something, isn't it, so.

'*Maria*': Yeah.

Group interview with participants in *Capture Wales* workshop, South Wales town on border with England. The women quoted here are all white and their ages range from twenties to forties.

'*Maria*' did not have strong thoughts about using new technology to represent herself in a public space to a contemporary or a future audience, rather this was an important private activity, facilitated by the BBC. In a similar vein, some participants in the projects talked about making a record for private use. Here, the making of the self-representation is spoken of as the making of a kind of (technologically) updated family album. For example, 'Vikram', a participant in *Capture Wales*, who was a refugee from Fiji when he moved to South Wales as a young man, where he now works as a journalist, spoke in his interview of the opportunity the workshop gave him to delve into family history and, by that route, also personal identity, for his own interest³⁴. Another *Capture Wales* participant, 'Rebecca', claimed that it had not even occurred to her to think about her digital story being exhibited in public:

Yeah it was much, much more for me. Something I wanted to do for myself, yeah. I mean I didn't even think about it being on the website and people viewing it.

Individual interview with 'Rebecca', participant in *Capture Wales*. White professional in her early thirties living in Cardiff.

These kinds of views on the purposes of participating emphasise appreciation of the provision of expertise to help and encourage people to look at and to use their own family photographs, and even to look at and consider their own identity and experiences. For participants who spoke about their participation in these terms, self-representation in *Capture Wales* or *London's Voices* does not provide an opportunity to

³⁴Individual interview with 'Vikram', *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales.

represent oneself in public, but rather an opportunity to make something whose important purpose is a private one.

Similarly, the experience of hearing other people's stories in the intimate workshop setting were often mentioned as what was important about the project, for example, 'Eric' was a participant in the *London's Voices* project *Holidays of a Lifetime* that invited people to remember and record their holidays, and to exhibit these memories and their own memorabilia as part of an exhibition that toured London libraries. In the group discussion, 'Eric' says the project was important because of the opportunity it afforded to hear the memories and stories of others. He was dismissive of the exhibition part of the project:

'Eric': Yeah I remember there was one guy who had a map of a city, New York?

Unidentified participant: Yes that's right, yes.

'Eric': I thought that was fascinating.

Unidentified participant: Yeah yeah.

'Eric': I mean he told us of the, what was it, the hostel or something where he stayed

Unidentified participant: Yes.

'Eric': Something like that. You know memories like that I'll take with me rather than the, the actual .. exhibition, whatever it was.

Interviewer: Yeah.

'Eric': I remember those kind of things about it.

Interviewer: The fact of hearing all these stories that wouldn't otherwise..

'Eric': Yeah, hearing people's experiences, that's what really done it for me.

Group interview with members of an Afro-Caribbean reading group that meets at a South London library, participants in the *London's Voices* project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*. 'Eric' is a local man and a published author, aged in his mid-to-late thirties, British of Afro-Caribbean descent.

The *London's Voices* participants did not make something that could be described as an updated kind of family album, as with the digital stories produced by *Capture Wales*, but, as we have seen, they did talk in interviews about how the project led them to think about their own lives and experiences, and about how they had enjoyed that process.

For a younger participant of a poetry writing group that took part in the *16 - 19* project *London's Voices*, the fact that her work was exhibited on the internet, and the fact that her name appeared in Google, provided a thrill, but this was about the thrill of impressing friends, not a wider unknown audience:

Interviewer: And have you shown it to other friends and family?

Joanna: Yeah. I was at school and we were in IT and I typed in my name on Google and it came up and everybody was like, 'oh my gosh'.

Individual interview, *London's Voices* sub-project, 16 - 19. Joanna is a young teenage member of the writing group that was put together from a young people's reading group at an Afro-Caribbean South London library.

Giving the institutions access to their lives

Some participants expressed a different take on the purpose of self-representation. For example, some of those in 16 - 19 saw themselves as being helpful by allowing the museum access to their lives and experiences. This turns on its head the notion that the purpose of institutions funding self-representation by members of the public is to do a service to the public by allowing them to represent themselves, rather than being represented by experts. Instead, in the way that the Lewisham reminiscence group, some participants in 16 - 19, and some *Capture Wales* participants expressed it, they were doing the public service institutions a favour by giving them access to their stories:

Interviewer: So you were invited, and did you think it will be good, it will be interesting to learn the technology or just you would like to go and see.

David: No the most important thing I would have thought, that it was ... good for them to know my story, not for me to learn the technology

Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

The way some participants speak in interview about the importance of their own 'stories' fits into a discourse about authenticity, whereby the authentic is reached through 'real', and personal, experience. This linking of personal experience with authenticity echoes academic and public debates about the representation of 'ordinary people', as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Clearly, some of these participants are well aware that the perceived authenticity of their experience helps to validate the public service intentions of the institutions. Another linked purpose is the improvement of what is available in terms of the stories offered to the public by these institutions, so that facilitating self-representation leads to a more plural version of social history, as 'David' puts it, also echoing the debates discussed in Chapters 2 and 3:

David: I think it's good. I think it's good because, rather than get stories which are from the usual place, you get a story now and again coming from their...

Interviewer: From their area?

'David': Yeah, from the viewer if you like, rather than from management.

Interviewer: Oh ok. And that's more interesting?

'David': At times that could be more interesting, at times it can be mundane, same as a lot of the stuff the BBC and everybody else does now anyway, don't they?

Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

Being heard

Self-representation is seen as political, as more than 'stories' for stories' sake.

Participants talked in interview about having a voice and 'being heard', suggesting that the process of taking part in the projects afforded them valuable recognition of their point of view and experience. This view picks up on the rhetoric deployed by the institutions when they propose that these projects 'give voice' to the public.

It seems a short step for anyone to make the assumption that the result of 'having a voice' might be some form of social change, or that 'having a voice' in itself constitutes pressure for social change. After all, the phrase 'having a voice' comes from a popular discourse about democracy. Thus, the young people who participated in one of the 16 - 19 projects as part of *London's Voices* explained that they took the opportunity afforded by participating in the photography project to show what needed to change in their poverty stricken and run down local area:

'Kimberley': No, it had to be about our local area but what we wanted to do. But we seen it as like how we wanted it to change. We like, we seen it like as we're showing the bad things what we want to change.

Interviewer: Ok.

'Clifford': To improve our area.

'Kimberley': Yeah, to improve it. So we were showing the good things that's like changed and then the bad things that need to be changed.

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in 16 - 19, *London's Voices*.

In this view, 'having a voice' is understood as political - self-expression that would lead to social change. But, of course, the Museum of London cannot propose to regenerate the area of London where these young people live. This view of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* raises the question of whether self-representation - 'having a voice' - takes place instead of change, as the youth worker for this group of young people put it:

Youth worker: [...] I think they're, young people in this area are probably sort of growing used to the fact that, you know, it is probably more in vogue now for people to go out and ask young people what they think, it's probably not yet completely in vogue to then go and act on it. But they're at least now asking the questions.

Interview with Youth Worker of a North London group that participated in the *London's Voices* sub-project, 16 - 19.

The participants in *Capture Wales* as well as in the other *London's Voices* projects, also articulated a politicised view of the projects. Some suggested that their participation in the projects might lead to their being heard now, in the present, not in the future, and not only for the sake of an understanding of how we lived in the past. For example, 'Vikram', a *Capture Wales* participant, hoped his digital story might prompt British people to reconsider their attitudes to refugees; while a participant in the Afro-Caribbean reading group who participated in the *London's Voices* project *Holidays of a Lifetime* hoped people would realise that black people travel the world as tourists. She hoped the project would counter stereotypes of black people in Britain that she thought represented black people as fixed in place. Unsurprisingly, it was members of minority groups who tended to express these kinds of views³⁵.

Ordinary People

Ordinary as extraordinary

The participants in *Capture Wales* set out to distinguish their digital stories as 'different' from what all the other participants produced. The following comment exemplifies this tendency:

'Violet': Yeah, yes, yes. We saw all the efforts that other people had made and we were told to look on the website, but I thought I'd prefer not to because I didn't want to be influenced by other people's...

Interviewer: Mm.

'Violet': stories, I wanted to make mine as original as I could.
Individual interview with *Capture Wales* participant, 'Violet', a retired woman who runs a Bed and Breakfast in a North Wales town.

³⁵Individual Interview with 'Vikram' *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales; Group interview with members of an Afro-Caribbean reading group that meets at a South London library, participants in the *London's Voices* sub-project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*.

By this distinction, it is implied that the 'other people' who make digital stories are ordinary, but that they themselves are not. This was also something which participants in the two workshops that I observed all did: they all wanted to make digital stories that were distinct from those of all the others³⁶. Again, we are reminded of the paradox at the heart of the notion of the 'ordinary', as discussed by Ben Highmore: if everyone considers their experience as unique and extraordinary, and by definition each individual's experience is unique, then the notion of the 'ordinary person' is destabilised.

Conversely, participants found each other's lives extraordinary so, for example, 'Rebecca' a *Capture Wales* participant, observed in interview:

It was quite interesting, one lady was from Pakistan and she'd come here when she was 15, had an arranged marriage and she actually was more shocked at my parents' green shed, and I was so shocked at her story and she was really shocked at mine and I thought, well mine's not half as shocking as yours but [laughs] she seemed to think it was and I mean that was quite interesting, the sort of feedback you get from the other people. Individual interview with 'Rebecca', participant in *Capture Wales*. White professional in her early thirties living in Cardiff.

This type of view also undermines the idea that members of the public are ordinary but, rather than because they want to show themselves as extraordinary, here it is because they find each other extraordinary.

The concept of the ordinary person undermined and reproduced

At the same time, in order to fit within the requirements of the self-representation genre (as discussed in the previous chapter), the stories tell about everyday, customary experiences and, while these are all, always, unique, at the same time there are universal aspects to these stories. As is discussed in the previous chapter, the way in which the self-representations are framed tends to emphasise the universal aspects, the everyday sense of the 'ordinary'. This 'everyday' understanding or function of the 'ordinary' is also recognised by the participants. In some of the interviews the participants explicitly invoked the notion of 'ordinary people' to explain what the stories were, using the term

³⁶Two workshops were observed, one English language workshop in a South Wales town on the border with England, and one Welsh language workshop in a North Wales town.

in the same rhetorical way that producers used it, as discussed in Chapter 5. To return to 'David', the following comments from his interview show him knowingly invoking and destabilising the notion of the 'ordinary person'. When he invokes 'ordinary' here, he uses it in the everyday and celebratory senses, as discussed in Chapter 2:

'David': At the beginning is the real family with the usual groups and the usual graduate thing and all that and all that and all that. And then you change it completely then. The second family is got to be different because that's where they get you the space isn't it.

'David': Yeah, yes, it is, showing an ordinary family, and showing, you know, where is he then, well he's out there with the other family, you know [laughs].

Interviewer: [laughs]

'David': You know, out of the way kind of thing [laughs].

Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

As this excerpt illustrates, the participants both see themselves as 'ordinary people' and, at the same time, absolutely do not see themselves as 'ordinary people'. In observing the workshops, I saw this 'ordinariness' and simultaneous 'extraordinariness' of each individual's experience as they put together their self-representations. The participants define themselves, sometimes invoking this notion almost strategically where it is useful to them to do so. They do not appear to be constrained or contained by it. And yet, as discussed in Chapter 6, the framing and the grouping of so many self-representations by members of the public does function to construct the 'ordinary person' in a way that contains and limits. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, this is not a stable and unchanging definition, but one that always comes undone when one looks into the content of the individual self-representations.

To return to 'Vikram'³⁷, we see how he does not employ the term 'ordinary people'; rather, in his interview about his experience of taking part in the *Capture Wales* project, he shows how the process led to his delving into, and becoming absorbed by, his family history and personal identity -those same concerns that are characteristics of the genre of self-representation, as I have been defining it throughout this thesis:

³⁷Individual interview with 'Vikram', *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales.

'Vikram': But I'd sort of told the story from my Grandmother's point of view yeah.

Interviewer: Mm.

'Vikram': Somebody who I'd never met, but who I then met really through that. So it was sort of beneficial, you know. I mean okay, the BBC got a little story out of it but for me it was much bigger. Much bigger, because I, I then learnt so much about her, I then got into doing our family history also.

Individual interview with 'Vikram', *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales.

'Vikram' shares this interest in family and identity with other participants in *Capture Wales* and so, in that sense, it marks him as 'ordinary' - like others in Wales. Exactly at the same time, however, the content of 'Vikram's' family history and struggles with identity mark him as extraordinary, not ordinary. He discusses how he consciously felt himself speaking as a refugee to the (supposedly) indigenous people of Wales about the experience of exile, and about histories of which they might be ignorant.

