“Live from Studio C, It’s Weekend Now!” A Case Study of a Student-Led Production Environment Exploring Experiential Education, Creativity and Gender

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This dissertation titled
“Live from Studio C, It’s Weekend Now!” A Case Study of a Student-Led Production
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Abstract

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“Live from Studio C, It’s Weekend Now!” A Case Study of a Student-Led Production Environment Exploring Experiential Education, Creativity and Gender

Director of Dissertation: Roger Cooper

Experiential student-led learning environments play an important role in cultivating collaboration, problem-solving skills and gender equality that empower students to become not only workers, but also future leaders in media industries. This case study explores the complex world of students in the student-led production environment of Weekend Now, discovering how they learn experientially, how they implement creativity and how gender roles may influence participatory roles. Data was collected through a triangulation of observations, formal in-depth interviews and document analysis of the 29th season of the student-led television show Weekend Now. The purpose of this case study was to explore the themes of experiential learning, concepts of creativity and issues of gender within a student-led production group, Weekend Now. The group created and produced a 10-episode season during the Fall 2012 semester. A thematic approach to the analysis focused on what the students are learning as well as the sub-themes of gender and creativity. Students were learning technical skills on their own, while learning the hierarchy of roles and responsibilities through others. On the surface gender was balanced in number, however there was a gender bias for particular roles. Characteristics of Weekend Now are compared to the characteristics of the creative industries. Specifically, constructing common creative
constraints such as deadlines, time limitations and prop/equipment limitations can be beneficial to students’ education as they simulate industry expectations.
Dedication

For my mother, Diane.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, a big thank you to the cast and crew of Weekend Now, this research would not have been possible without their commitment to the show and openness to my observation. Keep on creating.

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Chapter One: Introduction

It’s Season 29, Episode 2, otherwise known by students as week three; chaos ensues in Studio C on a Friday night during fall semester. Students are back from summer break, moods are elevated and vigor is in the air. Major projects and assignments in student courses have yet to begin and related stressors are still easy to ignore. The cast and crew of Weekend Now have just finished rehearsing an A-News sketch. A-News resembles Saturday Night Live’s Weekend Update routine with two news anchors delivering one-liner jokes while sharing poignant news stories. As the cast and crew finish rehearsing the sketch, everyone begins chatting, with several different conversations taking place at once. Conversation is permitted because students are waiting for a specific cast member to arrive before rehearsing the next sketch. Three freshmen stand quietly behind their cameras looking around, not chatting with anyone. Other students talk over one another as they waste time until the cast member arrives. One conversation sticks out among the rest.

Kady\(^1\), a cast member and regular for the A-News sketch, sits at the A-News desk, pulls out a large box of bracelet-making supplies, and places them in front of her on the desk. She calls the head writer, Zak, over and ties a colorful bracelet on his wrist. Kady has just given Zak a friendship bracelet. A friendship bracelet is given by one person to another as a symbol of friendship and is handmade of embroidery thread. Males and females are known to wear friendship bracelets. As Kady leans over the desk and giggles with Zak, the director, Victoria, joins in on their chat. Shortly after, Victoria

\(^1\) All names in this study have been changed to ensure the confidentiality of all people involved in the process and project. Although the specific identities of the student participants and locations have been changed, circumstances and descriptions are accurate.
is given a friendship bracelet as well (shown in Figure 1). After a few minutes of talking, Zak walks away to socialize with some other members of the cast and Victoria leaves to talk with the camera operators about focusing the cameras.

![Figure 1. Friendship Bracelet.](image)

Sarah, the producer, walks up to Kady and says jokingly, “I understand crafts, [pause], I don’t understand bringing your crafts to other activities.” Kady, not finding the statement funny replies, “Can I just tell you right now, that I have nothing to do the entire time. I mean like I’m not in any other sketches, I have nothing else to do.” Sarah takes a moment to think and in a much calmer, quieter voice suggests, “Go home and get yourself some food.”

Kady rebuffs the suggestion quickly, “I’ve already eaten lunch before I came here.” Trying hard to salvage a positive mood, Sarah asks for Kady to make her a
friendship bracelet. Kady states quickly and with force, “Stop it, just cause you didn’t keep the friendship bracelets that I gave you before.” Before Sarah can talk, Kady continues, “I’ve given you like three of them. I’m sure YOU lost them.” Sarah quickly states, “I have them” a pause, “I have ALL of them.” Kady stares nastily at Sarah, loses her patience and jumps to a conclusion, “You’re so mean. I don’t give a flying fuck.” Sarah’s attempt to smooth things over clearly took a turn for the worse. Kady, obviously angry, looks back down at her bracelet-making supplies. Sarah turns from Kady, runs her hand through her hair and yells with force at everyone to move on to the next sketch, “Are we done running A-News? Can you give me lights on green, please!"

The purpose of the above vignette is to provide a glimpse into the complex world of the student-led environment of the sketch comedy show titled, Weekend Now. It is worth noting at this point that within the structure of Weekend Now, the head writer makes casting decisions, not the producer. Kady’s friendship bracelet gift to the head writer, Zak, was a creative, seemingly calculated decision, however, her frustration and anger about being in only one sketch was misdirected towards Sarah, the producer. Why did Sarah receive the brunt of Kady’s anger? Was it a gender issue or just that Sarah was a convenient target? This is one small instance of the complexities I witnessed while observing the student-led experiential learning group Weekend Now.

**Areas of Interest**

This study is an interdisciplinary effort to join together the fields of experiential education, concepts of creativity and issues of gender. Although there is a plethora of research within these individual fields, my research addresses the intersection where
these three areas converge within a given environment. Most of the research on experiential learning comes from the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (Girl Scouts of America, 2012, Springer, 1999, Kirschner, 2006). There is very little research that specifically addresses experiential learning opportunities for students in media programs.

In my academic career I teach, maintain, facilitate and create various experiential courses, productions and exercises for students. The reasons are threefold; one, they are easy to showcase. Hands-on learning and production are made for one another. And is an easy sell to parents, (look what your kids will do!) and it is an easy sell to administrators (look at what we are creating!). Two, students love them. Great feedback in course evaluations – more of the hands-on in-class productions! Three, community partners embrace free video work. Experiential projects are easy to showcase, students love them and communities will work with you.

Experiential education. Experiential education has been defined in a variety of ways. According to Kolb (1984), experiential education involves the learning that occurs through direct application of skills and knowledge in a relevant setting. Part of this learning process involves reflection on those experiences and the learners’ feelings. Media programs offer many group-oriented assignments, which can lead to a greater understanding of the processes by which students learn to create media. While faculty and students work together regularly in classroom and studio settings, there is critical need to understand how students continue to learn outside of the classroom, without faculty supervision. Independent learning opportunities can exist that influence
pedagogical approaches in media classrooms. Exploring how students learning on a set can improve educational goals by identifying and reinforcing the concepts used in the classroom and introduce more egalitarian approaches to teaching.

**Creativity.** Creativity is a widely used term to describe the work that people do in the film, television and broadcast industries (a.k.a. the creative industries), but the term is also incredibly illusive. To create is to bring something into existence. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) defines in the context of the creative industries that, “creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one” (p. 6). The artistic expression of film, the exposé of narrative within television and the technical growth of broadcast news programs have pushed the envelope of media. Moreran (2011) posited,

> There are two problems with which the social sciences have to deal when discussing creative work processes. One is that the relation between inner impulse and actual creative practice… The other problem derives from the fact that creativity is in part inexplicable. (p. 21)

Becker (2006) characterized creative products as a “fundamental indeterminacy,” having no clear limits or strategy (p. 24). While films and broadcast shows may all use writers, directors, editors, camera operators and other personnel, the specific duties vary widely between production sets because roles and their enactment are all based on a specific series of choices. For instance, choosing how to light a particular scene, where to place the camera or how to construct a one-liner joke could be decisions made by the director on one set and the editor on another set. The “combination of routine and unusual
choices among available possibilities” gives every creative product its character (Becker, 2006, p. 25-6). This study adds to research by focusing on the situational creativity of a group working with their own constraints, developing problem-solving solutions together.

**Gender.** It is widely agreed upon that women are underrepresented in the media industries, especially the roles of producer, director, director of photography and writer (Lauzen, 2013; Escholz, 2002; Smith, et al. 2011). Each of these positions holds the highest degree of influence on how narratives are created and produced. By not holding an equal amount of control over the narrative, women are characterized in a limited fashion, which many argue is a negative influence on women within society. According to the critical documentary, *Miss Representation* (Newsom, 2011), the research of Lauzen (2013) and the lived-experience of Fey (2011), these negative and limiting portrayals will not change until women are more fully represented in positions of influence, particularly in writing production, the cinematography and in the organization and treatment of staff and crews.

**Significance of Study**

*Weekend Now* has many significant aspects that make it a strong site for study. First, multi-camera production is not taught as a formal part of the curriculum. *Weekend Now* as an experiential learning site is the only available outlet for students to learn multi-camera skills. Multi-camera productions are characterized as having a live studio audience within a closed set such as a studio, multiple cameras simultaneously recording and live-to-tape editing. Students, of course, are familiar with, and influenced by
*Saturday Night Live, The Big Bang Theory and Late Night with David Letterman* (imdb.com, 2013), but they have no experience with what goes on behind the scenes.

Second, students participating in *Weekend Now* work within self-enforced weekly production deadlines. Third, *Weekend Now* has been in production for almost 10 years in sketch comedy content and 20 years in name. It is important to note that, prior to Season 29, *Weekend Now* was produced within the university’s quarter system, so three quarters per year creates three seasons and six to seven shows are produced each quarter. My observations of Season 29 occurred during the first season on a semester schedule, meaning the cast and crew dealt with a large structural schedule change. As the longest running student show at the university, the show is stable, meaning the group consistently finishes 10 episodes each semester with a show airing every Friday at 10:00 P.M. on public access. Finally, the show has the largest student participation within the media department at the university.

Creative industries are unique in that as they require diverse skill sets from individual workers and an acceptance of the inherent uncertainty involved in a risk-driven marketplace (DiMaggio, 1977). While the creative industries include a wide range of products such as video games, advertising, architecture and performing arts, this study focuses only on the creative industries of film and television. Singh (2007), found the whole of creative industries to be one of the fastest-growing areas of the global economy; the sub-area of workers within motion picture and video/sound production industry creating feature-length films for a mass audience has grown from 571,500 in 2003 to 616,300 in 2013, which is an addition of 44,800 new workers, an increase of 7% (BLS,
Another sub-area of the creative industries, radio stations and television stations around the country have dropped from 810,000 workers in 2003 to 708,700 workers in 2013. This is a decline of 101,700 jobs in a single decade, a drop of 12%. In total, film and broadcast has lost 56,900 jobs in the last decade (BLS, 2013). In addition, there are 1.3 million jobs within both film and television broadcasting industries.

Despite the loss of jobs in the industry, the number of degrees earned within communication and visual arts is growing (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Communications, journalism and communication technologies grew from 56,980 degrees in 1999 to 85,982 in 2009. Visual and performing arts degree recipients grew from 58,791 in 1999 to 91,802 in 2009. This indicates an increase of 34% for communication, journalism and communication technologies, and 36% in visual and performing art degrees. Contraction in the industry is due to cutbacks in the labor force, as well as losing box office dollars in the movie industry, advertising dollars in television and displaced audiences on various media platforms. Now, with more competition than ever, college students who choose to pursue media-related degrees must learn what to expect in the industry, how to master the various flexible roles they will encounter, distinguish what skills are important and learn how to develop their careers once gaining employment in the industry. Knowing students are well informed of the industry and the best ways to create a career will make for a more competitive media program and a stronger and more employable alumni base.

Students in media programs may have the resources to create independent projects in extracurricular activities like the production of a TV show, webisode series or
even a feature-length student film. In these programs no credit hours are earned, no deadlines are put on assignments and no preferential treatment is given to the more proactive. These committed, proactive media students tend to become involved early, work hard to build their skill sets and resumes through these projects and, in mid-sized to larger programs, are often running the show with or without a faculty advisor. In these media programs, students are the decision makers, guiding and directing their peers as they work toward a common goal.

There is a scarce amount of literature on the subject of students working in an independent collaborative production environment, even though this is becoming more common at many universities. In Hardin’s (2009) article, Notes on Collaboration: Assessing Student Behaviors, Hardin asked for studies to answer the question, “What kinds of interactions among students occur while working on making films?” (p. 44). Hardin found that advanced students working on capstone projects found collaboration to be beneficial. Experiential student-led learning environments play an important role in cultivating collaboration, problem-solving skills and gender equality that empower students to become not only workers, but also future leaders in media industries. This study explores further the complex world of students in student-led production environments, how they learn experientially, how they implement creativity and how gender roles may influence participatory roles.