Here, I suggest that there is a complex, simultaneous undoing and constructing of the notion of the 'ordinary person', even though the term itself is not used. 'Vikram' shows himself to be 'ordinary', and seeks to encourage empathy and thoughtfulness in the Welsh population/wider audience, on the basis of this shared 'ordinariness'; at the same time, he distinguishes his experience from the rest of the population by virtue of its very unique and particular content. As we have seen in 'David's' and 'Violet's' comments, above, this distinction as 'extraordinary' frequently goes hand in hand with the invocation of the 'ordinary' in the way the participants speak about their self-representations. Finally, 'Vikram' invokes 'ordinary people' in the celebratory sense of non-expert, non-media person, a group he both attributes himself to and distinguishes himself from. 'Vikram' speaks of his amazement that he and the others in the workshop really were able to speak for themselves, and says that he was cynical about the possibility of this actually happening because he is a journalist and says that he therefore knows how the media usually represent people. Vikram's interview illustrates how membership of the category 'ordinary person' is not fixed. He speaks as an 'ordinary person' by participating in the BBC workshop, but works as a member of the media profession the rest of the time. He is extraordinary because of the particularities of his experience as a refugee and his family history in the indenture system that he tells of. Yet he is 'ordinary' because of the fact of his interest in a family history, identity, and family ties, as well as ties to a place thought of as home. Indeed, he is 'ordinary' in his experience as a refugee in as much as that, in making the films, he discovered the

massive immigration history of the South Wales valleys where he lives. These contradictory positions produce a break-down of the notion of the 'ordinary person', which is shown to contain too much; so it is undermined while, at the same time, it is reproduced.

Without actually using the term 'ordinary people', the participants claim their ordinariness. And this is one of the reasons self-representation can be seen as important. This recalls the comments of the former *Video Nation* producer, Mandy Rose, about the original *Video Nation* project, when she said that there was a sense in which every member of the public felt that they were misrepresented by the media, and wanted to right that mis-representation (see discussion in Chapter 5). Young people who participated in the *London's Voices 16 - 19* project, and who live in a deprived area of North London, also playfully address media representation and, I think, claim their 'ordinariness' against hyperbolic, racialised media representations of racial difference:

'Kimberley': This is 'the difference between black and white'. [*Pointing to a photograph of two boys - one black and one white- sitting on a wall with graffiti in the background.*] *Laughs.*

Interviewer: What is the difference?

'Kimberley': I'm joking, that's my brother. And then there's the graffiti. Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, 16 - 19.

Here 'Kimberley' plays with me, the interviewer. In the above interview excerpt, 'Kimberley', a participant in the *London's Voices 16 - 19* project, describes one of her own photographs. She employs the kind of slogan found in mainstream media representations: 'the difference between black and white'. When asked to elaborate, 'Kimberley' shows that she had me fooled: 'I'm joking'. Finally she powerfully undercuts the kind of labelling she has referred to by humanising the people in the photograph, and in so doing challenges this kind of media discourse and anyone who might take it seriously.

The participants' discussion of the stories, and the way in which the notion of the 'ordinary person' arose in these discussions, simultaneously invokes and destabilises the notion of the 'ordinary person' in a way that mirrors what takes place in the texts themselves, as discussed in the previous chapter, and what takes place amongst the producers, as discussed in Chapter 5. It is not that the producers' discussions favour one

view of the 'ordinary person' and the participating audience favour another. Instead, what we have when we look at the invocation of the notion of the 'ordinary person' across processes of institutional, textual, and cultural mediation, is always this simultaneous invocation and destabilisation. So, in terms of the question of whether the 'ordinary person' functions to contain and limit the self-representation, I suggest that it cannot be said that either one of these functions takes place consistently and overpowers the other. But, of course, the different stakeholders do not have equal power to shape the function of the construct 'ordinary'. In the concluding chapter, I return to the question of power in discussing how tensions over the notion of the 'ordinary person' (in all its senses) function in the processes of mediation, institutional, textual, and cultural, shaping the self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Community

When members of the public are invited to represent themselves in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, they do so as individuals. However, both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* construct representations of communities, through bringing together individual self-representations (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). These individual self-representations are made in groups and so, to some extent, must emerge from the interactions between individuals. Indeed, the group interaction in the workshops is described by those involved in digital storytelling projects in general as 'community building', and is regarded as a key aspect of the digital storytelling form (Lambert, 2006). And, in *London's Voices*, the museum worked with already existing groups that they referred to as communities, as discussed in Chapter 5. This 'community-building' intention on the part of the producers, is expressed by some participants as a notable aspect of taking part in these projects:

Interviewer: And did you do pictures of people you know quite a lot as well or...

'Kimberley': Some

Youth worker: You did a mixture of the two and you also go to know people probably a bit better cause you

'Kimberley': Yeah

Youth worker: Probably always knew ***** but you probably didn't know him as well

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Interviewer: So you feel like you got to know him quite well now.

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Interviewer: More about his life and stuff.

'*Kimberley*': Yeah. Cause we went into like a half an hour's conversation about one thing, so..

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices* sub-project, 16 - 19.

Interviewer: So but do you, as a more general user of the BBC, do you think it's something you would hope that they would continue to do, more people would get the chance to do, or?

'*Violet*': Well it does in a way bring the community together, which is really what the BBC's about I suppose, isn't it.

[..]

'*Violet*': well I mean for one thing it's important. How many of us were there, ten, I can't remember. And I'm sure every one of them showed it to everyone in their area. I had a little party here to show my neighbours, not because I wanted to show off, I wanted them to know that I'd used the area in something that was going to be publicly shown, you see. I didn't want them to be upset that I was sort of exploiting the area, so to speak. But they were very pleased with it. I know that the one who did the story about Africa, she had hers running continually in her church which was open to the public because there was a little garden there, to show people. That's what I meant, I think, you know, it brought a lot of people to the, they had the interest, that you know, the BBC had done this thing in the area and er, yeah, it did, it was quite a community based thing, yes.

Individual interview with *Capture Wales* participant, 'Violet', a retired woman who runs a Bed and Breakfast in a North Wales town.

At the same, time the self-representations are of individuals: individual members of the community, the workshop, the local, or the ethnic group. In these projects individuals represent themselves and those self-representations are located in/come out of, what the project producers/policy makers/cultural commentators describe as 'communities'³⁸.

'Community' functions as a uniting term: as one of the participants, 'Amy', who is herself a community arts worker, put it:

I was going, and that's the whole other thing about the project is that everybody is equal. And that's the whole thing about community actually. We're all equal, in the community we're equal.

'Amy' in a group interview with participants in a *Capture Wales* workshop, South Wales town on border with England. The women quoted here are all white and their ages range from twenties to forties.

But, as discussed in Chapter 2, and as these interviews attest, there is not *one* united community, but rather people understand themselves as members of distinct

³⁸In contrast, see Beeson and Miskelly's work on the use of digital storytelling processes to tell a communal 'story', rather than bringing together individual stories (Beeson & Miskelly, 2005).

communities, and indeed Bauman, for example, argues that the notion of community is predicated on excluding some people from being 'in' the community' (Bauman, 2001). Further, in a similar way to what I have described as taking place with the concept of 'ordinary people', the concept of community is broken apart by the uniqueness of the individual self-representations that are brought together under that label (see also the discussion in Chapter 6). To reiterate Mayo's succinct summary of the problems raised by what she calls 'community as policy', as discussed in Chapter 2, she notes:

'Community as policy' also raises problems of representation and democratic accountability. ... So who can legitimately speak for whom and how can the interests of the least powerful and most marginal be represented as well as the interests of the most articulate? (Mayo, 2006, p. 394).

In the sphere of cultural representation (as opposed to political representation), the facilitation of self-representation goes some way towards addressing the problem Mayo raises here of '..who can legitimately speak for whom' (ibid.). The individual members of the groups taking part in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* represent their own, individual, experiences and points of view. In this view, the notion of community does not categorise and constrain them because they speak for themselves. But, at the same time, once the self-representations are produced and displayed, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, these individual self-representations might well be read (by a wider audience) as standing in for wider communities, whose experiences these self-representations are taken to represent. So the problem of who speaks for whom in a community is not entirely resolved – indeed, perhaps it cannot be.

In a group interview with members of a London Asian women's group, who took part in the *London's Voices* project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*, the term 'community' was only used when interviewees referred to the borough council's 'connected community people', who published some of the writing produced for the *London's Voices* project in a council newsletter. Indeed, interviewees from *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, when they explicitly speak of 'community', echo the discourse discussed in Chapter 6, where community has a range of meanings - inhabitants of a locality, members of an ethnic group, inhabitants of a nation. And the meaning slides between these senses, but is assumed to be known. For example, 'Amy', a participant in *Capture Wales*, spoke about the important community arts value of the *Capture Wales* project. But 'Amy' was explicitly speaking as a community arts worker, whose first intention had been to bring

the *Capture Wales* project to her own town, for the benefit of the local population. And 'Vikram', another participant in *Capture Wales* said:

But the first one that we did, the sort of experimental one at Blackwood [Miners' Institute] was very revealing because you had all the facilities of the BBC available to you. I mean producers who have done programmes on radio and television that I recognised, you know, they weren't just some .. These people were available to have a look at our scripts, the sound engineer was a really great guy who was able to, in fact, in my case, because he couldn't find a recording of the music I wanted, he'd produced what I wanted simply from my description [..]. I found it a really brilliant use of public broadcasting facilities, you know, that they were making these very hi-tech things available to the community.
Individual interview with 'Vikram', *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales

Here, 'community' is about location: Blackwood Miners' Institute, to which 'Vikram' refers, is located *in* 'the community' and belongs to 'the community'. It is also very clear that the BBC and the Museum of London are not part of 'the community'; these institutions are admired for trying to get closer to the 'community', but they are not able to *be* it because they have not emerged from it.

In as much as 'community' does function as a categorising and constraining construct, this might be a construct that is laid over, or made out of, the self-representations that the individual participants produce, although I certainly would not want to suggest that the constraining and categorising is not powerful and effective, because of this. Nonetheless, when we look at the way that participants talk about producing self-representations as part of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, their comments do bring to mind the positive aspects of 'community as policy' activities, that Mayo identified (see Chapter 2).

Members of a North London Asian women's group who took part in the *London's Voices* project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*, said that they were proud of the chance to represent themselves to 'the public':

'Chendani': So when the exhibition was held in Uxbridge also we did go when the opening ceremony was there. Which was a thrill, really, really nice. Our name in the book our displays on the, on the board, her items.
[Everyone agreeing]
'Chendani': It was really nice.
Interviewer: So tell me why it was nice, what, how did it make you feel?

'Maya': We felt proud that our things have been shown .. to the public. And our stories have been shown. People are there, they'll come and read the stories, whatever life stories and...

'Kesar': Yeah people read our poems, people read our stories.

'Chendani': We are recognised, you know, by the public [*laughs*].

'Kesar': Because that is, it's not our name, it's written down [*****] .. Asian .. women's group; so we feel proud. We achieved something.
[*Murmurs of agreement*]

While, in this excerpt, the participants distinguish themselves from 'the public', this group of women were invited to represent themselves in a *London's Voices* project precisely as members of the public - the population of London. It seems that the kind of validation that they speak of in this excerpt led to these participants feeling that they are a legitimate part of the public, and yet they do not say this explicitly; what they say actually distinguishes them from that public: 'our things are shown to the public' and 'we are recognised by the public'. Throughout the interview, the women make comments that show that they consider themselves a group (a community) outside of the British public, which they present as a unified whole in their discourse. At the same time, they claim their place as part of that public, in that they feel that their participation in a project like *London's Voices* legitimises their voices, in public. Two excerpts highlight the way in which these women feel legitimised by their participation in the project, and yet distinguish themselves as a community, and as other to the wider British public:

Interviewer: Ok, ok .. Ok, so, what do you think, I would like to ask what you think the project was for, why would the museum do this project do you think?

'Chendani': To encourage the .. ladies to open up and say whatever their views .. and er think about if something is there in the exhibition.

'Kesar': For everyone, not for, just for white people there, everyone, everyone is welcome.

'Chendani': Mm.

Group interview, North London Asian Women's Group, participants in *London's Voices* sub-project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*. These women were of varied ages and recent migrants, as well as long term UK residents, from a range of countries.

Interviewer: And so when you read the stories of other people in London, did you see similarities or differences or?

'Maya': Difference So many difference.

'Sumati': So much difference, a lot of difference.

'Maya': Ha [*Yeah*]. We feel coming from abroad, because we are a little bit, little bit er different, we feel little bit ..

Group interview, North London Asian Women's Group, participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*. These women were of varied ages and recent migrants, as well as long term UK residents, from a range of countries.

In one sense, then, participation in the *London's Voices* project gave these participants a sense that their experience was legitimate in the public space provided by the museum exhibition. At the same time, while the display and website of *London's Voices* emphasises commonalities and difference across London's communities, these participants think that the self-representations highlight differences between their group and other participating groups. However they contradict this, by saying that the self-representations highlight shared experience on a human level:

'Maya': You know when I read somebody's life story, of somebody's I feel so something, I feel look, this person, how is going through this life, how he went through this life, now, where he is now. It's same story with us also.

Interviewer: Even if it's someone very different?

Both: It doesn't matter.

'Sumati': He's a human.

'Maya': He's a human being.

Group interview, North London Asian Women's Group, participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *Holidays of a Lifetime*. These women were of varied ages and recent migrants, as well as long term UK residents, from a range of countries.

These comments return us to the notion of 'ordinary people' in the everyday sense. In a similar way, 'Vikram' sees his digital story as addressed to the 'indigenous' Welsh population, and hopes that this story might lead people to reconsider their views on refugees, and to realise their shared experience on an 'ordinary' everyday level, as well as to realise that the apparently 'indigenous' Welsh community of the South Wales Valleys is made up of so many waves of immigration. These ideas of community as local, as ethnically based, as national, work to undermine the coherence of the notion of community. And it seems to me, therefore, that they might also undermine its effectiveness as a categorising and constraining construct.