**Approach to Study**

This case study explores the production environment of the student-led experiential television show, *Weekend Now*, specifically the 29th season. The study seeks
to define what students learn when they are part of a student-led experiential group, how creativity is implemented in problem solving and how gender influences roles within the production environment. The creation and growth of student-led initiatives are an emerging aspect of media education because these initiatives provide unique learning and development opportunities in media-focused environments. A deep understanding of what students are learning, how and if gender is an influence and how students problem solve at the collegiate level before embarking into creative industries adds insight into the best educational practices for success in the mass communication industries. These common features provide the foundation for a successful student-to-student learning program, where motivated student leaders can interactively teach their peers, establishing a successful and sustainable educational model.

Although case studies cannot assure sampling representativeness, the case of Weekend Now presented here can offer important information to be used in similar contexts and situations. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, a naturalistic case study can provide “sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment” (p. 124). Data were collected through a triangulation of observations, formal in-depth interviews and document analysis of the 29th season of the student-led television show Weekend Now. A thematic approach to the analysis focused on what the students are learning as well as the sub-themes of gender and creativity.
Organization of Study

Chapter 2 reviews literature on experiential education, concepts of creativity and gender discrepancies within creative industries. These foci will provide a rationale for the research questions asked during the study. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used to answer the proposed research questions; a case study approach utilizing observation, in-depth interviews and document review. Chapter 4 presents a description of Weekend Now, a typical weekly schedule and the discovered themes relating to experiential education, concepts of creativity and issues of gender roles. Finally, Chapter 5 highlights interpretations of the findings, reflections on the study, suggestions to both universities and Weekend Now and directions for further study.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Experiential learning is a commonly used teaching technique within media programs (Sabal, 2009, Coffman, 2009, Hardin, 2009). Whether the course is collaborative and focuses on projects such as video production, game design or band recordings or the course is more individual focusing on web design, motion graphics and editing, the implementation of experiential projects can be used universally. College-level media programs work to match, as closely as possible, the conditions of the industry helping students to gain a well-rounded education. At the same time, the curriculum should not fully mimic the exact conditions of the industry, but instead provide students with an education to develop critical thinking skills, encourage ethical and professional conduct and promote creative problem solving strategies. If media programs only mimic the industry, they run the risk of becoming trade schools, which only teach specific skills and lack the importance of a liberal arts education.

College graduates face a job market that prefers to hire candidates with hands-on experience, developed soft skills and the ability to work in a team setting with relevant internship positions (Katz, 1993; Thompson, 2009; Gault, et al. 2010). Universities must acknowledge this and work towards preparing students for entry-level positions when they graduate. Indiana’s Ball State University prides itself on ensuring all students have an immersive opportunity during their academic careers. The former president of Ball State University took experiential learning and turned it into the university’s strategic plan to guide the institution through 2017, stating “immersive learning prepares graduates to excel in our diverse, interconnected world” (Elliott, 2012, p. 30). Two example
projects from Ball State University immersive learning initiative are a promotional showcase for local businesses (Flook and Pike, 2012) and digital preservation for historical districts (Flook, et. al, 2013). Production courses are ideal educational courses in constructing environments similar to the atmosphere of creative industries. Specifically constructing common creative constraints such as deadlines, time limitations and prop/equipment limitations can be beneficial to students’ education as they simulate industry expectations.

The review of literature in this chapter is divided into three sections with the intention of reflecting on the three research questions for this study. These sections include experiential learning, creativity and gender in the creative industries. Ultimately, the combined information presented in these three sections explores and creates a deeper understanding of a college student’s experiential experience in media education.

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning was first proposed in the 1920s and 1930s by philosopher and educational reformer Dewey who suggested that education was too concerned with the delivery of knowledge and did not focus on the student’s actual experiences (Reed & Johnson, 2000). According to Dewey, education must address the previous experience of the learner. Education was to interact with and build on the social experiences of the learner in order to secure continuity in the development of the child. Dewey (1934) presented his philosophy of education as it related to children, but did not propose that students would know how to structure their own learning experiences.
According to Dewey (1934), the process of experience within education was far more important than the final outcome, the finished product, grade, degree or monetary reward. Dewey thought an experience and the learning that resulted from that experience created a transaction between the individual and her/his environment. This transaction is the process of the student’s ‘trying’ and ‘undergoing’ within that experience. The trying and undergoing create ‘meaning’ for the students within the experiential environment. The full potential of learning by and through experience can be maximized and the full meaning of that experience can be explored. Although Dewey’s theories were constructed around children, the premise that education must interact with and build on the social experiences of the learner applies throughout the education process. Using actual experiences to enhance education applies to all levels of academia, including the collegiate years.

Kolb is an educational theorist who developed the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) inspired by Dewey’s concepts. Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as a “process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” and focused on the “central role that experiences play in the learning process” (p. 20). The model is composed of four elements: concrete experience; observation and reflection; the formation of abstract concepts; and testing those concepts. Within the first element, concrete experience, it is common for the learning process to begin with a person carrying out an action. Then, the second element, observation of and reflection on the chosen action helps the person see the effect of the action within a particular situation. The observation and reflection allows the person to recognize the effect in a specific
instance so that if the same action were taken in similar circumstances, it would be possible to anticipate what would follow from the action. The third element, formation of abstract concepts based on their observation and reflection, the person begins to develop new ideas and actions to try out in the future (Kolb, 1984). The last step is the application of the new concept and the element cycle repeats.

These four elements create the learning process, which could begin at any stage and is a continuous spiral (Smith, 2005). Kolb argued, as Dewey did, this process is as important as the outcome. Knowledge is created from combining and transforming experiences from something concrete, to abstract, back to concrete. The model is similar to a revitalization process from testing and re-testing an idea while continually being able to reflect and better the process, experience and product (Kelley, 2005).

Hickcox (2002) conducted a case study of three experiential learning programs within a university setting. Using the term experiential learning, Hickcox (2002) described learning where the dynamics of the interaction between student and faculty was increased through new courses and tasks. These experiential learning programs encompassed practicum experience, giving credit for prior learning and service learning. These programs were considered active learning, during which students were more engaged in the learning process. Hickcox (2002) observed that experiential learning allowed students to individualize and strengthen academic concepts through simulated or actual learning environments. Positive outcomes noted by the students included increased ability to problem solve and the use of critical thinking skills as learning became self-directed and self-initiated. Preparing students to think, solve problems,
apply knowledge, engage in constructive teamwork and develop their capacity for lifelong learning will be the greatest demand on education in the future. Through experiential learning and reflection, the students must think, solve problems and expand their learning (Walker, 2005).

Steffes focused on “learn by doing” experiences in higher education in a 2004 study. By observing and reflecting on current actions in order to frame future practices, Steffes (2004) theorized that mentors and teachers involved in an experiential learning situation could aide in shaping the students’ sense of professionalism in their fields of study. Comparing experiential learning to service learning, Steffes (2004) hypothesized that the following outcomes are achieved through experiential or real world experiences:

- Increased sense of citizenship (values, skills, efficacy, and commitment to social responsibility);
- Development of stronger analytical and problem-solving skills;
- Enhanced personal development (self-knowledge, spiritual growth, finding reward in helping others);
- Increased leadership skills;
- Greater cultural awareness and tolerance;
- Enhanced social development skills; and
- Improved interpersonal development (working with others, communication skills) (Steffes, 2004, p. 49).

Students involved in service or experiential learning experiences had increased self-esteem and reasoning abilities, increased moral sensitivity, earned higher GPAs, proved
enhanced ethical development, and more greatly shared in the intellectual responsibility for their learning (Steffes, 2004).

Students in media programs, particularly focused on practical media skills such as video production, are prime candidates for experiential learning and for service learning. Sabal (2009) states, “unless the instructor provides a context for understanding and reflecting on the collective work experience, there is no way that a student filmmaker can endeavor to reproduce a positive experience or develop approaches that might prevent a negative one” (p. 4). The production environment in any media course created by instructors and perhaps the students themselves will never be exact replicas of ‘Hollywood’ production environments, but these environments can be similar. Hardin (2009) stated, “film schools can translate the bottom-line reality of the film industry – prioritizing craft over process”, but goes on to acknowledge this approach will miss the practice of building and maintaining a creative, collaborative team environment (p. 48).

During second year of teaching I facilitated an experiential project called, Cinema Entertainment Immersion. Students in an English course wrote the scripts, my Video course directed and shot the production, a Theater course provided the actors and an Audio course created the final audio mix. Being new to teaching (26 years old) I told my video course crews that if someone was not doing their job, let me know and I would fire them. Firing them equated to an ‘F’ on the project and potentially in the class. I naively thought this would stop any and all tardiness, communication issues, etc., but what happened was students did not tell me when others were not doing their jobs, because they did not want their fellow classmates to fail the projects. My approach stifled
discussion as to their jobs and responsibilities on set as well as I was unable to help a
group, which fell apart and nearly failed as a team. The colleague who taught me this
approach through chats and observation then became my anti-mentor, meaning anything
he did, I would work to do the opposite. As an instructor facilitating, leading and
mentoring experiential learning projects, one must learn along with the students the best
practices to be open, communicative to maintain the ability to reflect on learning of the
individual and of the group.

Plenty of constructive research exists on experiential learning environments,
however research is sparse when exploring student-led environments, with no instructor
around. O’Shea and Delaine (2011) conducted a study identifying student-led learning
occurring within the engineering education sector. A case study of four student-led
engineering programs found seven common features: an international focus; education
beyond technical topics; a combination of social and professional development;
volunteers; internal professional development; cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary
exposure.

According to Barrows (1968), empowering students with the responsibility to
solve a problem moved students from a lecture approach to a more self-directed,
problem-based learning approach. Educators are asked to seek to empower their students
by giving them control of and responsibility for their learning (McKeachie, 1990; Candy,
1991). Self-reflection should be used to help deter students from attempting to quickly
proceed to the right answer and instead focus more on how they arrived at the answer.
Adler et. al (2004) found,
teacher-led cases were associated with low levels of student involvement in and responsibility for the case study, resulted in poorly balanced learners. According to learning style theory, these students are less capable of carrying out plans and tasks and show less proclivity for becoming involved in new experiences. (p. 213)

Analyzing the distinct features of student-led educational programs is a useful tool in both determining the aspects attractive to potential students’ participation, and if there is a need for structured guidance from instructors or professionals. These common features lay the foundation for a successful student-to-student learning program in which motivated student leaders can interactively teach their peers, establishing a successful and sustainable educational model (O’Shea & Delaine, 2012).

While teaching at Ball State University I was the advisor for a student-led group called, Cardinal Filmworks. This group did everything, I, in all honesty, did not do much at all. My biggest responsibility was to sign a piece of paper allowing them to reserve a large theater hall for their film festival. The students created the event; I was a signature on a piece of paper. Of course I went to the events they managed to show support, they thanked me for being their advisor, I waved, but knew this was a very cushy advisor position. I do not feel I contributed much in terms of their individual learning; I merely helped them to do what they were already planning on doing. This is an example of student-led learning with a less-than-active advisor.

**Concepts of Creativity**

Csikszentmihali (1996) defined creativity as “something genuinely new that is valued enough to be added to culture” (p. 6). To explain this definition in more detail,
Csikszentmihali broke down the definition into three co-dependent parts: domain, field and individual. The domain refers to the symbolic rules and procedures of the specific creative industry. The field consists of the individual gatekeepers to the given domain. The individual is the one who creates something new; the field then accepts or rejects what the individual creates. If the new creation is accepted, it is added to the culture of the domain. Csikszentmihali (1996) expressed creativity as a product or outcome.

The strengths of Csikszentmihali’s approach were the creativity model of domain, field and individual. Each step clearly applies to creative industries and can be seen through multi-camera sketch comedy shows, such as *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*. The domain for *SNL* is the multi-camera sketch comedy show genre. Past shows included in this genre are *In Living Color*, *Mad TV* and *The Carol Burnett Show*. A current example is *Tim And Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*. The field, or the individual gatekeepers, for sketch comedy shows are the various influences keeping the show on the air. These influences can be the audience, ad sales, star quality of the actors and adaptability for long sustainability. The individuals are the creators of the show. Michaels created *SNL* in 1975 and the show is still successful today. *SNL* is the longest running sketch comedy show on television, thanks to the support of the field keeping the show on the air.

The limitation of Csikszentmihali’s idea was in his definition of creativity, specifically the use of the phrase, “genuinely new.” Genuinely new is not a common feature in creative industries. For example, creative industries often use recycled material for information, news and entertainment. In addition, student production work tends to either be genuinely new and hard to market or a mimetic production, bordering
plagiarism. In the professional realm, creativity in visual storytelling can be a small shift in a genre or subtle shift in a character. A genuinely new show does not always exist on television or in multi-camera sketch comedy creation. For example, *SNL* is a derivative of the Milton Berle generation of TV variety shows like *Texaco Star Theater* and *The Jimmy Durante Show*. *SNL* aimed to capture the sensibilities of the emerging baby boomer generation. The show’s success came from the innovative and fresh new approach by parodying contemporary culture and politics (Pekurny, 1980).

Educational theorist Guilford (1967) studied the intelligence quotient (IQ). Within his studies, he looked at creativity and creative production. For Guilford, creativity emerged as a collection of attributes only some people have. Attributes that make someone creative are originality, fluency and flexibility. Guilford explored these creative attributes through testing of divergent thinking. Divergent thinking is defined as a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions (Guilford, 1967). For example, a divergent thinking test would provide the subject a paper clip and a blank sheet of paper and instruct the subject to draw or list as many different uses for the paper clip. The more ideas listed and the more those ideas were different from each other, gave a higher score for divergent thinking.

Guilford did not find any correlation of high IQs and high divergent thinking. Both high IQs and low IQs could be either high or low in divergent thinking. The most insightful notion from Guilford is his idea of creative production, which he found to be similar to problem solving. For Guilford (1967), creative production was carried out as a means to an end, pragmatically solving some particular problem. Guilford (1967) stated
that the “varieties of abilities within the divergent production category depend upon the kind of information with which the person is dealing” (p. 8). This suggests that creative talents depend upon the medium in which the individual is working, such as working in architecture as opposed to working in live television. Guilford (1967) also posited creativity as a process.

The strengths of Guilford’s ideas of creativity rested in the similarities to the creative production of the producer, more contemporarily known as the showrunner, as described by Newcomb and Ally (1970), both stating that creative production is a means of problem solving. This idea is incredibly rich, since sitcoms cannot be too radically new; creators and producers must think within the box of what already works, but need something to catch an audience’s eye. Suh, et al. (2010) found in looking at experiential learning and creativity, that “process-based creativity is enhanced when the team members have a higher level of experiential knowledge, but outcome-based creativity is not significantly influenced by experiential knowledge” (p. 211). Taking these ideas into account, creative problem solving can be grown and practiced within experiential learning environments. Ayob et al. (2012) found positive suggestions that creativity emerged as a result of student participation in experiential learning activities. Production environments are filled with experiences for each role in the production as well as many problem-solving situations. Newcomb and Ally (1970) argued the main creativity for producers in Hollywood is the ability to problem solve on the spot. Learning to problem solve is a highly experience-driven application.
In the creative industry world of multi-camera sketch comedy shows, creativity and constraint need each other in order to be successful, although, producers and creative types might state the systematic constraints as counterproductive to the show’s creativity. Nevertheless, for a show to succeed, the constraints on autonomy, creativity and independence are needed and virtuous for an audience/high ratings show. Newcomb and Ally (1970) interviewed a wide range of producers working on various television shows in the 1970s and found the people who control a television show are the groups and creators with the power to make the most individual decisions. This typically is the producer-writer of the show. The producers continually indicated that they were not given creative freedom and had to please many people. For Nielsen ratings, producers have to suppress their sensibilities and creativity in order to survive in the highly competitive industries. Television must explore the central regions of the American mind to appeal to a large audience; this is what makes a show successful. This is the challenge posed to producers when creating a new show.

This is the problem solving that Guilford (1967) discussed in terms of creative production and Newcomb and Ally (1970) discussed in terms of the producer. Media professionals must balance creativity and constraint to grow and develop within these creative industries. Moeran (2011) suggested, “creativity itself is a meaningless concept unless considered in tandem with the constraints under which it operates: specifically, the different kinds of material/technical, temporal, spatial, social, representational and economic conditions under which all industries have to function” (p. 18). Students in media programs may have different constraints in producing their shows than
professional production companies. Grades may be involved, the type of equipment and software may not be consistent and working with other students who may not be as committed are a few examples of creative constraints to student-led shows. Analyzing the distinct features of creative production is a useful way to focus on how the students use creativity to solve problems and maintain a cohesive, creative environment.

This emphasis on intrinsic motivation suggests that individuals are more creative when they are interested in the task itself and enjoy the process of working on the task. Building on previous theory and research, Amabile (1988) proposed The Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity, which states that “people will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself—and not by external pressures” (pp. 142–143). According to this principle, anticipated external evaluation obstructs creativity because it takes the fun out of the assignment by applying external pressure and constraints, which reduces intrinsic motivation and, subsequently, creativity.

**Gender in Film and Television**

Behind the scenes of film and television productions, men outnumber women 3 to 1 in roles that make decisions based on the stories created: executive producer, producer, writer, and editor (Glacock, 2001; Lauzen & Dozier 2008). Lauzen (2013) created a report entitled the *Celluloid Ceiling* that tracks the number of women employed in Hollywood within the top 250 films of a given year. The newest data of the top grossing 250 films of 2012 found women accounted for 18% of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers and editors (see Figure 2). Breaking this down
even further, women accounted for 9% of directors, 15% of writers, 17% of executive producers, 25% of producers, 20% of editors and 2% of all cinematographers. All of these listed positions have a part in influencing the telling of the story and hold the most monetary control, making them above-the-line positions in Hollywood, with the exception of cinematographers. Even though the role of cinematographers is not considered by Hollywood as an above-the-line position, it is important in terms of largest gender bias. Cinematographers are in charge of the lighting and electrical departments of production companies. Astonishingly, 38% of the films employed either 0 or 1 woman in the roles considered.

![Top Grossing Films of 2012 Gender Breakdown](image)

*Figure 2.* Top Grossing Films of 2012 Gender Breakdown.
During the 2011-12 primetime television season, women accounted for 26% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and directors of photography. Women accounted for 38% of producers, 25% of executive producers, 13% of editors, 18% of creators, 30% of writers, 11% of directors and 4% of directors of photography (Lauzen, 2013) (see Figure 3). Women are considerably underrepresented within the above-the-line positions in both the film industry and television. These inequities do not stop at only the above-the-line positions, but continue in the below-the-line positions and in casting roles. Above-the-line positions are considered individuals who guide, influence and add to the creative direction of the narrative. These roles typically include screenwriter, producer, director and known actors. Below-the-line positions include everyone else who works on the physical production of the show or film, which can be hundreds of people.
Shonda Rhimes, an African-American female and creator of *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Scandal*, quoted by Pate (2014) states,

> It’s not because of a lack of talent. It’s because of a lack of access. People hire who they know. If it’s been a white boys club for 70 years, that’s a lot of white boys hiring one another. And I don’t believe that that happens out of any specific racism or sexism or prejudice. People hire their friends. They hire who they know. It’s comfortable. You want to be successful, you don’t want to take any chances, you don’t want to rock the boat by hiring people of color.

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*Figure 3.* 2011-2012 Prime-Time Television Gender Breakdown.
Within the industry there have been outspoken males citing a “lack of talent” within the pool of female job applicants. Keenan Thompson (2013), an eleven-season male cast member of *Saturday Night Live*, believes the lack of African-American females on the cast is because, “they never find ones that are ready” (Luippold, 2013). Aaron Sorkin, writer of *A Few Good Men* and *The Newsroom*, quoted by Mulshine (2014), stated, *Bridesmaids* is looked at as a fluke. The success of that movie is looked at as a fluke and therefore Hollywood doesn’t do it. That is a premise that suggests that studio executives have piles of scripts as good as *Bridesmaids* on their desks. They don’t. *Bridesmaids* got made because it was really good.

Dan Harmon, creator of *Community*, was ‘heavily encouraged’ by the former NBC programming head Angela Bromstad to make his writing staff half women. Harmon initially found this to be a challenge but now works to practice this 50/50 model, They’re harder to find. It’s definitely not because women ain’t funny, because I’m finding the opposite. It’s because there’s fewer of them. The statistical probability of picking up a shitty script, it’s compounded for women… I think women are different, and I think having them in the room is crucial to a family comedy, ensemble comedy, television comedy, where half the eyeballs on your show are women. As it turns out, I think Megan’s the only female writer who’s staying this year… now I’m carrying this legacy, going, 'Eh, guys, we really need a half-female writing staff.’ I would teach it. I think we have to stop thinking of it as a quota thing and think of it as a common-sense thing (Rosenberg, 2012).
To succeed in creative environments, Bielby and Bielby (1992) looked at writers’ careers in film and television by exploring the Writers Guild of America’s employment statistics. Bielby and Bielby (1992) found that writers in film and television worked on short-term contracts, and their jobs/reputations were the most important qualification to getting the next job. Getting into the industry was reachable for beginning writers, but the next job was the hardest to obtain. The number of females who were lead writers on action adventure movies was incredibly low, suggesting a stigma that women cannot write action adventure stories. At the same time there is no research on how many women want to write action adventure. Bigelow, female director of action movies such as *Point Break* (1991), *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), has built a successful, award-winning career writing and directing action adventure films. For *The Hurt Locker* (2008) Bigelow won the Academy Award for Best Picture, Best Director (imdb.com, 2013). Bielby and Bielby (1992) found women who became writer-producers helped create a working environment where there were more women writers and women within the entire cast and crew of the production. *Parks and Recreation*, *The Mindy Project* and *30 Rock* are examples of shows with higher numbers of women working on set than what is typical of other shows during primetime. Each of these shows has female writer-producers (Poehler, Kaling and Fey) (imdb.com, 2013).

Smith and Choueiti (2011) found “when females occupy leadership positions behind the camera the number of roles for girls/women on screen increases significantly. Executives responsible for green lighting pictures are encouraged to think about gender diversification in their hiring practices of above-the-line personnel” (p. 6). In addition,
Lauzen (1999) found that a “growing body of research indicates that women working in the behind-the-scenes community in the television and film industries influence the on-screen portrayals of female characters” (p. 358). Similarly, Riegle-Crumb and Moore (2013) found that for communities that have a higher percentage of women in the labor force working in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), girls were as likely or even more likely as boys to take physics in the school system. Teenage girls growing up in communities where women are better represented in technology are more likely to see women commenting on technology issues in public forums and in school discussions — and more likely to run into a friend's astrophysicist mom at a birthday party. By contrast, Riegle-Crumb explained, girls growing up in communities where the majority of working women are in jobs traditionally held by women, such as child care or nursing, might not see that non-traditional female careers exist. Overall, research tends to indicate that adding more women behind the scenes has a positive influence on additional women looking for jobs in media industries and on the characters within visual narratives.

I am acutely aware that I am a woman in the academic production world, working towards a Ph.D., the ability to teach technical skills and be a woman is a three-for-one. A department hiring me would maintain a tenure track position, keep adjuncts out of required classes and get a notch for hiring a woman. I watched my mother work with the local community theater -- I was given my first camera at 12 and created *American Girl Doll* plays on screen. I do remember choosing an Accounting major, to be guaranteed a job when I graduated, but quickly becoming bored. Only to stumble into a Communication course and change majors – Communication gave me the ability to

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continue making films Accounting did not. I also found a supportive environment in the Communication department, a male video professor and an encouraging female chair of the department. Where I found female mentors working in fields I was interested, I saw I could have a future. In addition, being a female in teaching production can give females the added vantage point to see another female succeed where they hope to be in the future.

Phalen (2000) explored the experiences of women within creative industries by conducting empirical work using in-depth interviews with female media managers of broadcast television stations. A bias towards the women managers was found, where some women felt ignored or left out. More often than expected, women felt they were being left out of decision-making meetings. Phalen (2000) found women who had a mentor (male or female) were doing better in their jobs and climbed the ranks faster. Interestingly, the majority of the females interviewed did not have a mentor. Phalen (2000) stated,

It is clear that barriers to the advancement of women in the industry are not always formed by individual prejudices - they are often constructed by an organizational culture that limits acceptable responses to business demands and conditions the personal and professional decisions of employees. (p. 245)

The benefits of having a mentor can help to assist in career development and to share knowledge in order to navigate the media industries (Raffo et. al, 2000).

In regard to specific female representation working within creative industries, there is little research. A study looking at conflict resolution strategies found lead male
characters were more often part of conflict resolution than female characters (Lauzen & Dozier, 2008). Another study looked at the impact of age on leadership status and found female character’s leadership abilities, occupational power, and effectiveness in achieving goals did not grow with age in opposition to the depiction of male characters (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005).

Henry (2009) explores the place of women in creative industries today and call for further research into women’s actual experiences within the creative sector to build an empirical foundation to explore the barriers facing women. Stating, “women may be particularly well suited to working in the creative industries either as employees or as entrepreneurs,” and goes on to explain women are not growing as rapidly as expected. Reis (2002) has demonstrated that, “women’s creativity is diverted to multiple area in their life, including relationship, work related to family and home, personal interests, aesthetic sensitivities, and appearances.” Phalen (2000) found in interviews with female television managers there was a “bias against women in management, a clash between cultural expectations and individual management styles, exclusionary patterns of communication among male managers.”

Millward and Freeman (2002) explored the expectations of female managers in terms of their innovation skills. They found male managers were perceived to be innovative, and female managers were perceived to be adaptive. Diaz de Chumaceiro (2004) looked at orchestra conductors in regards to serendipity and psuedoserendipity strategies to advance job related success for goals. They found, “chance events contribute to career success, only if artists are well-prepared.” Interestingly, Stoltzfus
(2011) found, “men and women who reported strongly masculine gender role characteristics surpassed the performance of undifferentiated participants.” Women are less likely than men to have the benefit of mentors. From Akande (1994), “[mentors] provide much-needed emotional support and confidence… They suggest useful strategies for achieving work objectives that protégés might not generate for themselves.”