The participants in both *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* spoke of the historical value of the collection of self-representations. And this view fits closely with one of the producer's intentions, which was to contribute these self-representations to the historical record, and also to contemporary representation of the members of the society, so that there is this notion of contributing to a broader whole:

'David': There's probably, probably people who look at them I suppose, they, they went to watch the ten o'clock news and this comes two minutes before the ten o'clock, and it happens. If it's a good one it strikes a note doesn't it.

Interviewer: Mm, strikes a note of understanding?

'David': That's right, that's right, yes.

Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

There is a tension in how the notion of 'community' works in these projects to highlight and to allow, and even to celebrate, difference, on the one hand, and to emphasise commonality on the other. When used to emphasise difference, and to fix people in specific communities, we can understand 'community' as operating to categorise and constrain. At the same time, when 'community' is called on to emphasise commonalities, we can also understand this as a constraint that does not allow individual difference to emerge. This summary can also be turned on its head: so that where 'community' is called on to emphasise difference, by people representing themselves, then the notion is being used by the individuals and groups concerned because they find identifying as a community useful. When the notion 'community' is used to emphasise commonality among people who are representing themselves, the individuals and groups concerned purposefully use it because they find emphasising commonalities useful. Deciding either that community operates as a constraining construct, or that it does not, elides recognition of the struggle and tension between the ways in which the term is used by the different people (at different times) who contribute to the processes of cultural mediation at work.

Quality

As suggested in Chapter 2, indicators of 'quality' vary according to what is being assessed. If quality is used to describe aspects of the processes of production, then different things are considered to be signs of quality, from those that are considered when the final outcome is being assessed. In the interviews with participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, quality is ascribed to production processes and to production outcome. Quality is shown to be important, and interviews with participants reveal a kind of opening up of the notion of quality, as well as a taking on of the discourse and signs of quality. In some cases, the issue of quality leads to a kind of pleasure in the feeling that the self-representation is taken seriously; in other cases it leads to a kind of refusal of the positioning constructed by these projects. These

different emphases by participants, around the notion of quality, serve to show how quality operates as a key tension in processes of cultural mediation. These tensions are real, in the sense that different individuals and groups require, expect, and evaluate quality differently, so that it is shown to be a concept that must fulfil sometimes contradictory, sometimes complementary, expectations and definitions. Hence the notion of quality is at the heart of people's understandings and expectations of what they were doing in representing themselves as part of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Some participants emphasised the quality of the process of production, even to the extent where they were completely disinterested in the outcome. Members of the reminiscence group, for example, talked about their pleasure and enjoyment at having been interviewed:

'Madge': Yeah well she, yes. She got in touch with Amanda, Amanda asked us would we be willing to do it. And we all said we would. And we found it very interesting in as much as it brought back. This is a reminiscence group.

Interviewer: Mm.

'Madge': And it brought back reminiscence that we thought we had forgotten. You see she starts to ask, well, when were you married or when were your children born or what job did you do, and all that sort of thing brought things back that we had not thought of for years.

Unidentified participant: No never think...

'Madge': So it was sort of therapeutic in a way, to us, as well as helping her to do her project.

Focus group interview with a Lewisham reminiscence group composed of elderly white working class women and men. Participants in *London's Voice's*' sub-project, *Lewisham Voices*.

For this group of participants, their evaluation of the quality of the experience rests on their enjoyment of, and interest in, the process by which the self-representations that make up the *Lewisham Voices* website were produced. Some group members said that they would have liked to spend more time with the museum curator who was working with them on their reminiscences, but this was not in regard to any particular desire to improve the quality of the outcome but, rather, because they enjoyed the reminiscence and wanted more.

The participants said that the process was extremely emotional and upsetting, as well as rewarding. People even talked about the process as being therapeutic. In this vein,

participants described the impact of hearing fellow group members' personal stories, as well as the time spent thinking about their own.

For other participants producing self-representations, quality of process is also emphasised as important, but in order to produce high quality outcome. Thus, participants in *London's Voices 16 - 19* expressed appreciation at working with professional photographers and writers. Similarly, participants in *Capture Wales* repeatedly emphasised the process, and talked about the quality of the experts available to help with the production of the self-representations:

But the first one that we did, the sort of experimental one at Blackwood [Miners' Institute] was very revealing because you had all the facilities of the BBC available to you. I mean producers who have done programmes on radio and television that I recognised, you know, they weren't just some .. These people were available to have a look at our scripts, the sound engineer was a really great guy who was able to, in fact, in my case, because he couldn't find a recording of the music I wanted, he'd produced what I wanted simply from my description.
Individual interview with 'Vikram', *Capture Wales* participant, middle-aged journalist originally from Fiji, long term resident of South Wales.

Here, 'Vikram' spoke of the high quality of the expertise available to assist people in their production of self-representations, and he meant this in the sense that it helped to produce the highest quality outcome. In this way, quality of process is linked to quality of outcome for the participants in *Capture Wales*, as it is for the producers of the project, as discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, for some participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, the quality of the outcome is completely linked to the skills that are developed through the professional assistance provided.

Some participants linked quality of expertise with quality of equipment, the implication being that this produced the highest quality production process. This kind of view fits with the producers' intention to have the highest quality equipment, as well as expertise, in order to create both the highest possible quality experience of process, and the highest quality outcome. Thus the participants in *16 - 19* dwelt on skills acquisition in photography, not only because of the opportunity of working with a professional photographer, but also because of the opportunity to use a professional standard camera. Interestingly, in the interests of economy (time and money) and equality (the other *16 - 19* groups would not all have the same opportunity), the museum did not emphasise the

use of professional standard equipment. In the photography project the museum intended participants to use throwaway cameras, but the photographer in one case wanted them to learn to work with a professional camera, so introduced this of his own accord. The museum staff emphasised professional expertise, but did not insist on high-level equipment, whereas in *Capture Wales* they emphasised both. The projects have different budgets but also different purposes: where *Capture Wales* involved perfecting the production of one specific form - digital stories - the Museum of London was interested in *experimentation* with different forms of collecting and exhibiting oral history.

Other participants emphasised that the quality of the process raised the kind of value that they saw attached to their efforts, through the ways in which the processes culminated in different forms of display. And again, in this way, quality of process is linked to quality of outcome. Members of the North London Asian Women's Group spoke proudly of the exhibition in which their self-representations were displayed in the local library. Clearly, the outcome was an important end to the process for these women, because it was the culmination of being listened to, first by the museum personnel who worked with them, and then by a wider public. Members of the Monmouth group who participated in *Capture Wales* also drew particular attention to the screening at the end of the workshop, in which their self-representations were displayed formally to workshop members, friends and family, as well as the BBC producers who had worked on the workshop. In a similar way to the North London Asian Women's Group, the *Capture Wales* participants in this particular workshop felt valued by this process and, I think, its formal execution was seen as another sign of the quality of the process.

Conversely, while some participants were not particularly concerned with outcomes, and some emphasised the linking of process to outcome, other participants experienced outcome as at odds with process. Some participants in *16 - 19* were disappointed by the showcase event in which their self-representations were displayed at the Museum of London. I emphasise that this was just one group of participants among many - I interviewed a member of another group that had participated in *16 - 19* and she thoroughly enjoyed the showcase event. However, she did not assess it in terms that raise this issue of tension over quality, and the comments of this particular group of participants are particularly interesting in terms of that tension:

'Kimberley': I think it was alright, yeah, but I didn't expect it to be like that, yeah, because I thought it would be like on a wall. But it wasn't, it was just like on a little telly with a DVD player or whatever they had.

Interviewer: What?

'Kimberley': Flicking through. And I didn't expect it to be like that, so I thought it was kind of a bit rubbish truthfully.

'Clifford': A normal TV with about five chairs for people to sit and there was about thirty people.

Interviewer: And whereabouts in the museum was it, when you come in the museum?

'Clifford': When you come, go right, it was just there.

Interviewer: That sort of entrance.

'Kimberley': In the corridor like no one even cared about us. They didn't even put us in properly, just in the corridor.

'Clifford': I thought our pictures were gonna be on the wall.

'Kimberley': That's what I thought it wasn't ...

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, 16 - 19.

It is not that the museum curators ever said that there would be a formal exhibition of the young people's photography, in a main gallery of the Museum of London. The showcase event always functioned as a celebration of the process, and as a launch for the 16 - 19 website, which was always intended to be the main outcome of the 16 - 19 project. However, these participants were probably told that they were invited to take photographs to represent their lives etc., and that these would be on show at the showcase event. From the point of view of these participants, they were learning professional photography, and associated the quality of the display with professionalism. They recognised that their photographs were displayed in the museum as, to borrow the BBC phrase, 'amateur content', and they found this disappointing.

While we might regard this wish for a formal exhibition of quality prints of their work in a proper gallery space as unrealistic, it is also possible to see this view as the logical progression of the idea that members of the public are told that their views are important to the museum, and their self-representations are being taken seriously. This complaint, even if it is a wilful misunderstanding on the part of these young people, does actually represent a challenge to the linkage of 'ordinary people's' self-representation with a lesser quality (in terms of production values).

Participants also thought about quality in terms of outcome, in the more familiar sense whereby quality is associated with high production values. Participants in *16 - 19* discussed the gradual improvement of the quality of the photographs that they were taking, as they became more experienced:

Youth worker: The main reason this one was used is because, if you take some of your early portrait photographs, quite often they would be out of focus or ...

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Youth Worker: Or, you know, could just have turned away or, you know. The other thing to be noted is, is not just about the subjects, it's also about the quality of the photographs that you took isn't it?

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Youth Worker: Because your photographs did improve and your choice of photograph improved.

'Kimberley': Yeah.

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, *16 - 19*.

'Interviewer': And then did you read them to each other and change them and...

'Joanna': Yeah. Like we evaluated them and, er, all the other group members helped us like to make it better.

Individual interview, *London's Voices*' sub-project, *16 - 19*. Joanna is a young teenage member of the writing group that was put together from a young people's reading group at an Afro-Caribbean South London library.

In this way the participants associated the quality of the outcome with the skills they developed in making the self-representation. It was striking that many participants felt they could have produced a 'better' self-representation if they had had a second opportunity, now that they had some experience in doing so, and had developed the necessary skills - technical, intellectual, emotional, etc; but also, they said, in terms of now knowing 'what was required'. That is, we could say, that they had learned some of the necessary skills to produce texts conforming to the genre of self-representation.

But quality of outcome is also associated with the capabilities of the technology per se, not only with people's abilities to master it. So, some particularly IT literate participants in *Capture Wales* talked about the 'poor quality' of the shorts viewed through RealPlayer on the Internet, and discussed the BBC website's reliance on RealPlayer as a drawback [*Capture Wales* group interview]. While, for other participants in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, the technology presented a barrier, not in quality terms, but

in terms of problems of access and ability to use. Furthermore, it was clear that some people do not use the internet, have no interest in doing so, and would prefer to view the shorts on television, implying that the 'quality' of the television viewing experience was preferable. This lack of interest in using new media technologies has been found in other studies (see, for example, Selwyn, 2003).

Another understanding of quality appears in several of the participants' accounts. In this view, quality is not seen as residing in production values, or skills training, or how the outcome is displayed. Rather, quality is seen to be inherent in the *content* of the self-representation, which is understood as the property of the person making the self-representation:

'David': It was good for them to learn a story, which in the end became quite successful, wasn't it, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. Famous. So you mean the BBC, when you say 'them', you mean the BBC?

'David': Yes, I do. Yeah because they've got enough technology haven't they, they're not worried about their technology anyway.

Interviewer: No.

'David': But they can be worried about their stories now and again.

Interviewer: Yeah?

'David': Because if you're looking for the quality story, they don't come very often. Because ... they're like leaves on a tree, they're all the same, but they're all different.

Interviewer: Mm.

'David': But, er, some particular leaves will stand out from the other leaves. Individual interview with a *Capture Wales* participant. 'David' is a retired miner and amateur photographer.

In this account, the ascription of quality changes direction. That is, quality is not about the production of the self-representation, and the way that the experts facilitate this in the process or in the outcome. Instead, quality is an innate aspect of the self-representation - it comes from the raw material that the individual is providing to the institution. This takes the notion proclaimed by the institutions - that there is so much of value in people's experience - and suggests that, in amongst all these 'ordinary' accounts, there will be some material of quality to compete with the rest of BBC content. What is notable is the way in which this refuses the generic boundaries of self-representation, in a similar way to the refusal expressed in the disappointment of some of the participants in 16 - 19, discussed above.

Finally, quality comes up in another sense pertaining to content and raw materials: here quality is understood as residing in what people have the opportunity to photograph:

'Clifford': No. I think there was one there that I think they were better, they were the one that come from (inaudible). That group they took better pictures than us.

'Kimberley': I think they must have had a better area than us though. ..

Interviewer: What do you mean?

'Kimberley': Cause there's nothing really to photograph. They had like flats and. What did they do, go to a window or something?

Youth Worker: They were based in central London so a lot of the buildings were a lot higher, so they had some interesting views.

Group interview with members of a North London youth group composed of working class young people from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Participants in *London's Voices*' sub-project, 16 - 19.

Other participants who claimed to find other people's self-representations of more interest, and by implication of better quality, than their own, echo this.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, the perspective of the participants on the making of self-representations was explored, in order to identify the constituents of the processes of cultural mediation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The discussion was structured by means of the same four areas that were used to structure the discussion of the processes of institutional and textual meditation in Chapters 5 and 6, since these again emerged in the data analysis as the key sites of tension over what the self-representations are, what they mean, and how they are understood.