In *Bossypants*, Fey (2013) discusses her mentor, “during my nine years at SNL, my relationship with Lorne transitioned… to one of mutual respect and friendship. I’ve learned many thing from Lorne, in particular a managerial style that was the opposite of *Bossypants*” (p 121). Fey explains having a mentor helps guide and give strategy to not only their professional life but also their personal. For myself I have always had a mentor in my academic career. At my first position at Ball State University I found a connection to the chair of the department and derived advice and mentorship from him. Yet, quickly found a female mentor within the administration. I also was very aware of my young age (25 at the time of my first collegiate teaching position) and I used this to my advantage. Older colleagues gladly gave me all the advice I wanted about any topic under the sun. In fact, I had what I call an anti-mentor. There was one colleague in particular whom I did not agree with. However, my colleague did not know I did not agree with any of their advice. I would ask their opinion on various events, students and ideas, say thank you for their time – then do the opposite. Mentors are important on numerous levels; they can help advance careers, give advice and be an example to follow. I suggest to all of my students to find a mentor and learn from them.
This literature suggests that not only are the creative industries a unique, uncertain, and risky industry for all employees, but there are additional occupational and non-occupational obstacles for women working in these industries. The roles in which students participate during college shape their experiences, which then impact their employability in the industry. Using a survey of instructors in film programs, Proctor (2011) discovered a very low enrollment of women in production courses. The study also found “women students are more likely to take non-technical crew positions (producer, art director) while men assume the role of director and cinematographer” (p.1). Bielby and Bielby (1992) argue the control of the technology and distribution plays a large part of the gender-bias in the creative industries. Sabal (2009) stated, “having internalized the success story of their filmmaking idols, by the time students walk into a film production classroom, they do so with a clear understanding of what it takes to ‘make it”‘(p. 6). Ultimately Sabal (2009) observed students had more exposure to movies and the filmmaking process meaning that film education does not begin in film school. Certainly, an understanding of gender roles occurs long before students step into a collegiate classroom; however, it is important that collegiate educators learn what else can be done in the classroom to help change, promote and mold the media industries, so that they will allow and encourage minority and other disempowered voices to create their stories.

I routinely see women in my courses lean towards the non-technical positions. When I do find a woman who grabs the equipment no matter who is the group with her, I know I have found someone who will go far in production – if they so choose. Yes, some
people must be producers and be non-technical, but there is a clear, outright gender split when it comes simply to touching the camera, touching the lighting and talking to the actors. There are, of course, a small group of women that engage with the equipment and understand these are tools they must learn in order to create a visual story. I was always the student in my video group to take charge, work the equipment and plan everything. I was challenged by delegation and when working with a team that did not embrace my ideas.

**Production Culture**

From the book, *Production Culture* (Caldwell, 2008), much can be learned by exploring various aspects of film and television production cultures such as personal presentation, “common sense” industrial theorizing and “trade stories” that production workers tell among and about themselves. All production workers participate in self-performances and cultural practices that affirm group identities, respond to changing economic, industrial and technological developments and leverage individual careers. “Industrial reflexivity needs to be understood as a form of local cultural negotiation and expression as well, for the production communities that create films” (p.2). In this section of the literature review I will explore the production culture of *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*.

National Broadcasting Company, NBC, is one of the largest media production companies in the United States. Owned by Comcast and General Electric, this creative industry can be described as a “vertically integrated oligarchic firm that mass produces a few standardized products,” or in other words a wide range of television programming
(Caves, 2000). The live-to-tape sketch comedy show, *Saturday Night Live (SNL)* is a creative business produced and funded by NBC. The show’s organizational structure is, “a variegated form of large firm that tries to take advantage of the potential flexibility of the bureaucratic form without giving up central control by acquiring creative services through short-term contracts” (Peterson, 2004). *SNL* is a variety show owned by a large oligarchy, the National Broadcasting Company, which controls the show’s creativity through short-term contracts with writers and performers. Although employee agreements make the environment to create at *SNL* stressful from season to season, they ensure the ongoing creation of a strong product within the risky television industry.

*SNL* has been produced by Lorne Michaels since 1975 and holds the most Emmy nominations in television history. DiMaggio (1977) states that within creative environments the leaders “must control and coordinate their own creative divisions, so that creation remains routine, predictable and guaranteed to produce materials acceptable to the widest possible range of individuals in the controlled market” (p.439). However, the quality of the program has varied throughout its thirty-one years on the air. Twice in thirty-one years Michaels cleaned house by not renewing the majority of his writers and performers contracts. Each time, this resulted in a growth in the show’s ratings.

Seasonally, week after week, *SNL* creates a live comedic sketch show to entertain a small live studio audience and a national audience watching from their living rooms. The sketches range from live scripted scenes to digital shorts and commercial parodies and animation. *SNL* writers, performers and the weekly guest host collaborate on show content the entire week before a show airs on show content. Not much is certain about
SNL except that the show always airs on Saturdays at 11:30 p.m. EST. Competition among the writers and cast is heightened during the week leading up to a show’s airing as everyone tries to have content chosen for the show.

Research looking at production culture is small; academia has mainly looked at texts without considering the author and the audience of the text (Barthes, 1968). In contrast to past research, Caldwell (2008) states, “while film and television are influenced by macroscopic economic processes, they also very much function on a microsocial level as local culture and social communities in their own right.” In addition, Moeran (2011) argues that social science research must look at the, “relation between inner impulse and actual creative practice.” Moeran goes on to explain the ritual aspect of creative industries and how they, “erase structural distinctions and allow different participants to activate their different sets of expertise this climate of approval is ritualized and provides the best possibility for creativity.”

Exploring the community of SNL as a seemingly unstructured production with a strict schedule leads to Turner’s explanation of communitas (1969). Turner defines communitas as “unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated communitus.” SNL’s writers and cast are unstructured in this sense due to the show’s unique ritual aspects dealing with stress, pressured creativity and deadline requirements. SNL’s production process and in particular the writing process, has been described as a horrific and terrifyingly stressful experience (Pekurny, 1980). At SNL, the playing field is leveled with all writers having a chance to have their sketches featured on the weekly show. Approximately forty to fifty sketches are written every week and seven to ten are
selected for inclusion on the weekly show. This statistic and the perpetual creation of skits and scenes showcase an incredibly creative group process. This process is turbulent with the sheer number of ideas and the strict reading of scripts to find out what will be on the air and what will not make the cut each week. Powdermaker, an anthropologist who observed Hollywood, states (1950), “…more workers are used than necessary, raw material is thrown away, highly skilled men are employed and then not permitted to function with any degree of efficiency; foremen, bosses and others are constantly asserting their will, without regard to the effect on the product -- and all this in an extremely personal atmosphere,” (p.169). The number of scripts is the raw material and the high majority of those scripts are thrown out. At SNL a writer has a 25% chance that her script will be used in the live show and there is an even lower risk that a performer will be included in the show.

The writers’ room is on the ninth floor of NBC studios in New York City. There is a window in the room looking down on the eighth floor studio that the writers use to view the weekly show. Ryan, a Starpulse reporter, took a trip to the SNL writers’ room in 2009, “When you enter the writers' room…the first thing you notice are the photos of every cast member lining the walls in, from what I could tell, no particular order. For example, Tina Fey’s picture was right next to Rob Schneider's.” The photos of all the past cast members (all 5x7’s in a brown wood frame) represent the idea of group support and pride, yet at the same time represent the disorganization and randomness of the writers’ room. There is an egalitarian nature experienced when viewing the photos; all the photos are the same size and in the same frame with no one photo being emphasized.
Ryan continues to describe the atmosphere of the room, “lining the room are couches and chairs that I have to assume have been there since 1975.” 1975 was the year *SNL* began; NBC might be striving to not spoil or over indulge the cast and crew of *SNL* since the space still looks like the 70s. Or, perhaps the cast and crew may edge on superstition and not want to take their chances on spoiling a good thing by making changes to the sacred space.

Lorne Michaels is the omnipresent and intimidating creator, Executive Producer and leader of *SNL*. As Fey (2011) describes the atmosphere waiting for her first interview with Michaels, “…the assistants started making popcorn in a movie theater popcorn machine -- something I would later learn signaled Lorne’s imminent arrival. To this day the smell of fresh popcorn causes me to experience stress…” The popcorn symbolizes Michaels’ arrival to all of the workers on *SNL*. Having your own scent and not just a little popcorn in the microwave, but a movie theater popcorn machine is a very powerful move and signifier. His office is on the same floor and area as the writer’s room - and he has the biggest window that looks down upon the *SNL* performance stage.

In the writers’ room at *SNL* the boss or “maestro” (Turner, 1982) is the head writer. Producer Lorne Michaels states (PBS, 2011), “…they must be a writer that all writers admire and second they must be a writer whose best work is understood to be the voice of the show.” The head writer holds an incredible stout position; in charge of all other writers (who can also be the performers and guest host) and ensuring deadlines are hit and the product is ready to go at 11:29pm. An in-depth article in the New Yorker about Tina Fey’s comedic history up to *30 Rock*, written by Herffeman found,
The other writers and performers defer to Fey. ‘If she laughs, everyone’s
laughing,’ Fallon told me. Fey writes two comedy sketches each week, and runs
one of two pivotal and often ego-bruising ‘rewrite tables’ every Thursday. And
she is one of a small group of writers and producers who decide which sketches
will air, as well as which writers get to join the staff.

For Fey to be a head writer and have the power to control the writers’ room so
much that she essentially chose what was funny is remarkable. The ability to understand
what would make an entire group laugh means the head writer must have a strong grasp
or gut on what is deemed funny in comedy. In contrast Martin (2014) held an interview
with Kaling, the creator of *The Mindy Project*, Kaling stated,

> I think that the sort of sexism that I see has been one that's a little bit like a gentler
form of sexism, but still a little bit debilitating… if I make a decision it'll still
seem like it's up for debate… With like, an actor - if I decided there'd be a certain
way in the script, it would still seem open-ended where as I would not - if I was a
man, I would not have seen that… I sort of would have to leave the room so that it
was final and there was like, no discussion that would come after that.

Group cohesion must be part of the atmosphere, and creative industries must have
creative workers that care vitally for the product to succeed (Powdermaker, 1950, Caves,
2000). Moving past the head writer looking at the other writers, “they are intrinsically
connected with the ‘work’ of the collective in performing symbolic actions and
manipulating symbolic objects so as to promote and increase” creativity and the ritualized
product of *SNL* (Turner, 1982). The expectations of the cast and crew of *SNL* are high.
Within a small window of six days, they write, cast, block, re-write and preform a live comedy show. Kaling (2011) worked as a guest writer on SNL for two weeks, “while they all talked and goofed around, I sat at the table listening and smiling and saying nothing, like an upbeat foreign exchange student who spoke very little English (p. 129).” Noting how hard gaining access to the group was; the description of the read-through for the writers at SNL in 2003:

Well, the first hurdle you go through is the Wednesday read-through. You’re in a room with all the writers, all the performers, all the producers, all the designers, and NBC legal. It’s a tough room, and they’ve heard a lot of comedy over the years. The first time you get a laugh in that room is really exciting. But you also spend a lot of time in that room eating shit. It’s an incredibly nerve-wracking, intimidating experience. You sweat from your spine out, you’re woozy, and you can feel your heartbeat in your mouth. I’ve talked with other writers about what it’s like when you have a sketch that tanks. Like when you set up a joke on page three and it doesn’t get a laugh, and you’re sitting there thinking, ‘Oh my god, I call that joke back four times. There’s going to be six more pages of this joke that nobody thinks is funny.’ It’s the worst feeling in the world. But once you get callous to it, you’re a much stronger person (Spitznagel, 2003).

To explore this high-stress and in essence a tearing apart of an individual’s ego with how much pressure is placed on laughter, I will turn again to Turner (1982), who states, “novices are, in fact, temporarily undefined, beyond the normative social structure.” Within the Wednesday read-through, to be defined is to have people laugh at
your joke - if they do not, and still the entire script is read through, you are back to being a novice, a beginner, someone who cannot be funny at the high level of SNL’s expectations. Turner goes on, “this weakens them, since they have no rights over others. But it also liberates them from structural obligations.” Not getting a laugh certainly would deflate your ego, yet, if your sketch were not chosen, part of the pressure to continue working on your script is relieved. The sketch will not make it to the live show, but you will still work on other writers’ scripts that were chosen over your own. The novice then can learn from the masters. Also note the idea of becoming ‘callous’ to the read-through and not letting it deflate your ego. By this description the more ‘seasoned’ writers learn that not having a sketch selected for a weekly show is not the end of the world and the next week they may just get a laugh with their material.

Summary

Experiential learning lessons and opportunities are readily available for students in media programs across the United States. Research on experiential learning environments can be found in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); however this literature review begins to pull together student-led experiential learning, concepts of creativity and gender issues specifically in media production areas. This study seeks to close the gap in media production studies by looking directly at a media programs’ experiential learning environment to understand what students learn. This leads to the first research question:

RQ1: What are students learning in the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?
One primary difference from media programs and STEM areas is the concept of creativity. The students of *Weekend Now* have volunteered to work on the sketch comedy show in at least one specific role for a minimum of eight hours a week. There are bound to be a variety of constraints, not only on a material/technical level, but also within social situations. How do these particular students solve these restrictions? Do they work within them or against them? This leads me to the second research question:

RQ2: How are students negotiating and enacting creativity in the student-led environment of *Weekend Now*?

Film and video experiential projects offer a unique opportunity to construct a framework that encourages creative direction and small team coherence while challenging preconceived notions of authority, as they relate to gender. The role that women play in film and television leadership roles in academic and professional settings can be controlled by the instructor, if they are creating the guidelines for the project. Additionally, in student-led learning environments, fellow students and their peers can and will establish leadership roles. I wanted to find out how gender shakes out in these areas in the group of *Weekend Now*? Will students follow gender roles set forth by Hollywood and television as some studies suggest, or will they find their own way in constructing their own leadership structure? This lead to the third research question:

RQ3: How does gender influence participatory roles within the student-led experiential environment of *Weekend Now*?
Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of what students are learning during their participation in the student-led show, *Weekend Now*. Qualitative research seeks to “preserve and analyze the situated form, content and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 18). I collected the data in a natural setting and employed an inductive research strategy, building to “theory from observations and inductive understandings gained in the field” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning and understanding accompanied by a highly descriptive report that conveys what the researcher learned about students during *Weekend Now* (Merriam, 1998). While the original intended method for this research was an ethnographic approach, after careful consideration of the intent of the study, the methodology changed to a case study, emphasizing my focus of developing an in-depth description and analysis of a single instrumental case study (Creswell, 2007), rather than evaluating *Weekend Now* as a culture.

The conceptual framework of this case study was social constructivism. According to Creswell (2007), the assumption in this framework is that the “individual seeks understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 20). People develop subjective meanings toward their experiences. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to “look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p. 20). The goal of this research was to rely “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 20). The
questions asked of the participants were broad and general so the participants could construct the meaning of the situation when they interacted with the researcher (Creswell, 2007). I made sure to listen carefully to what the people were saying in their interviews or doing in their settings by recording the audio for transcription and taking notes during and after. “These subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” and are shaped through collaboration with others through cultural norms that operate in the individuals’ lives (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Additionally, I addressed the process of interactions among individuals and focused on the specific context of Weekend Now to understand the settings of the participants. In this framework, I worked to generate or develop a pattern of meaning. The study was undertaken to understand the educational merits, creative problem solving and gender implications of the student-led experiential learning group, Weekend Now and focus on what the participants were learning in the community.

This chapter details the methods used for data collection and is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the research sites and population of Weekend Now. The second section expresses my own reflexivity towards my interest for the study. The third section explores my relationship to the subject of this inquiry as a researcher, revealing how different positions and relationships were negotiated during the fieldwork. The fourth section highlights the specific qualitative data collection methods that were used in this research. The last section explains how and why I constructed my data analysis.
Sites

*Weekend Now* is an experiential, student-led sketch comedy television show that allows students working in specific roles to collaborate amongst a variety of other student participants, external groups and university personnel. Each show is shot and taped in front of a live studio audience. There are two sites for this observation: the studio and the writer’s room.

**The studio.** Studio 5C is located on the 5th floor of the RTV building at a mid-sized public four-year university in the Midwest. Any major within the university can join *Weekend Now*, but the media department schedules and maintains the studio. *Weekend Now* uses the studio on Thursday and Friday. The two-story studio space spans both the fifth and sixth floors of the building. During my fieldwork, the studio floor was cramped with a 30 foot high ceiling, had a double door on the north wall, and two doors on the east wall leading into the control room. Within the studio space were three 12-foot tall, 4-panel plywood sets of various colors and textures. The plywood panel on the south wall was used for all of the *Weekend Now* shows, and featured a brick background with a working black door. On the door was a small sign with “Studio C” in black lettering. This brick background was always used for the banter sketch that introduces the host of the show. Another plywood set always used was A-News, a blue background with a blue and grey world map with the border titled A-News on the top and bottom. This set was always in the northwest corner of the studio. The third set, chosen by the director and art director was either a golden rod color or a mint green color with a window and a door. The placement of the A-News set was always in the southwest corner of the studio.
Cameras were stored on the east wall of the studio between the two doors to the control room. When in use, they moved between each of the sets in the middle of the floor. All cameras had a thick black cord which fed the cameras power, sent the cameras’ signals to the control room, allowed the camera operators to communicate with the director via head phone, and controlled the cameras’ settings, such as iris and white balance. Chairs were typically stacked around the cameras and taken down as students would come in and sit down. Just before the dinner break at 6 P.M., all the chairs would be set out for the live studio audience. They were placed in rows of three along the east wall and in a row of two along the north wall in front of the double doors. The producer and floor director escorted the audience into the studio through the door on the east wall from the hallway.

The studio and control room were halved with a large double-paned glass window separating the studio from the tiered control room, which looks down into the studio. From the floor of the studio, two different routes led to the control room, which contained stadium-like seating for around 15 people. One option was to walk up a full set of stairs located in the far left corner of the studio, which led to the top of the control room. A second option was to walk in on the ground floor and then below the control room where a set of stairs could be found. Book bags lined the entry-level of the control room as the second level was filled with students sitting in various chairs controlling the graphics, lighting, tape/digital recording and camera image control. The steep narrow staircase continued to the third level, where students coordinated the rundown; the director watched all cameras via small screens, and beside the director was the switcher. The
director called the cuts as the switcher made the cuts on a small switchboard. A large double-paned glass window looked out into the studio from any position in the control room. A door on the third level of the control room opened to two sets of staircases, one that led down into the studio, and the other, and a shorter set, which led up into a small boardroom on the sixth floor. There was an additional double paned window looking down into the control room. Continuing on through this room was a small audio control room with an audio board mixer, two monitors and one student mixing the live audio and adding sound effects. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show glimpses into the studio and control room.

Figure 4. Studio 5C. From the top level of control room looking down into the studio.
*Figure 5:* This is the bottom level of the control room. In seating order from Left to Right; graphics, lighting, engineer.
**The writer’s room.** Writers met at 6 P.M. on Sunday evenings. The initial location in the Media Building room 127, a small classroom, but during week five the meetings moved to a small, 15-person conference room in the Student Center about a block away. Writers’ meetings were casual, with students wearing sweatpants, shorts and t-shirts, and bringing their own laptops and power cables. At the beginning of the semester, over 20 writers attended the meetings, but by episode 2906 (week 8), many first-year students stopped attending and only 10 students remained. During the first two writers’ meetings none of the ideas brainstormed were used in. Students could have found it frustrating and confusing that their ideas were not getting on the shows. Writers
included various members of the cast, crew members and the show’s producer and head writer.

The head writer called for everyone’s ideas and wrote them on the board. The group would discuss, laugh and express their thoughts for a variety of sketches. After all concepts were written on the board, the head writer circled those he wanted to see further developed for that week’s show, and assigned to at least two writers. Original authorship of a sketch idea was ignored, unless the original author stated explicitly they wanted to write the script. Final written sketches of 2-5 pages were submitted to the head writer electronically the following Wednesday evening. At my third observation of the writers meetings, I was asked if I had any sketch ideas for the group, and I politely passed. This moment seemed to be a turning point in the group’s acceptance of my presence. Figures 7 and 8 show the writers’ meeting for episode 2906; sketch ideas can be seen on the board behind the head writer and the show’s producer.
Figure 7. Writers meeting for episode 2906. Producer on left and head writer on right.
Participants

*Weekend Now* is one of ten shows produced under the student-run media production house umbrella, BMW Productions. The shows produced by BMW Productions include: a satirical news program; a sports show covering varsity, club and intermural sports for the university; and a single-camera narrative comedy series focused on dorm life. The BMW Productions executive board consists of students who run for various positions, such as general manager and marketing manager, and are elected to serve in those positions. BMW Productions executive board controls the budget for all shows, the online uploading of shows, and ensures that shows are successful. The producer role for all shows is applied for and voted on by the BMW Productions’
executive board. All other role designations, duties and responsibilities on each show are controlled completely by the participants. Student participation directly impacts a show’s success. If no one participates, there is no show.

The cast and crew of *Weekend Now* work an average of nine hours a week to create the show. These students earn neither credit hours nor compensation, and most students do not put the show on their demo reels, only a line item on their resumes. The most committed students occupy the roles of producer, director and head writer, each working more than 25 hours a week and had worked on *Weekend Now* for six quarters (two years) before the 29th Season. They write and edit sketches, organize the cast and crew, shoot outside the studio for cold opens and digital shorts, and take on the responsibility of distributing the show to the public broadcasting company and to BMW Productions. The newest members to the show, typically freshmen, work on average six to nine hours during Thursday evening, Friday afternoon and Friday evening. There were a total of 31 freshman, 16 sophomores, eight juniors and six seniors working on the show throughout the semester. All of the participants I interviewed knew of the show before they enrolled at the university, either through friends or during the campus tour of the Radio Television building.

The number of crew participants declined throughout the semester. This is typical with volunteer organizations as the semester progresses and courses, social life and jobs may begin to take more of students' time. Reduced time commitment, frustration over roles and lack of motivation also become issues as the semester goes on. Table 1 shows the change of participants in each episode. For the first three weeks, participation was
steady with 57 participants, growing to 60 and staying at 60. After the first break in the show schedule the show lost six crew members. For the season finale show 2910, *Weekend Now* had 38 crew members. This larger drop occurred after Thanksgiving break, just before finals week and following a steady decline of two to three participants every week. Looking back at the data the students who left were all freshmen. I did not get a chance to talk to some of the freshmen that left since they did so suddenly and without warning.
Table 1

*Cast/Crew Numbers Breakdown*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Semester</th>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Cast</th>
<th>Crew</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>2902</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>2903</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>2904</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>2905</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>2906</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>2907</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>2908</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>2909</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Weekend Now* held the largest crews of all BMW Productions’ shows, averaging 51.9 show participants on Friday evenings, when the show aired. Males made up an average of 26.8 participants (52%) and females, an average of 25.1 participants (48%). The participants in *Weekend Now* represented a much more equitable gender balance than the major of media production, 78% male and 22% female during the 2012-2013 school year (Pecora, 2013). However, *Weekend Now’s* gender participation was consistent with the non-production majors, with those enrollment numbers as 52% male and 48% female.
(Pecora, 2013). While not everyone working on *Weekend Now* was a media major a large number of them were. This gendered participant average varied slightly from the entire student population at the university, which was 48.8% male and 51.2% female during the 2011 school year (Ohio Fact Book, 2011). Table 2 provides a gender breakdown for each episode of *Weekend Now*. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports comparable statistics to *Weekend Now*’s female participation as BLS (2013) indicates females represented 48.3% of all employees working in art, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations.

Ethnic diversity within *Weekend Now* was below the national average with a 5.7% non-Caucasian population, two Asians and one African American. The university’s student population is 80.6% Caucasian, 4.7% African American, 1.0% Asian American, 7.4% Non-Resident Alien, 2.4% Hispanic, .2% American Indian, .1% Hawaiian, 2.0% two or more races, 1.7% unknown. During the 2011 school year, the university as a whole had an African American population of 4.7% and an Asian population of 1.0%. *Weekend Now* was above average in Asian population at 3.8%, and below average in African American population at 1.9% (Ohio Fact Book, 2011).

**Interview selection.** Participants of *Weekend Now* were selected for formal in-depth interviews using maximum variation sample (Creswell, 2007). I initially chose maximum variation to gain a diverse range of knowledge and response. Participants who were interviewed had crew and cast experience ranging through all of the roles available to the students. The first five students chosen for the formal in-depth interviews were the head producer (sophomore), director (junior), a cast member (sophomore), the assistant
director (freshman) and a camera operator (freshman). I chose to interview the producer and the director because of their control over the narrative of the show and their years of experience working on the show. The camera operator and the assistant director were chosen because they were newer members, and could best explain the process of learning about the production of the show. These interviewees then suggested other students to interview and so I interviewed another cast member and the associate producer. Prior to each interview, I asked for each individual’s permission to audio record the conversation. All agreed.

My decision to interview this group reflects the importance of choosing a case which both welcomes the researcher’s inquiry and which has a prospective identifiable informant who is willing to comment on certain draft materials (Stake, 1995; Yin 2003). The producer, Sarah, was an ideal informant who could confirm specific details of Weekend Now. Sarah looked over the roles and responsibilities of the cast and crew, the timelines for schedule each week and clarified larger narratives throughout the semester.

**Reflexivity Statement**

Reflexivity requires researchers to address their relationship with the informants in the field and with the field itself (Creswell, 2007; Watt, 2007). The students of Weekend Now were of particular interest to me because I use experiential teaching methods in the classroom focusing on hands-on learning projects. I strive to continuously encourage my students to use creativity and divergent thinking to solve problems on set. Also, I am part of the minority of women that teach video production.
In 2009 as an instructor of Telecommunications at Ball State University, a colleague and I mentored a crew of 24 students in a class project designed to create profile videos for locally owned businesses in economically-depressed Muncie, IN. Working closely with each business, our students built a working website while producing 24 promotional videos. The other instructor and I would joke that we were not even instructors in traditional terms, since we were not lecturing, grading or administering tests. We considered ourselves facilitators of the project, while the students took it upon themselves to produce great videos adhering to deadlines and developing the confidence to make mistakes. Students also collaborated and criticized in order to make the project their own. We, as facilitators, created the overall structure for the course and let the students work in it. The overall notion of the success of the experiential learning project became a research interest of mine. Muncie citizens and business owners have praised this particular project and consider it a success due to the high production quality and potential to contribute to local economic development (Flook, 2010).