Firstly, the ways in which the participants understood and described the purposes of self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* was discussed. Here, the focus was on how participants understood the purposes of the projects for themselves, as well as how they understood the purposes of the institutions in producing self-representations by members of the public. It was suggested that the most striking finding to emerge from discussion with, and observation of, the participants was the wide range of purposes that individuals saw for these projects that facilitate self-representation. It was argued that this diversity of views on the purposes of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* shows that a singular view of purpose is impossible. In fact, what is revealed about the processes of cultural mediation is an opening up of the notion

of self-representation; for example, while 'having a voice' does feature as a purpose, other purposes also emerged as important. Further, even 'having a voice' is broadened into 'having a voice' to: speak to private familial audiences, explore one's own identity for one's own benefit, speak to audiences across the globe, and speak to imagined future audiences. What happens then, in the processes of cultural mediation explored here, is an opening up of the purposes of the projects. The purpose of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* shifts for different individuals, and shifts for the same individual depending on how they are thinking about the project. This sheds a new light on the containing that must take place when the producers produce outcomes that are fixed in texts, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Secondly, the ways in which the notion of 'ordinary people' is invoked and undermined by participants in their discussion of their experience of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* was discussed. It was suggested that we can see ways in which 'ordinary people' does function to contain, and so must limit, people's representations of themselves. But it was argued that this is never complete because of the sophistication of these participants in using and undermining this notion. The particular way in which audiences as participants can, and do, use and undermine the ascription of themselves as 'ordinary people' is itself a characteristic of the genre of self-representation, because this genre allows room for participants to use and to refuse this notion. As I noted though, the power of the notion of the 'ordinary person' to define and so to constrain participants depends, in the end, on what weight we give to what people say about how they understand, and what they get out of participating in, these projects and, of course, by extension, what weight we give to the analysis of the processes of textual and institutional mediation. It is problematic to attempt to finally decide on this weighting; the key point is that we consider these processes of cultural mediation as central to the processes of mediation shaping self-representations in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Thirdly, it was suggested that the notion of 'community' is a site of tension, because it figures in contradictory ways in the participants' discussions. Participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* experience the community-building intentions of the producers as actually taking place, but the individual nature of each self-representation undermines the unifying notion of community. At the same time, because individuals speak for themselves, *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* address the problem inherent

(as Mayo argues) in community projects where community groups speak *for* different individuals (Mayo, 2006). The problem that Mayo raised, of who speaks for whom, is not entirely resolved because, of course, the self-representations here might well be read as representative of a wider community to which the individual belongs. It was suggested that it is impossible to say that 'community' functions to constrain or not. Instead, the way in which community functions both to hide, and to expose, issues of individual identity and the collective, make 'community' a key part of the processes of cultural mediation shaping self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Fourthly, the ways in which competing, often contradictory, sometimes complementary, notions of quality are used in participants' discussion of their experience was discussed. The ways in which some participants focused on the quality of the experience of producing the self-representations, to the extent that they were not interested in the final outcome, was illustrated. It was suggested that some participants linked quality of process with quality of outcome, and thought about the kind of experience and the production values of the outcome in terms of quality. Some participants talked about the equipment and expertise in terms of quality. The outcomes were defined in terms of quality and, for some participants, these were seen as high quality while, for others, they were seen as low quality, which forced their work into an amateur category. It was suggested that, in a refusal of the boundaries of the genre of self-representation, some participants spoke about quality as a property of the content of their self-representations: so that they were giving something of high quality to the institutions. The ways in which quality is pulled in different directions makes clear that it is a site of tension that is a key part of the processes of cultural mediation shaping self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

Interviews with, and observations of, the participants show how the key areas of tension – Purposes, Ordinary People, Community, and Quality – are continually pulled in multiple directions. The processes of cultural mediation really render unstable any categorical view of the meaning of self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. This finding fits with work on audiences that has long argued for multiple meaning making by audiences. However, as we turn to the conclusions of the thesis, we must remember that the meanings produced by participants are produced within unequal power structures, between institutions and audiences, and these are the contexts in which the texts appear.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis contributes to the growing body of literature concerned with what happens when the audience comes into contact with, or appears as part of, media productions. The research question addressed was: how do processes of mediation shape self-representation in public sector projects in the cultural sphere? The research began from the observation that members of the public are today representing themselves, in public, across a range of media and cultural spaces, to such a wide extent that our society has been labelled 'auto/biographical' (Plummer, 2001). Within the context of a wide range of ways in which members of the media audience come to appear, and to be involved, in the production of their own representation, it was suggested that it is of crucial importance to discover how those self-representations come to be what they are, particularly when there is an *explicit* claim that the people involved are representing themselves.

The notion of *processes* of mediation guided the investigation of the activity of those members of the audiences who are taking up the invitation to represent themselves on platforms provided by public service institutions of the cultural sphere. A multiple case study approach drawing on a range of qualitative methods - interviews, documentary analysis, textual analysis, and observation - was deployed in order to address publicly funded self-representation as a contemporary phenomenon not limited to media productions but, rather, as a contemporary characteristic of all kinds of media and cultural spaces. The multiple case study design was chosen as the most appropriate to explore publicly funded self-representation precisely as a contemporary phenomenon.

In this concluding chapter I first offer a brief summary of the thesis, and situate the findings of the present study in relation to other work on audiences who participate. This is followed by a discussion of how the findings generated in this research contribute to the debates on mediation that were outlined in Chapter 2. I then turn to discuss in detail the implications of the research presented here for the theoretical

problematics guiding the research, laid out in Chapter 2 - that is, I address the question, how do processes of mediation shape self-representation. This discussion begins with the constructs of the 'ordinary person' and the 'community, then moves on to consider the implications of this thesis for the question of self-representation as a more democratic form of representation, moving on to address the question with which Chapter 2 ended - that is, do self-representations challenge how members of the public are represented, or fix them in place as 'ordinary' members of 'communities'. The conclusion then turns to a discussion of the policy implications of the thesis. Finally, a discussion of the limitations of this thesis is followed by a discussion of the priorities that the research presented here suggests for future study.

Mediating Self-Representations: Summary

The thesis began with an introductory chapter that outlined the two case studies: The Museum of London's *London's Voices* and BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* as exemplars of the contemporary phenomenon of self-representation in publicly funded institutions of the cultural sphere. The theoretical approach taken, focusing on audience activity and the processes of mediation, was discussed in Chapter 2. The constructs 'ordinary people' and 'community' were explored in terms of their role in the processes of mediation shaping the production of self-representation, and the concept of three dimensions of mediation was introduced and explained: processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation. In Chapter 3, the histories of public service broadcasting and public museums were explored, in order to trace the background of the contemporary invitation to self-representation now being issued by these institutions. Next, the research design of the multiple case study, drawing on a range of qualitative methods, and its deployment in the present study, were discussed in Chapter 4. The empirical data was presented and discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, each chapter exploring a different dimension of the mediation process.

The case studies explored here add to the body of work exploring the participation of members of the public in talk shows, reality television, talk radio, and audience/user involvement in the internet. The research presented supports the proposition, increasingly noted by scholars, that contemporary media involve the audience in what Mehl has referred to as a 'flesh and blood relationship' (Mehl, 2005, p. 82). I take Mehl's phrase here to refer to the interactive relationship that is taking place between

media producers and their audiences, which is distinct from the interactive relationship by which audience research investigates how audiences interact as viewers, in their consumption of media outputs. This thesis suggests, moreover, that this characteristic is not limited to contemporary media, but that publicly funded museums also actively seek to involve their audiences. Thus, audiences participating are not limited to those who view television, but include those who visit museums, and those who use the internet. The discussion of the processes of institutional mediation, in Chapter 5, suggested that audience involvement is an explicit goal on the part of the institutions and the bodies that fund them. Self-representation is seen to be an effective way of encouraging participation. I return below to the notion of self-representation and the questions about democracy and the public sphere that it raises.

In common with other studies, this thesis has investigated the motivations of the audience members who took part in media productions. The wide range of motivations uncovered in this research echo those found in other studies. In *Freaks Talk Back*, Gamson finds participants using their appearance in talk shows to mark their difference from the everyday and the 'ordinary' others (Gamson, 1998). In an analogous way, as discussed in Chapter 7, this thesis found some participants wanted to make a self-representation that marked them as extraordinary, as different from everyone else.

Other studies have found people taking part because of the opportunity of 'something to do', as Syvertsen puts it in her discussion of a Norwegian dating programme, as noted in Chapter 2 (Syvertsen, 2001, p. 319). The idea that motivation came from the opportunity of 'something to do' is interesting, because it suggests that media participation is understood as an activity, among others, rather than the media being something to consume. This finding of 'something to do' was also echoed in the research conducted for this thesis, which further suggests that people participated in order to satisfy a range of different things that they wanted to do, as the discussion in Chapter 7 makes clear. Participants might be people who always join in with activities, were excited by the training afforded by the process, enjoyed the therapeutic aspect of talking their experiences through in the storytelling circle, or whose youth worker thought it might interest them when they were otherwise doing 'nothing'. This range of interests also parallels findings in research into why people take part in, and what they get out of, 'community' arts projects (Carey & Sutton, 2004; Mattingly, 2001). Thus, *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are inviting to people for some of the same reasons

as community arts projects are, suggesting that the institutions are producing projects that have a great deal in common with those projects that are begun by local, grassroots groups.

Contribution to debates about mediation

In order to think about the personal perspective that members of the audience (must) take up when they appear in public, the research presented in this thesis moved beyond a discussion of what participants claim to have gained, or to want, from taking part, to a discussion of the processes of mediation in which they become involved.

In Chapter 2, four theoretical approaches to the notion of mediation were introduced, and it was proposed that these are not mutually exclusive. The approach taken in this study was then introduced as a close exploration of mediation processes, which were separated into three dimensions: processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation. I now take each of the debates on mediation outlined in Chapter 2, and discuss how the findings in this study contribute to them.

First, I identified those scholars whose use of the concept mediation focuses on the role of technology in mediating between persons. In one sense, the findings in this study support Thompson's conception of mediation as referring to how communication is technologically mediated and replaces face-to-face interaction (Thompson, 1995). This study also adds support to the idea that the role of the digital warrants particular attention. There are examples of this technological understanding of mediation right across the data collected in this thesis. Producers and members of the audience imagine audiences with whom they communicate across time and space; that is to say, they consider both geographically separated audiences and audiences in the future. Such imaginings are possible because of the fact that self-representations are constructed using digital technologies, and displayed on websites promising both indefinite preservation and global access.

However, the close analysis of the processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation in the present study led to the argument that these multiple dimensions of processes of mediation are constituted through tensions in four areas: the purposes of the projects, the construct of the 'ordinary person', the construct of the 'community' and

various different ways of defining and achieving quality. These broad areas of tension showed both *how* the technological mediates the construction of the self-representations in question and, at the same time, that mediation processes entail much more than the technological.

Chapter 5, for example, in the discussion of tensions surrounding the purposes of the projects, showed that ‘using new technologies’ was central to the earliest planning of the projects. *Capture Wales*, run by the New Media department of BBC Wales, specifically set out to use new media technologies in innovative ways. Similarly the overall aim of *London’s Voices* was to broaden access to the already existing Oral History Collection, and to experiment with new ways of collecting. New technologies were seen to be integral to these goals in absolutely concrete ways: *Capture Wales* developed the digital storytelling form as a way to connect with audiences and to deliver new content for the BBC websites. *London’s Voices* made parts of its archive available on the web, collected new contributions from members of the audience through using new technology for collecting, and used the internet to display the newly collected self-representations.

In the discussion of the processes of textual mediation in Chapter 6, we saw how the technology of the internet interface makes possible a particular framing – a framing which, I argued, clearly evidenced tensions over the sometimes conflicting – even contradictory – purposes of the self-representations. Technology was also key in the construction of the complex but ubiquitous term ‘ordinary people’, because the ways in which the audience participants used technology, and the ways their uses were framed, marked the self-representations with a recognisably ‘amateur’ aesthetic.

The discussion of the processes of cultural mediation, in Chapter 7, showed how people’s imaginings regarding new technology permeated their discussions, particularly in terms of their views of the purposes of the projects, and their own reasons for taking part. Lastly, and particularly in *Capture Wales*, people took part specifically in order to familiarise themselves with new technologies. Technology was central to the tensions over quality, in particular the decisions to use, or not to use, professional standard equipment, and the bearings this had on the perceived quality of the process and of the outcomes.

Many participants were offhand about the possibility of their self-representations appearing on public media and cultural platforms. Nevertheless, the ways in which the unequal power relations between the institutions and the participating audience came to the fore in all the areas of tension that constitute the processes of mediation explored in this thesis, does suggest that the media are central to the processes of mediation shaping *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. However, it is important to acknowledge that, since this study positions media institutions and their productions at the centre of its analyses, it would be difficult to find that the media were not important. Finally processes of mediation as the never ending circulation of meaning, continuing far beyond the processes of production of any particular texts, in the sense the notion is deployed by Silverstone, Martin-Barbero and others, remains the wider context for the close analyses offered in this study (Martin-Barbero, 1993; Silverstone, 1999).