My interest in gender issues is grounded in my experience as “the lone woman” in nearly all of the production courses I teach. In film and television, women are the minority in both cast and crew; a master’s degree is not necessarily valued by the industry and gender typically is not an integral part of video production courses. When I started teaching video production at the college level at the age of 25 (one of three women in a telecommunications department of 24 full-time teachers), I became acutely aware that the men in the department refused to acknowledge, much less discuss, gender
issues in media production. I taught two production courses with no female students; other production courses would have only two or three women. When I asked my male colleagues about this discrepancy they expressed surprise at the low numbers, but would not acknowledge it as a problem. I was told, “I have no women in my classes” and “really, that’s odd, I’ve never experienced that.” When I asked my two female colleagues the same question, they acknowledged it and said, “get used to it.” This stuck with me. At Ball State University I was always engaged in debates with male students who would say things like, “women, as a whole, could never make for a strong director.” Another male student was convinced that Kathryn Bigelow won the Oscar for Best Director for The Hurt Locker (imdb.com, 2013) because the academy felt “it was time to give the award to a female” even though the male student had not seen the film. I know women in university media programs already facing the same systematic gender discrimination found in the profession.

My professional background is in media creation, specifically video production. I have been writing, directing and producing visual narratives since I received my first camera for Christmas at 12-years-old. I have taught video production, media criticism and screenwriting for the past six years at the college level and am knowledgeable with single camera productions. Since arriving at the university in August of 2010 as a doctoral student, I have taught the introductory video production course for five quarters and one summer session, as well as have been a teaching assistant and later instructor for a course titled, Media and the Creative Process. I also taught one advanced screenwriting course focusing on social change. I left the university to take a position as Director of
Electronic Media and Film and Instructor of Communication at Capital University in June of 2012. I teach mainly production courses as well as media criticism, media management and public speaking.

Since I was the sole instructor of the introductory video production course for five quarters at the university, many of the students working on *Weekend Now* had taken that course from me. A few of the students had taken multiple courses with me. However, I was still at the outskirts as the department kept graduate students separate from undergraduate students. As a graduate student we were not invited to attend departmental meetings, nor invited to the departmental party at the end of each academic year. From what I understood at these departmental parties the undergraduate students are given awards and their hard work is acknowledged. As a graduate student we were kept separate from the undergraduates, which was a 180-degree departure from my time at Ball State University as a graduate student. There graduate students were given an open invitation to all departmental meetings and graduate and undergraduate students were not separated from departmental events. I believe the students who enjoyed my classes but did not see me at such important departmental events would assume I was not a ‘teacher-authority’ but more along the lines of an ‘adjunct’. I believe this hindered my authority in the classroom at first. Luckily, production faculty within the department grew to trust my teaching and allowed me into the discussions, future directions for the program and writing of internal grants within the production area. This acceptance, although not fully, helped build a stronger repertoire with students.
The former teacher/student relationship I had with the students facilitated the research process in that the students knew and had a level of comfort with me. I would discuss my research within my course, as well as observed two additional student-led production environments. One, was a small location set for a short film, I observed this for a paper in a course. My second observation was of a 48-hour competition group. This observation was for a course in my doctoral program. It is important to note that, at the time of the observation of *Weekend Now*, I was not teaching at the university; therefore I did not have a current student/teacher relationship with any of the participants. I think this helped the students not to worry about grades, or biases within a classroom in relationship to what I might learn about their actions during *Weekend Now*.

From the beginning of the study, I considered myself both insider and outsider in the field. My position as an insider came from knowing the students from a teaching perspective and having knowledge of video production and narrative creation. In the field, I was well acquainted with how the production would work on a technical level, and how each crew position would typically be assigned in the production setting. I was also aware of my position as an outsider. While I am familiar with single camera production, multi-camera production was not so familiar and, frankly, not as interesting to me as an instructor. As in my own undergraduate education, I avoided the multi-camera experience so that I could focus on documentary production. In fact I actively remained a Communication major and would not become a Radio-Television major, because I disliked both radio and television. I wanted to create my own films, so, I added a film minor to the Communication major. Observing what students were doing at
*Weekend Now* was an opportunity for me to learn more about other ways of creating media. Additionally, I was able to observe how students learned in a high-pressure, time-sensitive environment. I had a good sense of what students learned in my single camera production lessons, but knew very little about what was involved with multi-camera shows when students were completely in charge.

To guard against my own biases, I took many directions. First, for the in-depth interviews I made sure to ask all interviewees’ the same questions. The same questions ensured I was getting everyone’s perspective on a particular idea and on the program of *Weekend Now* to ensure a wide range of thoughts and opinions. Second, I used a triangulation of observations, in-depth interviews and document analysis to work towards a complete picture of what happened in the show and why. Third, I spent as much time with the group of *Weekend Now* as I could. Attending every Friday session during season 29 (except for one) allowed ample time to get to know the group, their processes and their goals.

**Access.** My initial contact was Sarah, the producer of the show and therefore, the initial gatekeeper for access. An average student, she had taken both of my introductory video production course and an advanced screenwriting course. When she showed up to class, she contributed insightful comments to the course, but missed some assignments and had less than perfect attendance. When I heard she was going to be the new producer of *Weekend Now*, I was a little surprised because of her lack of responsibility, but excited because she was a fellow feminist. I approached Sarah after class near the end of the quarter and asked if I could observe for the entire next semester; she was enthusiastic and
allowed me on set. I explained to her I would be asking for consent from everyone working on Weekend Now and would observe all semester. She asked what I would specifically be looking for and I explained I was looking at how students learn in experiential environments. Sarah may have agreed quickly because she took my courses and was excited that a fellow feminist wanted to observe and explore the show. As the observation went on, the associate producer became interested in the study and asked for a printed copy of this dissertation for Weekend Now to keep on record. I agreed, and will give him a copy when my committee signs off on this dissertation.

After Weekend Now was selected and the producer agreed to allow my presence for the semester, I requested approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Prior to submitting the project outline to the IRB, I was required to complete an online training module to protect participants from any potentially harmful impacts. The IRB consent form is included in Appendix B and the IRB approval letter is in Appendix C.

The first meeting for Weekend Now was an informational meeting to explain what they did and to obtain contact information from students interested in working on the show. This was a pre-consent observation I conducted; none of this particular event was used in the study. I asked for consent on September 7th, 2012. This was the first show of the semester (see Appendix F for their entire semester schedule). I decided to get to the studio early (1:35pm) to ask for consent from everyone who walked into the studio. From 1:40, when the first student arrived, until 2:30, I was explaining the consent form and talking with everyone individually or in groups of two or three. I explained the rationale for the study, asked for everyone’s consent, and instructed him or her to be
prepared for an interview request. That evening, I received 57 signed consent forms from the cast and crew. The majority of the students signed the form within minutes. Only two students, Zak, the head writer and Jamie, the art director, asked me additional questions. Zak probed more on the topic of what I would specifically be observing; he was uneasy with allowing me to observe the show. I stated I would be around every Friday and for many of the writers’ meetings. In addition, I told Zak I would answer any questions he had at any point in the future. Jamie mentioned that her mother would want her to read the consent form before signing. She wanted to know if there would be any risk to the study. I told her none were anticipated, but that I would be happy to answer any other question.

For the first two Fridays of observation, students typically ignored my presence and worked hard on the show. Sarah was the only exception. When everything was very hectic, Sarah would come tell me, “it’s not normally like this.” This gendered response blaming her for the other 50+ students in the location being loud, chaotic and unfocused. In addition, she would ask me what I thought she should do. One moment in particular she asked my advice on what to do with the placement of the audience for the show. The new control room replaced where the audience was seated in the year prior, so there needed to be a decision as to the new location of the live studio audience. I responded, as I did to any questions requiring me to participate in a way that was not observational, that I could not give my opinion on the matter. I knew then Sarah still saw me as an instructor. As time went on, this faded and Sarah stopped asking me questions. I also thought that Sarah was worried about the amount of yelling, stress, and general chaos of
the show and felt she needed to clarify that it wasn’t ‘normally’ like this. I assured her I was not judging her behavior or anyone else’s, and was just trying to understand how a live show works when it is completely student-run.

After observing four of the shows, students became comfortable with my presence. A few sought me out to share instances of conflict and excitement, Sarah pulled me aside to tell me about the conflict between *Weekend Now* and BMW Productions. The associate producer, Andrew, would tell me about his new ideas and directions for the show, along with his concerns with comedy. At times I felt more like a confessional rather than an observer. Since only a few students talked to me this way, I assumed they had specific reasons. Sarah seemed to tell me things to make sure I knew what was going on from her side, Andrew bounced ideas off of me, and Connor and I regularly discussed the final season of *30 Rock*. On the positive side, it was great various informants wanted to tell me what was going on with the show and with them. On the negative, this may have held other students back from talking with me, as they saw I was getting closer with certain students. To make sure I was getting more than one side of the stories I brought up significant occurrences to more than one participant.

The season finale created chaos in the typically calm control room. The TriCaster (the system which allows for recording and switching of cameras) broke down; the cameras were blacking out with no video, and graphics would not load. The control room was hectic, loud and frantic (this was atypical; normally the control room was near silent). The students knew I had recorded the audio of the event in the control room.
They asked for a copy to use as a behind-the-scenes for *Weekend Now*. I agreed and gave them my audio copy of the show.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative data was obtained through observations, interviews and documents. This is considered data triangulation and helps create an in-depth understanding of the topic being explored (Patton, 2002). Observations were completed throughout the fall 2012 semester, interviews were conducted with various student participants and documents were collected via *Weekend Now* email listserv.

**Observation.** According to Patton (2002), a researcher’s participation in research ranges from complete immersion in the setting as a full participant to complete separation from the setting as observer. During my fieldwork, I assumed the role of observer-as-participant. Through observing, I sought to understand normal circumstances of the show and gain a narrative of the 29th season as it progressed. As someone who actively observed every phase of the production process, I became the prime source for gathering data (Madison, 2005). I observed a total of 63 hours. I attended 9 of the 10 Friday show sessions from 2:00 P.M. until 8:00 P.M.; five Sunday writer sessions typically from 5:00 P.M. until 6:00 P.M.; one Thursday set up session from 9:00 P.M. until around 11:30 P.M. and the first meeting of the show from 4:00 P.M. until 6:30 P.M. During every visit, I observed the working routines and interactions among the *Weekend Now* cast and crew. I was able to observe the participants’ activities and immediate experience, while also conducting go-alongs (Kusenbach, 2003). These go-alongs allowed me to compare and contrast these observations with attitude, motivation and feelings.
When I first started observing on Friday afternoons I would open up the Notes Application on my iPhone and connect a keyboard via Bluetooth. This allowed me to write observation notes while not looking at a screen and provided a quick digital copy. After using this method for two Fridays, I switched to writing in a black moleskin journal to have more freedom in walking around without carrying all the technology. During the writer’s meetings, I would quickly write down significant moments as to not distract the group. For example, I took note that Zak started the meeting. I noticed students would look at me when I would start taking notes, the room was small and more movement was noticed. After the meeting concluded I would go back over my notes and add smaller details.

**Interviews.** Go-alongs and formal in-depth interviews were used as data-gathering tools. According to Kusenbach (2003) the go-along is a technique in which the researcher moves alongside informants to collect information. Go-alongs occurred spontaneously with almost everyone on set at one point or another, ranging from a quick chat to a long story. I typically initiated these go-alongs, asking someone what they enjoyed about *Weekend Now*, which led into stories about roles and what they were learning. The go-alongs provided an opportunity to create mutual trust between the student’s and me. When I had the audio recorder with me, I recorded these stories. When the recorder was not with me, I would type out notes as soon as I had a free moment; typically during the dinner breaks on Fridays and immediately after the observations on Fridays and Sundays in the writers’ room.
The in-depth interviews were conducted at the end of the 29th season of the show, so that I would be more familiar with the student’s experiences working on the show. According to Kvale (1996), the use of open-ended interviews allows for follow up and clarification questions and solicits the opinions of the interviewees on the themes of the study. The in-depth interviews were scheduled primarily using messages sent via the online social network Facebook, and were then conducted via a free video conferencing software called Skype. I started each interview by first inquiring about the role and years spent with Weekend Now and led in to what they learned. The majority of interviews ranged from 40-55 minutes and followed an interview guide approach (Patton, 2002), which contained a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix A). One interview with an informant lasted two hours. This interview focused on the same open-ended questions and had an additional aspect of confirming narratives, roles and responsibilities. Responses produced information about the varying aspects of learning, perceptions, experiences, knowledge and opinions from working on the show. This approach had many benefits. First, interviews remained conversational and students could go beyond the bounds of the questions. Second, the questions increased the extensiveness of the data and made data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent’s interview.

Documents. Document review allowed for another way to understand how the participants communicated and worked with each other. The documents the students made were communicated via email. Specifically, these were the script and the crew calls for each week. The crew call sheet provided a record of students’ roles on every episode of Weekend Now. The students of Weekend Now barely used any type of
document printed on paper. The only physical paper work was the rundown sheet for each individual show and a few copies of the scripts. Most of the cast members read the script during rehearsals from their smart phones and not a paper copy. The documents I collected were all via email: the Friday call sheets, scripts and various communications reminding students to arrive on Thursday evenings for set up. The email listserv consisted of a list of around 100+ students. Students could opt out of the email list at any time by emailing the director.

**Data recording and storing.** During the observation, I utilized situational and personal audio recordings, descriptive and reflective field notes (written and photographed), email communications (documents), and formal in-depth interviews as methods and tools for data collection. Audio and field notes were collected to help recreate the narrative in written form. I typically relocated myself when the situational audio was recorded. For example, if I were observing the dress rehearsal in the studio, I would place the audio recorder in the control room. Additionally, I recorded personal audio recordings when I did not have the means to type or write out field notes. Photographic documentation occurred only during a few of the shows, as the camera proved to gain too much attention from many of the students.

My field notes, all audio recordings, email communications, photographed documentations and interview transcripts were kept in folders organized by show airdate. These items are backed up on two different computers (home laptop and work desktop) and on a portable hard drive. The dated, organized approach helped bring my memories back into focus as the data were reviewed, coded and transcribed. All open-ended
interviews were recorded via my personal audio recorder. The interviews were also transcribed.

**Data Analysis**

Case study data analysis usually involves an iterative and cyclical process that advances from general to more specific observations (Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 2000). My analysis focused on the narrative of the cast and crew of *Weekend Now* to achieve a rich and detailed report. All field notes, formal in-depth interviews and informal conversations were analyzed through the method of thematic analysis, an inductive tool used for identifying themes embedded within the data (Aguinaldo, 2012). Thematic analysis can be used to analyze a wide range of narrative texts. In conducting the thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest the importance of becoming familiar with the data; generating initial coding features across the entire data set; collating codes into potential themes; reviewing themes and generating a thematic map of the analysis; and, finally, defining and naming themes. This method of analysis was chosen to help focus on a few key issues of learning, how gender influenced participatory roles and the enacting of creativity to understand the complexity of the case (Caswell, 2007).

To conduct a thematic analysis for this study, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model. At the first stage of engaging with the data, I read through my electronic field notes, written field notes, the call sheets, email communications and interview transcripts. I reviewed photos and listened to the audio recordings of the observation considering my research questions about learning, gender and creativity. I placed all these items around the floor of my living room and began making color coded notes.
throughout. Coding was completed manually as I took notes while I read through my field notes, transcriptions and listened to the situational audio recordings. When I was finished, I had created a preliminary list of codes, extracting what was in the main themes along with other interesting ideas and stories. After initial coding and note taking, the third stage was to indicate strong themes and patterns within learning, gender, creativity and the stories that stuck out or diverted from the norm within Weekend Now. As was indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006), themes emerged as I selected and sorted through scraps of collected data and put like-minded pieces together into themes, creating a thematic map of the data.

The fourth stage was to review all created themes. I compared and contrasted particular codes within each theme. Overlapped codes were merged and non-overlapping codes were moved to another theme. The fifth stage was to name and define all themes to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall narrative within the data. The themes for learning were job duties, collaborative social skills, conflict management, collaborative storytelling, and learning to be adaptable; the themes for creativity were creativity through constraint, compromise, creative concepts, structural changes and nothing left to lose, and the themes for gender were leadership development, gendered roles, primary female roles, primary male roles and chivalry. Finally, the sixth stage was the write up of the results. The results and interpretation chapter will be a collection of compelling narrative examples and a final analysis of the selected examples relating back to the research questions and literature.
Presentation of findings. In addition, the emails and interviews that are reported have been subject to grammatical corrections that are identified as author’s insertions by placing them within brackets []. At other places, any word or explanation that has been inserted by the researcher is also identified by being placed within brackets. For the sake of confidentiality, all names in this study have been changed to ensure the privacy of all people involved in the process and project. Although the specific identities of the student participants have been changed, the circumstances and descriptions are accurate.
Chapter Four: Results and Interpretation

The purpose of this case study was to explore how students learn in a student-led production environment. This chapter contains an extensive description of a typical week at Weekend Now and the key themes that emerged from the analysis of field notes, audio recordings, 63 hours of observation and six interviews with key informants. The complexities of this experiential culture can best be understood by experiencing it, and as the researcher I had the great fortune of embedding myself in the Weekend Now experience through my role as observer as participant. The main research questions for this case study are:

RQ1: What are students learning in the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?

RQ2: How are students negotiating and enacting creativity in the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?

RQ3: How does gender influence participatory roles within the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?

Weekend Now

Weekend Now is an experiential, student-led sketch comedy television show that requires students to collaborate amongst a variety of external groups, university personnel and voluntary student participants with specific roles. Weekend Now is loosely based off of the structure and style of Saturday Night Live, beginning with an opening sketch, titled ‘banter,’ lead by the host of that particular week. This is similar to the opening banter on Saturday Night Live delivered by a celebrity host. Each show is shot in front of a live
studio audience. The show itself is given a disclaimer stating, “Weekend Now contains content not suitable for younger viewers. Viewer discretion is advised.” See Figure 9 for the title card. Since the show runs on public access at 10:00 P.M. on Friday evenings, the producer tries to maintain PG-13 content. There is not a specific list of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ content. The main decider of whether the content is inappropriate is the producer.

Figure 9: Weekend Now View Discretion.

**Season 29.** This was the 29th season of Weekend Now, observed during Fall 2012 of the 2012-2013 school year. The semester began August 27th, 2012 and ended on December 15th, 2012. This was the first semester-long show following the university’s transition from a quarter to semester calendar year system. A total of 10 shows were produced, with the first nine productions being 29 minutes and 15 seconds in duration, and the tenth being 58 minutes and 30 seconds in duration. All episodes were taped around 7:00 P.M. on Fridays and aired the same evening at 10:00 P.M. on public access channel, WOUB2. Table 2 is a breakdown of the weekly Friday Lives’ airing schedule.
The table includes the weekly host and episode number to give a semester overview of the *Weekend Now* agenda.
Table 2

*Season 29 Schedule of Weekend Now Academic Semester Fall 2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date (Friday)</th>
<th>Episode #</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/31/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Initial Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/7/12</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>Will B.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/14/12</td>
<td>2902</td>
<td>Amy T.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/21/12</td>
<td>2903</td>
<td>Travis P.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/28/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/5/12</td>
<td>2904</td>
<td>Megan H.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>2905</td>
<td>Brian M.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/19/12</td>
<td>2906</td>
<td>Connor N.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/26/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/2/12</td>
<td>2907</td>
<td>Kady R.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/9/12</td>
<td>2908</td>
<td>Jamie R.</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/16/12</td>
<td>2909</td>
<td>All Cast</td>
<td>29:15</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/23/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/30/12</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td>Zak F.</td>
<td>58:30</td>
<td>Last Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12/7/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/14/12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A typical week. To provide a full picture of student duties and filming schedule, this section will outline all of the events during a typical week at Weekend Now. This section will contain descriptions of the Sunday Writers/Pitch Meeting, Wednesday Read Throughs, Thursday Set-Up, the Friday Call Sheet, and a breakdown of a typical Friday evening show schedule.

Sunday, writers/pitch meeting. Writers met at 6:00 P.M. The location began in the Radio Television Building room 127, but during week five moved to the campus center conference room 229. ‘Writer’ is a loose term because everyone on cast and crew was invited to come pitch ideas and write sketches, although not everyone attended. At the beginning of the semester, there were significantly more writers at the meeting, around 20 students. By episode 2906 (week 8), the writers meeting had 10 students and leveled out at that point. Writers consisted of various members of the cast, crewmembers, students who were only seen at the writing meetings, and the show’s producer and head writer.

Writers meetings were casual, with students’ dress consisting of sweatpants, shorts and t-shirts. Each writer came with his or her own laptop and power cables. Students had their laptops open and would read small one to two line pitches for ideas when the head writer would call for attendees’ ideas and write them on the board. The group would discuss, laugh and express their thoughts for a variety of sketches. After all concepts were written on the board, the head writer circled the sketches he wanted to see written for that week’s show. The circled sketch ideas were then assigned to at least two writers. Original authorship of a sketch idea was ignored, unless the original author
stated they wanted to write the script. Final sketches were due to the head writer by
Wednesday evening. The producer would encourage everyone to stick around and write
up at least a draft of the sketch after the meeting, but when I observed everyone
immediately left after the sketches were assigned.

**Monday.** Nothing occurred formally, informally writers worked on sketches.

**Tuesday.** Nothing occurred formally, informally writers worked on sketches.

**Wednesday, read through.** Finalized sketches were due to the producer, director
and head writer. The entire cast, head writer, producer, director and assistant director met
at 7 P.M. in the studio to perform read-throughs for each sketch and the producer
recorded initial timings. This was also a casual affair with students sitting around reading
the sketches aloud. Voting was performed by a quick show of hands, and the head writer
decided in any ties. The head writer would cast the roles with various students. After the
cast members performed all sketches, they submitted a vote for their favorites. Typically
there was room for three sketches in each episode and those with the highest votes got on
the show. Once the sketches were chosen, the head writer would finalize the casting.
Typically, those who wrote the sketches could say whom they wanted to play the role, or
they would play in the sketch themselves. The producer and assistant director made
adjustments for timing to create the show rundown, which is the order of the sketches and
selected commercials to be used ultimately creating a show with duration of 29 minutes
and 15 seconds. While the rundown was scheduled and the cast was learning their new
casting roles, the director would decide props and begin thinking through blocking of the
scenes.
**Thursday, set-up.** Thursday evenings at 9:00 P.M., a formal meeting was held to set-up for the show in Studio C. This meeting consisted of the producer, director and all the crew who could attend. Everyone who worked on the show was encouraged to show up for ‘set-up.’ Production work consisted of copying the final script to cue cards, bringing in plywood backgrounds for each sketch, designing sketch sets with props, and devising lighting for each sketch. Cue cards were white poster boards cut in half and had the cast’s lines written on them, typically the female cue-card holders wrote the cards. Each sketch had its own pile of cue cards and each cast member had their own font color/permanent marker to read. The plywood flats were stored throughout the week on the fifth floor of Media building in a locked prop cage. The director would choose the flats needed for the shows. A flat was a twelve-foot high plywood wall with a 2x4 frame. Four of these flats clamped together from the back created a set. There were four options of flats; a brick background with black door, a plain gold flat, a blue A-News flat and a mint green flat with a window and a door. The props to be in each live sketch were decided by the director or cast and created by the art director or subsequent cast member. The more creative the cast member, the more they seemed to creating and bring their own props, costumes to use on the show. For the flippers sketch, those within the sketch crafted their own characters needed in the story created the puppets.

Various props on hand consisted of a couch, small dining room table, posters, a twin bed and many costumes, these items were used if a sketch called for a specific piece of furniture. Then the art director would decorate said furniture to either pop off the flat or fit with the sketch. If there was a prop needed that they didn’t have on hand, either
the producer, director, or Art Direction would purchase the item – or the cast member
would find something to work. They would then be reimbursed with receipt through the
executive board of Broadcast Media Works (BMW). Many cast and crew mentioned the
length of receiving a Reimbursement took a long time, and this was used as a last resort.
After setting up the flats and beginning to decide props, lighting would begin adjusting
the studio lights to provide adequate lighting to each set for the live show. Lighting was
not ‘designed’ as there were not many lights to choose from on the lighting grid. As long
as something was ‘visible’ to the cameras, the lighting was good. The most styled
lighting was used for the musical acts, where they had one spotlight above the musicians’
head and typically a light with a red gel for an accent. Attending this Thursday evening
pre-production event was key to showing commitment and was necessary to be
considered for the higher responsibility positions on the show.