The work presented in this thesis, as a whole, is most directly a contribution to the conception of mediation found in Corner's article about Access television (Corner, 1994), and in work exploring how meaning is made across production, text, and audience (see, for example, Buckingham, 1987; D'Acci, 1994). This thesis contributes to this understanding of mediation, firstly in its conceptualisation of the three dimensions of the processes of mediation: institutional, textual and cultural, and, secondly, in the idea that mediation is constituted through tensions. I suggested that, in the case of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, the processes of mediation were constituted through tension in four areas: purposes of the projects, the construction of the 'ordinary person', the construction of 'community', and defining and achieving quality. This thesis suggests that mediation is constituted through tensions. I conclude, therefore, that, in other instances where self-representations are produced, processes of mediation are likely to be constituted through tensions as well, though the specificities of those tensions would depend on the particular instances in question.

Katz, as noted in Chapter 2, proposed that there might be another process at work, that of disintermediation, whereby the media professional's role in shaping what the audience receives decreases in the contemporary media environment (Katz, 1988). This thesis suggests, contrary to this, or at least in addition, that there is a new role for media professionals, and indeed museum curators - that of facilitators and intermediaries. A process of disintermediation may be taking place as audiences are in a position to create media in unprecedented ways; nevertheless, this thesis shows that there are audiences

who are encouraged and assisted in the creation of media representations who might not be doing so without the facilitation of institutions. There is a role for professionals as facilitators, then, but this also means that disintermediation has not taken place here: the old role continues; the institutions still retain the power to frame representations.

How Do Processes of Mediation Shape Self-Representations?

Ordinary people

In Chapter 2 it was suggested, building on Williams' *Keywords*, that four senses of the term 'ordinary people' are used in popular and in academic discourse. The four senses of 'ordinary people' were labelled as denigration, celebration, everyday, and citizenry. These contradictory and competing views of the public as 'ordinary people', in the denigratory, celebratory, everyday and citizenry senses, were also seen in the discussion of the historical formation of the public museum and public service broadcasting, in Chapter 3.

The empirical analyses of the case studies supported this a priori theoretical work, when it was found that the construct of the 'ordinary person' emerged as one of the key areas of tension constituting the processes of mediation shaping the production and display of the self-representations produced by *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, where the processes of institutional, textual and cultural mediation were each separately explored through the data, I showed how the four different senses of the construct 'ordinary people' shaped the ways in which producers and participants spoke about, and shaped, the self-representations produced and displayed on the institutional platforms.

The data analysis suggests that 'ordinary people' carries the negative, denigratory connotations of Adorno and Horkheimer's undifferentiated, ignorant, and even threatening, label 'mass'. It seems that producers' understanding of that connotation informs their reluctance to use the term or, if they do use it, then they qualify it to indicate their awareness of the problems it raises.

Members of the audience who have produced their own self-representations within the *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* projects invoke 'ordinary people' from a very

different position from the producers, who have invited, and who facilitate, the production of their self-representations. There is an unequal power dynamic at play here. The producers who are wary of the denigratory connotations of the term 'ordinary people' do not themselves fit the definition of the 'ordinary person'. As discussed in Chapter 2, Couldry suggests that, here, there is a division between 'ordinary worlds' and 'media worlds'(Couldry, 2000a). This idea of a symbolic division is important when considering the data analysis presented in this thesis.

We find a knowing audience, supporting the history of work in audience studies, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The audience participating here by making their own self-representations knows, just as the producers know, that 'ordinary people' carries negative, denigratory connotations but, like the producers, they do not invoke those. Audience members do two things: firstly, throughout the process of production, as well as in interviews with me, they all undo the notion of the 'ordinary person' by showing how the extraordinary and the unique are central to its construction. Secondly, the audience members who participate in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* variously claim their ordinariness by celebrating their right to speak, showing their commonalities across difference, and invoking their citizenry status.

These moves are supported by the producers who, like Carpentier's characterisation of the producers of *Video Nation* (Carpentier, 2007a), aim to minimise inequalities between the institution and the members of the public. Thus, the producers qualify their use of the term 'ordinary people', in order to make clear they do not mean it in a denigratory sense. Moreover, the producers also aim to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary – hence, members of the production teams spoke about spending time with each unique story, and used the workshop process to bring out individual and unique experiences. I suggest that this conception of uniqueness *does* undo the designation 'ordinary'.

It is not surprising to find that the persons involved in the day-to-day production of the self-representations, as well as those persons higher up the organisation, want to claim value in the presentation of these self-representations for the institutions and, following this, for their legitimacy today. And, in so doing, as we have seen, 'ordinary people' are invoked in the processes of institutional mediation in the senses of celebration, the everyday and the citizenry. Thus, excluded voices are given a space on institutional

platforms, and in this process these accounts are rendered legitimate as alternative versions of history. In this light, consider the comments of a Trainer on *Capture Wales*, Huw Davies, on how the self-representations produced by *Capture Wales*, taken together, problematise representations of Welsh history (Chapter 5), or see how the young participants in *London's Voices 16 - 19* play with my own, and the wider media's assumptions about their lives (Chapter 6). This is democratising the media, and democratising through the media – hence, both are examples of the celebration and citizenry senses of 'ordinary people', both explicitly political connotations and goals.

But maybe overall the everyday sense of 'ordinary people' is strongest. As research has long made clear (see, for example, Coleman, 1997; Corner, 1994; Couldry, 2000a; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994), the members of the audience who participate in media productions are doing so from a structurally different power position from those who invite this participation, and this structuring is clearly not absent from *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, even while there are explicit attempts to address it. This power structure is evident when we turn to the construction of the 'ordinary person' in the texts: the processes of textual mediation.

The close analysis of selected self-representations demonstrated the undoing of the notion of the 'ordinary person'. In the discussion of processes of the textual mediation, we saw 'ordinary people' invoked as the celebration of excluded voices, or as the citizenry achieving exposure in public spaces. However, the processes of textual mediation invoked the notion of the 'ordinary' most strongly, I suggest, in the everyday sense of the term. The understanding of 'ordinary people' in the everyday sense can be read as celebratory of everyday life and commonalities, but it is not *as* explicitly political as the citizenry sense of 'ordinary people'. This returns us to the debate between Schlegloff and Billig, discussed in Chapter 2 (Billig, 1999; Schegloff, 1999). Schlegloff claimed that ordinariness emphasises the commonality and shared positions from which we all speak, while Billig argues that 'the ordinary' denies difference, and the consequent unequal power relations. The research presented in this thesis suggests that 'ordinary people' is a slippery and contentious term precisely because it fulfils both these functions: it can operate to deny difference and with it inequality, as Billig argues, but functions to emphasise commonalities as well. We have seen the construct 'ordinary people' functioning in both ways in the way it is invoked and avoided strategically by

producers from the institutions, BBC Wales and the Museum of London, as well as by participating members of the public.

In the presentation of 'ordinary people's' self-representations in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, commonality is emphasised, even while close analysis reveals difference. Perhaps there is some risk that the overall impression the audience would get from these self-representations is of shared everyday experience uniting 'us all' and, at the same time, a reaffirming of Couldry's hierarchy between 'ordinary' and 'media' worlds.

Communities

The connotations of the construction 'community' were discussed in Chapter 2. The idea that 'community' operates as a claim, as a desire, as well as symbolically, has been noted by scholars (Anderson, 1991; Silverstone, 1999). Moreover, it was suggested that 'community' summons an image of people, not institutions (Williams, 1983), but that the concept, because of its symbolic connotation, is dangerous, because in invoking some people it excludes others (Bauman, 2001; Hall, 1999). Rose's reference to the influence of American Liberal Communitarian thinkers like Etzioni (Etzioni, 1997) and Putnam (Putnam, 2000) on British New Labour's Third Way was noted, as was Mayo's suggestion that 'community' *is itself* currently functioning as policy.

To return to Rose and to Mayo, both have suggested that the idea of 'community' has become a key concept in contemporary policy and politics (Mayo, 2006; Rose, 2001). Rose suggests that US communitarian thinkers are key to the formation of the Third Way, discussing the role of 'community' as envisaged by those thinkers:

The communitarian answer to the crisis of values, however, differs from that proposed by neoconservatives. What was necessary was not strong government but the recreation of civic engagement. Moral order cannot rest on legal codes enforced and upheld by guardians; it is embodied and taught through the rituals and traditions in the everyday life of 'communities'. Hence a strategy to recreate civic morality cannot succeed if it seeks to articulate and enforce a fixed set of virtues, but must seek to recreate 'community' engagement, to foster moral dialogue within and among diverse 'communities' around a minimum set of core values shared by all (Rose, 2001, p. 7).

And, as quoted at length in Chapter 2, Mayo noted the risks, but also the benefits, to members of the public of what she described as 'community as policy'.

The empirical work presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis suggested that 'community' was important to the mediation of self-representations. Specifically, *tensions* over the construct 'community' were a key factor in the processes of mediation shaping the self-representations produced in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. Thus, in the processes of institutional mediation, the term was ubiquitous. In particular, the term 'community' appears central to the original funding proposals, so that making 'community' central might be said to be key to getting funding in the first place.

The ubiquity of the construct 'community' in the discourse surrounding *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* adds support to Rose's claim that it can be understood as a tool of governance. Furthermore, the ubiquity of 'community' in the producer discourse, in particular, suggests that 'community' is policy, not only in the areas of regeneration and development on which Mayo focuses, but also in the cultural sphere.

The value of an exploration of processes of mediation is that it allows us to see behind-the-scenes of the discourse to which Rose refers. In Chapter 5, we saw that, while the term 'community' is ubiquitous in the discourse surrounding the projects, at the same time, there is considerable tension over what it means. 'Community' is both the place where the audience is located, and an ideal that the projects should contribute to bringing into being. Producers' use of the term 'community' seems to signal the desire to unite people, across their differences; that is to build 'community' amongst the members of the audience who participate in the projects. Silverstone's argument, that 'community' always operates as a claim, is borne out by the discussion of how the term figures in the processes of institutional mediation discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, Silverstone's suggestion that the belief in the thing brings it into being is also supported (Silverstone, 1999). Thus, in believing in community as something that can be found and/or can be constructed, moments of what can perhaps be described as community are brought about. This was very clear in the observation of group events: the workshops run by *Capture Wales*, the young people taking photographs for *16 - 19*, and even the 'community' created by the juxtaposition of individual and group experience on the websites of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*.

The investigation of the processes of institutional mediation shows that 'communities' are sometimes built across difference - for example, in the bringing together of people who would never normally meet, such as that which takes place in the *Capture Wales* workshop. At the same time the detailed exploration of the processes of production highlighted that, in giving voice to distinct 'communities', it is shown to be challenging to try to unite them across their difference. In both *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, analyses of the processes of textual mediation showed that 'community' was built in the presentation of diverse individual stories on the websites as much, if not more, than among the people themselves in their material lives. Moreover, contradictory definitions of 'community' emerge from the textual analysis: 'community' as singular, plural, existing and lacking. The analyses of the processes of cultural mediation discussed in Chapter 7 show that the idea of any one 'community' is called into question by the fact that the notion figures in contradictory ways in participants' discussions.

On the one hand, this thesis has highlighted some of the problems that arise in attempts to unite individuals as a collectivity, thus giving support to Bauman, and Hall, both of whom have suggested that 'community' functions to exclude people (Bauman, 2001; Hall, 1999). At the same time, we see *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* being used to bring individuals together, not only by means of the institutions' efforts, but also by the participants themselves. An example of this is that one woman taking part in the *London's Voices* project *Holidays of a Lifetime* saw her participation as a chance to counter what she saw as stereotypical representations of the 'black community', and here she explicitly spoke as a member of that 'community'.

Tension over the meaning and function of 'community' is thus central to the processes of cultural mediation shaping the production of self-representations. The exploration of processes of mediation suggests that today's public service institutions continue in their longstanding role of assisting in the imagination of a national 'community' (Alexander & Jacobs, 1998; Anderson, 1991; Silverstone, 1999). However, at least on the part of the institutions making these projects, imagining national 'community' is today about imagining, constituting and giving space to the diverse 'communities' that make up the nation. Thus, the findings in this thesis support much recent academic work which suggest that, as Silverstone puts it, the casualty is the national 'community' (Silverstone, 1999). Or, perhaps more correctly, what this thesis suggests is that the effort to imagine the nation differently *is* taking place, at least in *Capture Wales* and

London's Voices, and, following from this, we can speculate that it is also likely to be taking place in other, similar, projects.

The exploration of processes of mediation shows that taking part in imagining 'communities' means taking part in conflicts about what 'community' means and who it is for. Certainly the idea that 'community' is part of policy can be seen in the wording of the BBC's *Connecting with Communities* policy, in the *HLF* support for community projects, and in *London's Voices*' work with 'communities'. Therefore, there is support in the findings of this thesis for the idea that 'community' is now a key notion in governance, as Rose argues, and as Mayo's work also suggests. However, in both *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, where members of the audience are producing their own self-representations and taking part in the projects for their own reasons, this functioning of 'community' is troubled, because the projects actually raise and make explicit the complex and contradictory issues at stake in the notion. This thesis suggests that projects inviting self-representation have a useful role in relation to the unpacking of 'community', and that this is the case is tied to the involvement of the public, the relation to the audience, and the consequent (cl)aim to democratise representation.

Self-representation as a more democratic form of representation?

I noted in Chapter 2 that the possibility for media and cultural spaces to function as a public sphere, in the sense of the Habermasian ideal, has long concerned media scholars (see, for example, Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). I did not explore critiques of Habermas' ideal public sphere, nor did I address the issue of whether or not the media should, or could ever, be understood as a public sphere. Rather, I focused on two questions: firstly, the role of the media at a time in which it has been argued that *a range of publics* have replaced *the public*; and, secondly, the place of the personal in the public sphere.

Gitlin's argument that contemporary life is characterised by a proliferation of groups who are out of touch with each other (Gitlin, 1998) raised the question for the present study of why nationally funded public service institutions of the cultural sphere are inviting members of different groups (or 'communities', following the discussion above) to represent their experience *to* each other. Of course, underlying this question is the possible implication that the public was once more united than it presently appears to be. To discuss this claim is beyond my present scope, but I refer to the discussion in

Chapter 3 which does not show a move from one united public to a range of publics, but, rather, a move to recognise and accept as positive the existence of the range of publics.

In Chapter 2, I asked whether self-representation is seen to help in facilitating communication across different and separated groups. It seems to me that this question is addressed by the discussion of the role of 'community' above. A focus on 'communities' is prevalent as a way to describe who makes up the public. Thus, the BBC has a *Building Public Value* review, and *Connecting Communities* forms part of that strategy. This focus on 'communities' in the plural would seem to add support to Gitlin's contention that we should think in terms of public sphericules rather than the public sphere. Furthermore, the institutional focus on the public as a range of communities suggests that this notion of publics who are out of touch with each other is considered to be a problem, and one which public participatory programmes, of which self-representation projects are a type, can help to address. These implications come across in the discussion of the processes of institutional mediation in Chapter 5. Above all though, the exploration of the processes of mediation, across the dimensions of institution, text, and culture, suggests that there are tensions surrounding the many perceived purposes of *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. As a result, the aspiration to unite publics who are out of touch with each other is just one purpose among many.

A second aspect of the debates about the concept of the public sphere, raised in Chapter 2, concerned the place of the personal in the public sphere. This study finds categorical support for the earlier suggestion by Livingstone and Lunt, with regards to audience participation in talk shows, that the opportunity to speak comes with limits (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). The self-representations produced in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* must, by definition, speak from personal and experiential perspectives. Even where the form is very different - audiences participating in workshops to create their own self-representations, rather than audiences appearing in a talk show - the participating audience *must* speak in a way that marks the representation as self-representation, by speaking from personal perspectives. Thus, in Chapter 5, we saw how a personal perspective was encouraged in the workshops producing the digital stories, indeed it was intrinsic to the form. And in the discussion of textual mediation in Chapter 6, an experiential basis was shown to be a marker of the genre of self-representation.

Before we immediately assume that speaking from personal perspectives is a drawback or a weakness of the projects, however, we must consider the discussion of the processes of cultural mediation in Chapter 7. Here, we saw that the participants *enjoyed* speaking from experience and, in fact, *expected* the opportunity to speak from experience as an intrinsic part of the process of producing their own self-representation. In some cases, people took part precisely because the process afforded them the opportunity to speak - and think - about personal experience. 'Rebecca' and 'Vikram', for example, were two participants in *Capture Wales* who found it valuable to think about their lives. 'Vikram' found himself delving into family history in a way that he had not done before, and in a way that he hoped might have wider, and political, ramifications. He hoped that the audience he imagined for his self-representation might come to reconsider their attitudes to refugees. Some teenage participants in the *London's Voices 16 - 19* project expected that speaking from their experience might have led to improvements to their physical environment.

These examples show that the process of 'speaking from experience' can have a range of benefits. Sometimes these benefits are private, as was the case when I was reprimanded by a participant in *Capture Wales* for asking the wrong questions, when I asked the focus group participants why the BBC was doing this kind of project. This participant said that I should rather ask what people get out of participating. In some cases, speaking from experience served less private intentions, as in the examples of 'Vikram', the refugee from Fiji, discussed above, or the young people who participated in *London's Voices 16 - 19*, or the Asian women who participated in *Holidays of a Lifetime*. All of these participants hoped that their speaking from experience would impact upon how they were perceived and understood by the wider public.

Now, this view of the value of speaking from experience connects to wider debates about the public sphere. This value placed on personal experience in public recalls Van Zoonen's argument that the visibility of 'humdrum experience' in public is valuable, because it changes the bounds of what is an acceptable part of public discourse (Van Zoonen, 2001). And, at the same time, the value placed on personal experience, as potentially leading to change, recalls ideas about the relation between how what takes place in media spaces does or does not lead to actual material change beyond media spaces, an issue raised by Fenton (Fenton, 2007). I return to these debates below.

The exploration of the production of self-representations in the cases of *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* suggests that there are strong similarities between very diverse kinds of self-representations by members of the audience across genres and spaces. Thus, issues raised by two such different things as, on the one hand, participation in reality television and, on the other, participation in internet activist networks, are also raised by the concern of this thesis with the production of self-representation.

Above all, the injunction that the genre of self-representation means speaking from personal, experiential perspectives unites the self-representations produced in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* with self-representations in other forms, as a similar finding is reported in research on talk radio, reality television, dating programmes, and internet homepages, as well as Access television and the online *Video Nation* project (Carpentier, 2003; Cheung, 2000; Coleman, 1997; Dovey, 2000; Gamson, 1998; Griffen-Foley, 2004; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Priest, 1995; Syvertsen, 2001; Van Zoonen, 2001).

Challenging representation or fixing in place

That participating audiences are always participating from a personal and experiential perspective, and that the audience producing their own self-representations is not an exception to this rule, suggests that audiences who participate are fixed in place as 'ordinary people', as the bearers of experience and, as such, are different from the inhabitants of media worlds, recalling once more Couldry's division between media and ordinary worlds (Couldry, 2000a).

However, while these projects can be understood as part of a much wider shift in terms of what is considered to be appropriate public subject matter, it does not follow that the division between what is deemed public, and what is deemed private, subject matter is being challenged. That is because, firstly, private subject matter is associated with the genre of self-representation. Secondly, private subject matter is associated with the constructions of 'ordinary people' speaking from, and/or located in, 'communities'. Finally, private subject matter is associated with texts that are identifiably that of the genre of self-representation, bearing the 'quality' of the amateur aesthetic discussed in Chapter 6. Now, this 'amateur aesthetic' can be read as positive – the claiming of a

distinct aesthetic (in Atton's terms) - but it can also be seen as resulting in a fixing in place (in Bourdieu's terms), as precisely *not* being equivalent to the consecrated arts of fine artists and film makers, who operate in public as professionals (Atton, 2002; Bourdieu, 1990 [1965]).

Thus, while the self-representations explored in this study contribute to a widening of what is deemed worthy of public exhibition, at the same time, as I noted above and in Chapter 2, the question is raised as to the implications beyond representation, of this change in public subject matter. Carpentier makes a distinction between participation 'in' and participation 'through' the media, and argues that participation *in* the media allows citizens to be active in daily life, and to exercise their right to communicate, while participation *through* the media, he suggests, '[...]allow people to learn and adopt a democratic and/or civic attitude, thus strengthening (the possible forms) of macro participation' (Carpentier, 2007b, p. 88). In a related discussion, Livingstone suggests:

The resources, the competences, the motivations which lead people to participate in public draw – in a manner little understood – on the lived experiences and activities, the conditions and constraints, the identities and relationships of people in their status as private individuals. In other words, rather than denigrating certain kinds of sociality as 'less than public' - as pre- or proto- or quasi-public – we could ask, what does it take for people to participate in public, what does the public require, what are its preconditions? (Livingstone, 2005b, pp. 28-29).

Livingstone is talking here about the audience in terms of their activity as private individuals; she goes on to cite family discussions as an example of where opinions are formed. I am deploying Livingstone's argument here in a slightly different direction, to suggest that we should not dismiss the self-representations produced because they always come from an experiential perspective and focus on personal experience. The implication of both Carpentier's and Livingstone's remarks for my argument here, is that the audience activity of producing self-representation *could* indeed lead *from* the personal *to* the public.

The discussion in Chapter 7 showed that some audience members saw their opportunity to produce a self-representation as absolutely linked to a wider social politics. The young participants in 16 - 19, for example, seemed to assume that there would be a link between their representing what they felt was wrong with the area, and something being done to improve their area in light of their representation. However, as their youth

worker commented, the young people were now accustomed to being asked for their opinion, though not yet to seeing it acted upon. The youth worker's remarks suggest that the young people's point to me, in interview, that they expected something to change as a result of their participation in *London's Voices*, was better understood as an indication of something that they hoped for, but did not really expect.

I argued, in Chapter 2, that tracing the link between participation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, and projects like them, and material political action in social life is beyond the scope of this thesis, but that the question of how self-representations are mediated is absolutely a key precursor to any assessment of micro- or macro-participation, in Carpentier's terms. It is in this area of concern that this thesis contributes an exploration of exactly *how* self-representations are mediated. The projects studied are further examples of how processes of mediation can work, as Carpentier notes, in regard to how *Video Nation* is different from other mediated self representations:

The British television and web-project *Video Nation* illustrates that the obstacles can effectively be reduced when the involved media professionals adopt an open, honest, respectful, process-oriented, and (micro-) participatory attitude, based on a thorough analysis of the power processes and imbalances (Carpentier, 2003) (Carpentier, 2007a, p. 167).

Corner, too, in his earlier discussion of Access television noted:

For it is how 'ordinary people' appear and speak on television, within particular formats, which determines both the character and the success of 'access' socially and politically (Corner, 1994, p. 20).

In the present thesis, the investigation of processes of mediation showed that the participating audience members are thoroughly involved in the processes through which their self-representations are produced, and that the producers are concerned to facilitate the self-expression of the audience members. Of course, the thesis also shows that these efforts on the part of the producers and curators take place within hierarchically unequal relations between the institutions and their audiences. Thus, the discussion in Chapter 5 showed how the facilitation of self-representation provides legitimacy to the publicly funded institutions and, in Chapter 6, we saw how it is the institutions that frame the self-representations.

Clearly, the institutional framing confers an authority that the self-representations do not possess by themselves. Indeed, producers are well aware of this - in both case studies they mentioned in interview the authority conferred on the self-representations by the institutions as a given, precisely because the institutions *are* institutions:

Cathy Ross: And there's, I'm sure, a lot more people or, sort of, groups like that out there wanting to do it. And it just seems to me, both for Rory beforehand and certainly with Annette, that there's, you know, there's lots of projects out there that want the Museum of London to take part, partly because the Museum of London sort of validates .. what they, they do.

Interviewer: mm.

Cathy Ross: Because we are an institution.

Interview with Cathy Ross, Head of Later London Department, Museum of London.

Maggie Russell: In 15 years time, when somebody's doing a PhD about the growth of user generated content, do I think digital storytelling will be one of the key things that will have been a thing to show that it is possible and deliverable? Yes. Do I think it's a key cornerstone in debates that are going on at the moment? Undoubtedly. You know, 4 years ago it didn't exist in the UK, 4 years later I think there's 5 or 6 PhD students who have done stuff on it. You know, that's massive.

Interviewer: Mm. Mm.

Maggie Russell: You know, it's in the institutions.

Interview with Maggie Russell, Head of Talent, BBC Wales.

At the same time, as the exploration of the processes of institutional mediation in Chapter 5 shows, the self-representations confer legitimacy on the institutions as public institutions. It seems as if currently, they need each other in order to attain legitimacy – the institutions need to show that they are providing a public platform, and the public need the platform provided by the institutions in order to gain legitimacy for their self-representations.

Meadows cites the occasion when Dai Evans stormed the stage at the Digital Storytelling Conference in Cardiff as evidence of a kind of healthy disrespect for the institutions on the part of the public:

So the people who attend love it. I mean, that's indisputable and I think when you see the conference, it was just wonderful. Dai took over on the opening night and that's how our participants are, you know, not that respectful of the BBC as an institution.

Interview with Daniel Meadows, Creative Director, *Capture Wales*.

But we have to return to the framing of the self-representations to see that, whatever participants feel towards institutions, nevertheless they are still framed as 'ordinary' and they are fixed, at least in the moment of the self-representation. There is no fundamental challenge to the power of institutions to name and place those that they represent.

However, the discussion in Chapter 7 makes clear that these factors do not mean that we should dismiss what audiences say they get out of taking part in the production of their self-representations.

In Chapter 2, I suggested that Couldry's conception of 'ordinary and media worlds', and Rose's argument that 'community' functions as a tool of governance in New Labour policies, are both suggestive for considering the production of self-representation in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*. The idea of a tool of governance allows one to consider how policies like the BBC's *Connecting Communities* can be understood as part of a wider set of policies which do function in the way Rose describes in conjunction with other New Labour social policies and, beyond, as part of the neo-liberal Post-Washington Consensus to which Mayo refers. However, this is not the end of the story.

The notion of some kind of mediated public space is, I think, necessary for thinking about what happens when audiences come into contact with the media and, in particular, when they make representations of themselves to be disseminated publicly. We can use the idea of a mediated public space without upholding Habermas' ideal type public sphere, as Livingstone notes:

After all, the media are not so successful in managing their complex institutions, texts and audiences so as to exclude deliberation, contestation, even transgression. Perhaps the media can, under certain conditions, play a role in exploring or challenging the limits of governmentality rather than merely serving as the instrument of its ever-more efficient control. Where else, after all, could such contestation occur if not in mediated spaces? (Livingstone, 2005b, pp. 36-37).

I suggest we can think about the operation of the notion of '*community*' and the construct of the '*ordinary person*' as governing structures through a metaphor of cracks and valves in structures. We might imagine valves in the structures of governance, whereby facilitating self-representation in mediated public spaces does nothing more than maintain the status quo – because it *allows* people to speak for themselves as a way

of pacifying any demands to actually be heard through meaningful democratic representation – again, note the youth worker’s remarks that the young people he works with are accustomed to being asked what they think, but just not yet to seeing anything happen as a result of what they say.

Alternatively, we might imagine cracks in structures, whereby there is a breaking through or a breaking down of the status quo through an undermining of what ‘community’ is about and what ‘ordinary people’ means. For it is clear that these projects do not remove tensions in what ‘community’ membership means, even though such tensions might be expected to damage the project of constructing ‘community’. All of these projects involve some degree of self-representation or collaboration. As a result, the ways in which individual participants position themselves - as ‘ordinary’, as belonging to a ‘community’, or not – cannot be, and the empirical work suggests is not, fully controlled. And so it follows that what ‘community’ and ‘ordinary’ mean, and therefore how they function, is also beyond complete control, and is in fact the site of power struggle through discourse – a struggle that we have seen in the empirical exploration of processes of mediation shaping self-representations in *Capture Wales* and *London’s Voices*.

Policy Implications

Media literacy agendas

Since the Communications Act of 2003 required of the new regulatory body, OFCOM, that it ‘promote media literacy’, debate has continued in the field of media studies as to what ‘media literacy’ actually means (Buckingham, 1993; Christ & Potter, 1998; Kintgen, Kroll, & Rose, 1988). OFCOM defines media literacy as the ability to ‘Access, Understand, and Create’ media, and Silverstone³⁹ recently suggested three ways to think about media literacy, which arguably apply to all three parts of the more instrumental OFCOM definition:

the question of media literacy as a societal capacity or as an individual competence; the question of the difference between media literacy and information literacy; and the crucial observation that media literacy should

³⁹See also Livingstone, S., Van Couvering, E., & Thumim, N. (2005). *Adult Media Literacy: A review of the research literature*, London: OFCOM, February.

be seen as a product of the interrelationship between producers and consumers of media, not necessarily as something that pertains only to the individual in isolation (Silverstone, 2007, p. 181).

Taking the suggestion that media literacy includes the opportunity to 'create' media, in OFCOM's terms, this thesis contributes through the detailed exploration of projects where the audience does precisely that. Above all, the research findings agree with Silverstone's assertion that media literacy 'should be seen as a product of the interrelationship between producers and consumers of media'.

Considering *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* from the perspective of media literacy, highlights the differences between the projects. *London's Voices*, as we have seen, produced a range of kinds of self-representations, in which new media technologies were used sometimes and sometimes not used at all. *Capture Wales* delivers workshops which teach participants how to use specific new media tools of image and sound editing. More generally, and equally importantly, both projects familiarised participants with production processes. In these projects those who might not have access are provided with the opportunity to develop media production skills and, crucially, critical reading skills – gained through insights into the processes of production.

Nonetheless the issue remains of middle class, well-resourced people taking up the opportunities more than others. This is an issue with *Capture Wales* – and was raised, for example, by the Head of Press and Publicity at BBC Wales, in the context of the difficulties in marketing a project like *Capture Wales*. However, *Capture Wales* does also reach a wider constituency, as well, as evidenced by the array of people's stories that are featured on the *Capture Wales* website. And, in the case of the more targeted projects of *London's Voices*, more of the people who do not traditionally use the museum are involved by the projects under the *London's Voices* umbrella. Both approaches should continue to be encouraged, as there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach to recruiting people to take part in self-representation.

Ultimately, different kinds of understanding of literacy are satisfied by the two projects. *Capture Wales* connects most directly to the media literacy agenda. Moreover, *Capture Wales* is highly successful as a media technology training course. The audience feedback that all *Capture Wales* participants complete shows very high levels of

satisfaction in terms of all aspects of the workshop, including the training in new media technology that is provided. *London's Voices* is less directly concerned with building media literacy skills, although these do result in a less direct and perhaps less in-depth way. However, we cannot criticise *London's Voices* in terms of the media literacy agenda because training in media literacy was never an aim of the project, rather it is worth noting that, even where media literacy is not an explicit aim, it can nevertheless be a result. The point is that, where media training occurs as part of a broader aim, in this case to produce a self-representation, then it can be very effective. I witnessed this as an observer: where people are using media in order to do something else that interests them, and the tools are simply there to help, then the tools are not the focus and are not off-putting but, rather, facilitate the person's aims.

There is a problem in terms of reaching people for both projects; indeed, the BBC's own internal report on user-generated projects recognised this. And, at *London's Voices*, the use of community groups does beg the question - can those members of the public who do not join community groups be encouraged to take part. Of course, these issues are of perennial concern to professionals involved in public participatory projects of all descriptions. But I do suggest that facilitating self-representation is important, not only because of the opportunity it affords for members of the audience to create their own representation, but also because along the way those people learn skills that can be applied elsewhere. It does seem that public bodies of all types support the facilitation of self-representation; this support would be more effective if its promotion were better resourced. David Cartwright, Head of Press and Publicity at BBC Wales, notes in his interview that perhaps marketing new kinds of activities like this requires wholly new marketing strategies. Perhaps the time has come for these new strategies to be developed, since encouraging resources in this direction would be a way to give teeth to the *create* aspect of the media literacy agenda, that both OFCOM and the BBC claim to support.

Future Priorities

Limitations

The methodological approach of the multiple case study allows certain questions to be addressed, and was chosen for its appropriateness to the research question with which

this study began. However, at the same time, limitations arise from the constraints of the multiple case study. As noted in Chapter 4, the decision to focus on more than one case has the advantage of making it possible to explore a phenomenon taking place in two differing contexts: public service broadcasting and public museums. However, a focus on just one of these case studies would have allowed a deeper investigation of all facets of the processes of mediation at work.

In particular, the ethnographic aspects of the research could have been taken further whereby many more workshops - the actual processes of production - could have been observed. This leads to another limitation also noted in Chapter 4, that access to the audience participants was necessarily achieved via the institutions. The reasons why this approach was taken have already been discussed, but it should be noted that it does mean that audience members came last in terms of contact, rather than the investigation starting with them and leading to the producing institutions. In this way, unfortunately, the hierarchy of institutions and their audiences has been replicated in this study.

The conceptual separation of mediation into three dimensions - institutional, textual, and cultural processes - and the subsequent decision to present the data in three chapters each exploring one of these dimensions, has meant that what was intended as a conceptual separation has been reified in the presentation of the study. Lastly, the attempt to treat the two cases as two examples of a phenomenon has led to the privileging of what they have in common, perhaps at the cost of exploring what separates them. I defend these decisions as they were taken in order to best address the research questions, but I do note that they have costs in terms of what was discussed and what was elided.

Priorities for the wider field(s) to which this research contributes

Inevitably, this thesis raises questions that it cannot answer and, therefore, suggests ways forward for this area of research in media studies. Most obviously, this study could be duplicated in order to discover whether the tensions that constitute mediation in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices* are the same main areas of tensions in other projects of a similar type within the UK and in other national contexts. But, as has been pointed out in the case of audience ethnographies, we now have a wealth of valuable case studies that explore the audience reception of media in a myriad of contexts

(Morley, 2006). While we can see patterns emerging, and undoubtedly more case studies of mediated self-representations would show us similar patterns in the processes of mediation shaping self-representations, we cannot generalise from case studies. In the context of so much activity by which audiences are 'creating' material, we need to know how widespread publicly funded self-representation is. To answer this question would require the use of a quantitative approach, in the form of a survey.

The question follows from the investigation of the construct 'ordinary person' as to the class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality of all the people who have represented themselves in publicly funded projects like *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*. The pursuance of this question would be fruitful, and could provide a comparison with other forms of media and culture in which members of the audience participate. I have argued that, in hearing from, for example, the participants in *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales*, we are hearing from people other than media professionals, and that this is positive. Following from this, the further question is raised as to where the 'ordinary people' are speaking from, in global terms. This question brings to mind Silverstone's discussion of his memory of an Afghani blacksmith speaking on BBC Radio 4 about his understanding of why Afghanistan had been invaded not long after 9/11:

I have a memory of an interview broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on The World at One during the height of the war in Afghanistan which followed hard on the heels of the attack on the World Trade Center. It was with an Afghani blacksmith who, having apparently failed to hear or understand the US airplane based, supposedly blanket, propaganda coverage of his country, offered his own account of why so many bombs were falling around his village. It was because, his translated voice explained, Al Qaeda had killed many Americans and their donkeys and had destroyed some of their castles. He was not, of course, entirely wrong (Silverstone, 2007, p. 1).

Silverstone goes on to note that it is highly unusual to hear from this perspective in the western media (Silverstone, 2007). This anecdote serves as an important reminder that, when we refer to the self-representation of members of the public in *Capture Wales* and *London's Voices*, we are talking about people who live inside the borders of the UK. An investigation of how members of the public, speaking from other territorial contexts, are representing themselves in the media, would be another fruitful and timely direction in which to develop the research presented in this thesis.

Above all, the detailed exploration of processes of mediation presented in this thesis raises the question of how audiences for the material respond to it. An investigation of the audience *for* self-representation could ask how people respond to different kinds of self-representations by members of the audience, building, for example, on studies that have explored the audience for reality television. Such a study of the audience in their reception role would complement this study's investigation of the audience as producers and would continue the exploration of processes of mediation begun here but, as Silverstone, Martin-Barbero, and others have noted, not ending (Martin-Barbero, 1993; Silverstone, 1999). An exploration of processes of mediation in the reception of self-representation would allow for a fuller understanding of Hall's circuit of culture (Hall, 1997) (discussed in Chapter 2).

But, finally, while this conclusion has emphasised the actual and potential links between political action and the democratisation of representation, I want to end by suggesting that the value of public funding to facilitate and produce self-representations by members of the audience does not only lie in the potential there is for leading to action in public, or changing the status of private subject matter, or constructing community, or building skills, though clearly all these are real benefits. The research conducted here suggests that self-representations are of value because they are a different kind of media output from that produced by professionals, and their existence provides an example of how media and culture can be used in different ways, and by different people from those trained as media or cultural professionals.

The research presented in this thesis contributes to a growing body of work exploring how the turning of audience into producers is taking place outside the institutions, and particularly on the internet - from blogs, to MySpace, and the most recent explosion of Facebook. As the ways for members of the audience/public to become involved in producing their own self-representations appear to expand, the research focus on how such representations are mediated will continue to be a rich field for enquiry.

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Appendix A. *London's Voices* and *Capture Wales* Project Descriptions

1. *London's Voices* Projects' Descriptions

(Information compiled from a combination of interviews with the producers, and internal project documents.)

Year 1: 2001-2002

***London's Voices* exhibition**

Existing oral history material made available (and searchable) at an online terminal (a 'computer interactive') in a temporary exhibition space in the museum. Also, visitors to the exhibition completed paper questionnaires about their experiences of, and attitudes to, London. The answers to these questionnaires were tabulated and displayed each week, so that the exhibition had an ever-changing representation of the views and experiences of the people who had come to see it.

Lewisham Voices

Digital Collecting Project in the London Borough of Lewisham in partnership with local libraries. New collecting with members of the public perceived to be under-represented in the museum's collections. This project culminated in a dedicated Lewisham Voices website.

***Voices* online website phase 1**

To provide online access to existing oral history material, and to promote the various London's Voices projects to a wider public.

***Brazil in Mind* artwork commission**

Commission to use existing oral history archive with music to accompany the Museum's Brazil 500 festival. A CD of the project was produced and made available for sale to the public.

Collections Development

The addition of 120 new interviews to the oral history archive.

Year 2: 2002-2003

***Voices* online year 2: Questioning London**

The questionnaires that were completed by 3,400 visitors to the *Voices* online year 1 exhibition were used as the basis for a website for year 2, entitled 'Questioning London' (*London's Voices* Year 2 Outline, Frazer Swift, June 2002). In addition, the website invited web users to contribute views and experiences of London.

***Holidays of a Lifetime* touring exhibition**

Workshops were held with local groups at a range of locations around London to solicit memories of their own holidays. These memories were added to the exhibition, which toured a selection of local libraries.

London 16 - 19

Six groups of young people aged 16-19 from across London were invited to participate in a project, which sought to increase representation for this age group who are under-represented in the existing oral history collection. The participants collaborated on devising the project. The project included some new oral history interviews, as well as a range of forms of self-representation. For example, two groups worked on poetry with a professional writer, one group created a fashion show, and two other groups carried out photography projects about the areas in which they lived. The project culminated in a one day showcase event at the museum and in a website displaying the material created for the project.

Postcards to London

A number of individuals were invited to look at the oral history archive and select extracts. These extracts, together with the reasons why the individual concerned had selected them, were printed onto postcards, which were distributed in the free postcard racks in cinemas around London.

Linked artwork commission

Linked was a partnership project about the building of the M11 extension in East London. New oral history interviews were conducted with people who had been involved in the demonstrations, or who lived in the area, and these were used in a permanent installation along the length of the roadside. Members of the public collect headphones, receivers and maps from libraries along the route, and then walk through the area and pick up transmissions of people's stories as they go. The installation was accompanied by a temporary exhibition in local libraries along the route.

Year 3: 2003-2004

Voices online year 3: three themed web exhibitions

The year 3 *Voices* online website showcased material from the archive around three themes: VE day, Motherhood, and After Dark.

Hospital Radio

Volunteers from Middlesex *Hospital Radio* worked with museum staff to select material from the museum's oral history archive. Museum staff conducted 'bedside interviews' which were combined with the archive material, and three radio programmes were produced at Middlesex *Hospital Radio* station.

London on Hold

Existing material from the archive was available to the public when they telephoned the museum and were put on hold.

Memory Bags

Existing material from the archive was printed on carrier bags and distributed to members of the public using Dalston street market, in Hackney.

Colour Contacts artist commission

Devised dance piece used existing oral history archive, which invited members of the audience to contribute personal experiences that could then be incorporated into the piece. Four performances took place at venues around London: the museum, Southwark Tube Station, the London Mayor's Mela Festival on the South Bank, and Brent Cross Shopping Centre.

Workshops

Workshops were held with local community groups, in order to share insights about new ways of working with oral history with other interested amateur and professional parties.

Soundspace

Museum-based oral history exhibition showcased material from the existing collection, including some of that gathered during the various *London's Voices* projects. This exhibition was based entirely around oral history, rather than using oral history to enhance object-based exhibitions.

2. *Capture Wales Project Description*

(Information compiled from a combination of interviews with the producers, speeches by the producers, and internal project documents.)

Capture Wales is a digital storytelling project run by BBC Wales' New Media Department, and Cardiff University's Centre for Journalism Studies. The project began in 2001, initially fully funded for three years by the BBC. *Capture Wales* teaches people to make short 'digital stories' for exhibition on one or other of the two *Capture Wales* websites (English language, and Welsh language) which can be found at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales>.

The stories are all uploaded to the *Capture Wales* website, where they are searchable by themes, and by area. There is also space for the web user to respond to the story. A selection of the digital stories are shown on television: on BBCi, on BBC One Wales' main evening news and current events programme, *Wales Today*, and on the Welsh language channel, S4C. In addition, the audio tracks from selected digital stories are played on BBC Radio Wales and Radio Cymru.

Appendix B. Interview Guides

Topic Guide: Producer Interviews

- How was the project conceived – the story of the birth of the project
What ideas were used, which ideas excluded, how such decisions were reached
- Display
Use of websites and other forms of display, issues arising, decisions taken, processes involved
- What does the interviewees' role involve – their relation to the project – relation of their department to the project
e.g. When did you join the project; a typical week in your diary
- How would you describe the project and what are the aims of this project as you see it, do you think they have shifted over time
What do you think participants get out of participating in the project
- Partnerships/collaborations
How did these come about, which issues arose
- Who do you want to participate, and what do you want them to talk about/show, and who do you now want to participate
How are participants found and recruited
- Who is the project aimed at and what do you know about your audience
In what ways is the project marketed, promoted etc.
- What do you know of how others evaluate the project
Who do you see as your peers, who do you see as the competitors, if anyone
- Impressions of the project: what aspects of the project have worked well, and what aspects have proved difficult or problematic
What are the dilemmas
What are the conflicts
What has turned out to be most easy/difficult/surprising
Relationship of medium to project – How does medium help or hinder project aims
- What hopes for the future of the project and are there experiences and/or ideas from this project which will feed into future projects
Partnerships and collaborations – how these came about, how partners are found and chosen, the processes here – the advantages and difficulties of these collaborations

- Can you talk about the place of the project in your institution and of projects like this in institutions more generally
In relation to the Public Service Remit/Charter Review/Funding bodies/Museum policy
- Anything else interviewee wants to mention.

Topic Guide: Participant Interviews

- Introductions
 - Name, area where you live, [young people – age]*
- What are your reactions to the [films/photographs/stories] now [for interview where we could look at the material produced]
 - Did you tell the story you set out to tell*
 - Is it what you wanted, is it what you expected*
 - Is it surprising, different*
 - What do you like, what don't you like*
 - What about each other's films/stories/etc.*
- If you had to explain to someone who wasn't there what the project you participated in was, what would you say
- Can you remember what it was that attracted you to the project, why did you decide to take part
 - Technology/skills*
 - Being on the BBC website/internet/TV/museum display/museum website*
 - Storytelling/workshop*
- Was the project what you expected
 - Have you ever done anything like this before*
 - [Museum: Have you ever been to the Museum of London before]*
- Did you enjoy the experience overall
 - Which aspects did you most enjoy, why*
- Was there anything you found difficult about the project
 - Or anything you would do differently if you were to do it again*
- Why do you think the BBC/The Museum of London is doing projects like this
 - What did the project set out to achieve*
 - Do you think it was successful in this aim*
- Where there was a public event
 - Did you tell people, did you take people*
 - What did you think of the exhibition*
 - What did your friends and family think*
- Do you visit the website
 - Did you use the internet before*
 - Why do you visit the website, what do you like about it/what don't you like about it*
 - What do you think of how your contribution looks on the site, anything you would change*
 - What do you think of the way the site is arranged, e.g. themes*

- **Would you be interested in doing similar activities in the future**
- **Anything else interviewee wants to mention**

Topic Guide: Partner Organisations

- Context: can you explain briefly to me what your organisation is and what your role is
- Purpose of the project you took part in with the Museum of London/BBC Wales as you understood it /what was the project for
Who took part/how many, how many regularly etc.
- Expectations: what do you think people who took part hoped to get out of the project /why did they want to take part
- Process – what did the project involve: what actually took place
How were activities decided on
How were themes and topics decided on
How were final images etc. decided on
- Impressions of the project: what worked well, what was difficult or problematic about the project
- Of those who took part, who do you think got something out of it, and what do you think they got out of it.
- Are there experiences from this that will feed into future activities and projects that you do
- Do you think you/your organisation will be interested in future projects with the Museum of London/The BBC
- Anything else interviewee wants to mention

Topic Guide: Contextual Interview - Other Projects: *Video Nation*

- Where do you work, what does your role involve
- What are the aims/goals of the project and have these shifted over time
- How does the medium help or hinder the project aims
 - Website as platform for material /invitation to new participants*
 - Contrast with original terrestrial television based project*
- What do you know of how others evaluate the project
- Who do you see as competitors (within and without the BBC)
- Who do you want to participate/why (inclusion, diversity agendas?)
 - How do you find/choose participants and what problems*
 - What do you want them to talk about/show*
 - Who do you not want to participate and why*
 - How many roughly*
- Why do you think people do it/don't do it
 - What do you think they get out of it*
- Editorial – Any material that would never be displayed on the website
 - Are editorial decisions different for websites and TV*
- Role of archive
- Audience
 - Who is it aimed at and what (and how) do you know about your users*
 - Do you use marketing – any issues around marketing*
- Is it living up to your expectations
 - Hopes/plans for the future*
- Thoughts on place of VN in the BBC more generally
 - And projects like this in the BBC more generally*
- Anything else interviewee wants to mention

Topic Guide: Contextual interview – Funding Bodies: Heritage Lottery Fund

- What the Heritage Lottery Fund is, and what it is for, what are the aims/goals of the fund
- The job description of the interviewee – relation to the organisation
- What is the place of oral history/people telling their own stories within the broader heritage remit
- Why are people's stories seen as an important part of heritage
 - For record*
 - For participation*
- Is this generally accepted that oral history is an important part of heritage
 - Within HLF*
 - Within government DCMS*
- Is there a view as to whose oral history should be collected
 - Diversity*
 - Multiculturalism*
 - Ordinary...*
- Is there a view as to what people should talk about
- What about methods of collection, recording, archiving – role of medium
- Other bodies in public sector funding participation/what is your view
 - Is there a general shift?*
 - Dateable in your view?*
- What works well/has worked well/lived up to/exceeded expectations
- What has been difficult/surprising
- Anything else interviewee wants to mention

Appendix C. Consent Forms

Capture Wales Producer Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space: Research Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on three case studies: BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*, The Museum of London's *London's Voices*, and the BBC's *Video Nation*.

I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which you are running as part of the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* project. I may ask to interview you about your experience of the *Capture Wales* project. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your name and job title. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research it may be useful to reference your name and job title but this of course will be subject to your consent. I will provide you with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to leave unattributed or to remove any quotes that you may wish to withdraw. You are welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if you so wish. Lastly, you are free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and you may if you wish reject the use of tape recorders.

I (Please print name and job title).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe the activities I am running as part of *Capture Wales*, and/or interview me about *Capture Wales*.

Signed:

.....

Contact Details:

.....
.....
.....

Date:

.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

Capture Wales Participant Consent Form (Parental)

Mediation and Community Space: Parental Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on three case studies: The BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*, The Museum of London's *London's Voices*, and the BBC's *Video Nation*.

I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which your son or daughter is taking part in as part of the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* project. I may ask to interview your son or daughter about his or her experience of taking part in *Capture Wales*. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your son or daughter's first name, age, place of birth and place of residence. However I will not pass these details onto any third party. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research I will provide anonymity by changing your son or daughter's name and any identifying details. I will provide your son or daughter with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to remove any quotes that your son or daughter may wish to withdraw. Your son or daughter is welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if he or she wishes. Lastly, your son or daughter is free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and may reject the use of tape recorders.

I (Please print).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe/
interview my child about the activities that my child is taking part in as part of
***Capture Wales*.**

For: Name of child:
.....

Signed:.....Parent/Guardian

Contact Details:
.....
.....
.....

Date:
.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

Capture Wales Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space: Research Participant Consent Form

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I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which you are taking part in as part of the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* project. I may ask to interview you about your experience of taking part in the *Capture Wales* project. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your first name, age, place of birth and place of residence. However I will not pass these details onto any third party. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research I will provide anonymity by changing your name and any identifying details. I will provide you with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to remove any quotes that you may wish to withdraw. You are welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if you so wish. Lastly, you are free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and you may if you wish reject the use of tape recorders.

**I (Please print).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe
/interview me about the activities I am taking part in as part of *Capture Wales*.**

Signed.....

Contact Details:

.....
.....
.....

Date.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

London's Voices Participant Consent Form (Parental)

Mediation and Community Space: Parental Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on three case studies: The Museum of London's *London's Voices*, the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*, and the BBC's *Video Nation*.

I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which your son or daughter is taking part in as part of the Museum of London's *London's Voices* project. I may ask to interview your son or daughter about his or her experience of taking part in the *London's Voices* project. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your son or daughter's first name, age, place of birth and place of residence. However I will not pass these details onto any third party. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research I will provide anonymity by changing your son or daughter's name and any identifying details. I will provide your son or daughter with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to remove any quotes that your son or daughter may wish to withdraw. Your son or daughter is welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if he or she wishes. Lastly, your son or daughter is free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and may reject the use of tape recorders.

I (Please print).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe
/interview my child about the activities that my child is taking part in as part of
***London's Voices*.**

For: Name of child:
.....

Signed:Parent/Guardian

Contact Details:
.....
.....
.....

Date:.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

London's Voices Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space: Research Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on three case studies: The Museum of London's *London's Voices*, the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*, and the BBC's *Video Nation*.

I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which you are taking part in as part of the Museum of London's *London's Voices* project. I may ask to interview you about your experience of taking part in the *London's Voices* project. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your first name, age, place of birth and place of residence. However I will not pass these details onto any third party. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research I will provide anonymity by changing your name and any identifying details. I will provide you with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to remove any quotes that you may wish to withdraw. You are welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if you so wish. Lastly, you are free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and you may if you wish reject the use of tape recorders.

I (Please print).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe
/interview me about the activities I am taking part in as part of *London's Voices*.

Signed.....

Contact Details:

.....
.....

Date.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

London's Voices Producer Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space: Research Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on three case studies: The Museum of London's *London's Voices*, the BBC Wales' *Capture Wales*, and the BBC's *Video Nation*.

I would like to obtain your consent to my participation in and/or observation of the activities which you are running as part of the Museum of London's *London's Voices* project. I may ask to interview you about your experience of the *London's Voices* project. I will take notes during the interview or observation and may tape record the interview and/or take notes.

I will keep a record of personal details, such as your name and job title. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing I produce which results from this research it may be useful to reference your name and job title but this of course will be subject to your consent. I will provide you with a transcript of any tape recorded interview and I am happy to leave unattributed or to remove any quotes that you may wish to withdraw. You are welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if you so wish. Lastly, you are free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and you may if you wish reject the use of tape recorders.

**I (Please print name and job title).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can participate in/observe the activities I am running as part of *London's Voices*, and/or interview me about *London's Voices*.**

Signed:
.....

Contact Details:
.....
.....
.....

Date:
.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

Context Interview Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space: Research Participant Consent Form

Mediation and Community Space is my doctoral research project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The research looks at when members of the public speak publicly about personal history, point of view and daily life. The research focuses on two case studies: BBC Wales' *Capture Wales* and The Museum of London's *London's Voices*. A context to the two case studies is provided by further interviews with people working in this area.

I would like to obtain your consent to interview you as part of this research. I may tape record the interview and/or take notes. I will keep a record of personal details, such as your name and job title. In transcripts of interviews or in any writing which results from this research it may be useful to reference your name and job title but this of course will be subject to your consent. I will provide you with a transcript of any tape-recorded interview and I am happy to leave unattributed or to remove any quotes that you may wish to withdraw. You are welcome to see a copy of the finished research project if you so wish. Lastly, you are free to refuse to take part or to withdraw from the research at any time and you may wish to reject the use of tape recorders.

**I (Please print name and job title).....
give my consent and agree that Nancy Thumim can interview me as part of her
doctoral research.**

Signed:.....

Contact Details:.....

.....

.....

Date:.....

For further information please contact me, Nancy Thumim, by post at the Department of Media and Communications at LSE (see above for address) or by email: n.thumim@lse.ac.uk

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