**Thursday/Friday call sheet.** After the Thursday evening meeting and before
Friday morning, the director sent an email of the call sheet to the entire crew. These
emails informed the crew about their roles for the upcoming Friday show, along with the
“call times” for the day, when the cast and/or crew is expected to be on set. These times
can vary depending on when a cast or crew member is needed. A separate email from the
head writer was sent to inform the cast of sketch actors and cast members when to arrive
for rehearsal. For examples of the Weekend Now email call sheets, see Appendix G.
Below is a sample from the 2906 show demonstrating crew times distributed via the call
sheet email, figure 10. Call information includes: time to arrive, sketch rehearsal, dinner
break, dress rehearsal of entire show, and live show recorded to tape.
**Figure 10: Call Time Example Episode 2906 Call Sheet**

| Call time: 1.45 pm |
| Run thurs: 2.10pm |
| Dinner: 5 pm |
| Dress: 6 pm |
| Show: 7 pm |

*Friday, the live show.* The Friday event was the least amount of time you could spend contributing to the show. Beginning with a call time around 2:00 P.M. in Studio C, students would arrive, hang out, chat and wait for further instruction. The producer, head writer, director and assistant producer were always dressed in a semi-professional manner. Typically the producer would wear dark skirts or dress pants and a blazer. The head writer always wore corduroys pants, a slim necktie and a button up shirt. The director wore a variety of semi-professional clothing from flowing dresses to blazers and jeans. When I asked the producer why she was always dressed up, she stated it was tradition, “the producer and director always dress up to work towards a professional environment.” The rest of the cast and crew wore a variety of clothing from jeans, t-shirts to hoodies. Their only requirement was to wear ‘close-toed shoes’ while they were in the Studio. This rule was also posted on the door of the studio and established for the safety of everyone working in the studio space.

After all crew members and the cast arrived, they would begin doing run-throughs of the live sketches. Each member of the cast had different call times depending on the sketches in which they starred. Typically the ‘host’ of the episode arrived at 2:00 P.M. and would stay for all the sketches. Other cast members would come in and out of the
studio depending on which sketch was being rehearsed. Then everyone started run-
through of each sketch with the cast and crew who would play in those roles. The cast
typically used laptops or iPhones to read the script (they did not use the cue cards until
the dress rehearsal). The head writer would watch and direct the cast’s performance of
the characters within the sketch. The director would block the cast with the cameras.
The producer watched out for many details, mainly making sure everyone was doing their
job and that rehearsals were running smoothly. During rehearsals, each sketch was timed
and if a sketch was seconds over (heavy) or under (light) from Wednesday’s rundown,
the show was adjusted in some way. If a sketch were heavy, they would ask the cast to
say their lines faster, if the sketch was light, they would try to take their time.
Additionally, camera set-ups were tested and edits are rehearsed with the director. After
all sketches were rehearsed, a ‘notes’ session occurred. Typically the producer would
yell, “Notes!” This signaled everyone to grab a chair and settle in to hear critiques.
During the notes session, the director, head writer and producer would stand up in front
of the cast and crew and comment on all of the camera work, cast performance during the
sketches and the look of the sets. They never discussed the actual story or content of the
sketches. After the notes the cast and crew were given an hour-long dinner break,
typically around 5:00 P.M. and were expected to return around 5:45 P.M. to do a full
dress rehearsal starting around 6:10 P.M.

When everyone returned from the dinner break, a full dress rehearsal of the show
was performed. The dress rehearsal consisted of the opening graphics, credits, digital
shorts, commercials and the live sketches. Timings were again taken for each sketch to
determine if the show was running light or heavy. The students who were cast and not yet in a scene would sit in the audience area and watch the show until their sketch was ready to be on. After the dress rehearsal, another notes session occurred with the director, head writer and producer leading the critique, again mainly focusing on cast performance, camera work and look of the sets. After a short 5 to 10 minute break, the studio audience was ushered into the studio for the live show. The audience would begin to arrive around 7:00 P.M. and line up in the hallway of the Media building’s 5th floor. For every show, the line would snake down the hallway to the elevator, a space of around 50 feet. *Weekend Now* averaged 35 audience members each show. Once the audience was seated, sometimes they would allow someone to do a few minutes of stand-up. This seemed to loosen up the audience and get everyone to start laughing. Comedians looked to be chosen on a whim, someone would tell Zak or Sarah they were interested in performing and they would be slated for the next week. I never observed a female stand-up comedian. Once the comedian was finished, the producer would turn off the house lights and everyone would turn to the in-studio monitor to watch the final output of the show.

**Weekend Now show rundown.** The show began with the assistant director counting down from ten seconds to zero. At zero seconds, the graphics crew ran the opening graphics and the technical director placed the graphics into the main feed of video. Bars and tone ran for ten seconds, the Student Appropriations Commission (SAC) funding title card ran for five seconds, the viewer discretion warning title card ran for 5 seconds and the opening credits consisting of video showcasing all of the current cast
members rolls for three seconds. All of these elements are input from a Mac Mini and all are prerecorded. Figure 11 and 12 below provide examples of the opening title cards used for the show. In addition, Appendix H displays a show rundown and the count the assistant director needed to say each show.

Figure 11: Program Funded by SAC (Student Appropriations Commission).

The live recording of the show started with a banter sketch utilizing the host scheduled for the week (similar to the opening monologue of Saturday Night Live). The opening sketch was followed by a commercial break. Commercial breaks allow the cast and crew the opportunity to prepare for the next sketch. A complete Weekend Now show consisted of 4-5 sketches (including banter) and a performance by the weekly musical guest. See Figure 12 for an example run down which was always in the studio for everyone to view.
Figure 12: Sample Rundown from Episode 2903.

The final sketch showcased the entire cast and the night’s musical guest, again, similar to the ending of SNL where the credits run overtop of the cast. In this final sketch, everyone joined together to say goodnight to the live audience. Finally, credits roll, concluding the show.

After the live show, the audience was shown to the exit of the studio and another ‘notes’ session began. Again, the director, head writer and producer commented on the show, reminded everyone to attend the evening after party and requested that people stay to breakdown the set. Typically these particular final note sessions were all positive and would let everyone know where the evening’s party was being held and if anyone needed ‘beverages’ to get a hold of one of the cast members. In observing 9 of the 10 shows, all of the parties were located at the producer’s apartment. However, before they could
leave for the party, the cast and crew were requested to stay to help break down the set. This consisted of returning all of the props and plywood flats to storage, stacking chairs and quickly cleaning the studio.

**Saturday.** Nothing occurred formally. This was a day of complete rest from working on any and all aspects of the show.

**Weekend Now Themes**

This section examines the themes that emerged from the data collection process of this study. The broad categories contained in this section are the expectations of the students by their peers, student perceptions of the show and themselves, problem solving techniques used, conflict management, and positive/negative reinforcement. The initial broad categories were determined by listening to audio recordings and reading transcripts, field notes and other materials obtained while observing *Weekend Now*. Experiential learning, gender and creativity emerged as subcategories from initial research questions. Each category was analyzed for themes common to *Weekend Now* participants.

**Experiential Learning**

This section will outline the themes of what students learned within the student-led experiential learning environment of *Weekend Now*. This section is to reflect and answer the first research question:

RQ1: What are students learning in the student-led experiential learning environment of *Weekend Now*?
The themes discussed will be learning job duties, collaborative social skills, conflict management, collaborative storytelling and adaptability.

**Job roles/duties.** Students who join *Weekend Now* are learning about technical skills and how specific jobs function within an overall group. As an incoming freshman to *Weekend Now*, students have the option of working in a wide range of jobs from writing, operating camera or floor directing and learning various skillsets such as how to operate a boom microphone, formatting a script or running a video switcher. Kevin, a freshman and the trainee assistant director stated, “I’m learning things everyday. So, as I was just starting off, I was keeping aware of how the camera angles worked, and the camera jargon, for trucking and panning and all that stuff.” Kristen, a cast member at the time, learned through doing, “for floor direction you have to be loud. I was really quiet as a freshman, and they were like no, you need to yell. So, you have to call over people and you have to listen to the booth and the director and not be afraid to tell people to move, or tell the boom to get out of the shot.”

The main way students learn new roles or explore roles they might want to do in the future is to shadow and observe the current person in that particular role. An important note is the student must let the leaders know they want to observe someone else’s role, they can either ask the producer, director or head writer. After the Fall semester the director, head writer, and a majority of the cast were leaving the show. The head writer, Zak was grooming the soon to be new head writer, Connor. The director Victoria made sure to mentor Andrew, as he would become the next director in spring
semester. Victoria explained how she was trained to become director, and in turn, how she decided to train Andrew:

[Maggie] trained me. She [told] me where I need to be when, what I do. Then I just observed her for 1 year, or so. So for [Andrew] I told him what Maggie told me, and he observed me for a long time and knows how stuff works too. Maggie told me I need to be around after read through I have to be on set-up. I have to be to set-up, to take notes, what I need for sets, what furniture I need. And then [for] Fridays show [create] the crew call and that’s all I know. Andrew observed all that (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Sometimes there is not someone to train a student for her or his new position. Sarah, as a sophomore applied for the producer position at the same time as Nick, the head writer of Weekend Now. Nick had been working on the show for four years and was the head writer of the 27th season. To become the main producer of a show, you must apply to Broadcast Media Group (BMW) and be given a vote of confidence by the board. The board chose Sarah. She ended up replacing Luther.

I had one show and then I came over to [Luther’s] house and asked him questions. He gave me email passwords and that was it. I didn’t really learn much from good old [Luther] (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

The reason Sarah didn’t learn much from Luther was because Nick was his best friend. She goes on,

I had to learn everything for myself. I didn’t really know what I was supposed to do. I didn’t really know what my job was supposed to be for a long time. So I
 kinda just made that up, I observed them doing it for a long time, cause [Nick] was head writer before he [applied for] producer and I had spent some time with Luther and Nick and stuff. So I understood certain things. But I didn’t know a lot of stuff that I learned later, which I should have known how to do (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

The trainee assistant director, Kevin discussed the laissez-faire methods on how to learn and train for the leadership roles,

I feel like it’s scary and unstructured how you’re supposed to learn things though the director or through the producer if you’re going to be [in the role] the next semester… I feel like it’s all through experience and word-of-mouth that you’re supposed to give to the next producer or director ‘in case of certain situations,’ so when it comes to that I’m a little concerned if there is a big problem. But I’ll play it by ear I guess (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

In all four cases, Kevin, Kristen, Sarah and Victoria observed the people whose positions they hoped to take over. The proactive students who wanted to grow within the production roles of Weekend Now took learning the roles upon themselves. Andrew, the current assistant director, minimized the importance of technical learning, “I have learned so much technically. But I would say, technically would probably be the quickest thing I picked up and the least valuable/least important.”

**Collaborative social skills.** At the end of every show, during the final notes session, someone would inevitably bring up the party location inviting everyone. “You know I had huge parties at my house where everyone was invited and told them to bring
their friends,” stated Sarah. If someone needed a beverage they were instructed on whom to contact with their order. Many of the students working in the booth, did not go to the parties. “I normally don’t go to parties. Because I don’t, I’m lazy, I’ve been around for like the whole day and I’m just tired so I don’t want to go,” said Victoria. Kevin, the trainee assistant director, said,

I didn’t go to that many parties, so outside socially they don’t know me as well.

But I feel, like it’s not like I’m an outcast that I don’t go to parties that much.

And if there were other opportunities – we talked about a canoe trip – that would have been a lot of fun, I would have gone to that. It’s more of the party scene that I back off a little bit (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

Andrew, the assistant director, did not go to parties either when he started in Weekend Now as a freshman,

I started off not being very social and I don’t know if you know, but Weekend Now has quite a few parties after the show. After every show. My freshman year I didn’t go to a single one, just cause, I don’t drink, I don’t, it’s usually not my scene. And because of that, I didn’t really make that many friends and the friends I did make were on the same level as me with that stuff. So I came my sophomore year (Andrew, personal communication, June 13, 2013).

Then when Andrew became assistant director with an aim to become director he started going to the after parties,

I don’t want to say you’re expected, cause that’s not true at all, but when I did go, I felt like in a way I could say, thanks again for all the hard work you are doing –
instead of disappearing afterwards. It kind of bonded us as an organization a bit more. If I were going to talk to people and tell them great job and stuff. And I would say that my social skills through Weekend Now is the most valuable thing I’ve picked up (Andrew, personal communication, June 13, 2013).

After the last show of the season, which was also the head writer’s and the director’s final show, Victoria did go to the party and planned on having fun. “I get drunk! After all of this – after seven seasons!” yelled, Victoria. Followed by an exiting roar from the other students.

The assistant director, Andrew stated, “it’s been a roller coaster to a degree. Trying to figure out my position, how I should talk to people, how I should interact with people.” Learning how to manage, lead and work with their peers was a big learning curve for students. Andrew continued, “just how to compliment someone, how to chastise someone when they need to be chastised. How to tell people they need to do more, or how to compliment them when they do a good job.” The trainee assistant director, Kevin, echoed this,

It’s more about the people, and how to work with people. There were instances last semester where it got a little rocky and people got upset, so uh, it’s more like dealing with people, more than actually technical things now. More like human interaction (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

As Kevin explained how he planned to start executing plans in the future,

Me personally, I wasn’t that much of an extrovert. I was more an introvert, so I didn’t really deal with people that much... But I’ve found you’ve got to be careful
dealing with people, cause sometime it’s hard to explain to certain people certain things and other people they are more easy going. So you have to be a lot more careful around the uptight people. I feel like this is all obvious stuff, but for me it’s rules that I’m just starting to follow. I guess I knew about people, but it’s more about implementing things that I want to get done (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

As students began to learn the basics of how to work with others, they also found the importance of working with committed students. Dillon started Weekend Now his freshman year,

I was excited. They gave me the first list of things to do and I was listed as the head writer’s production assistant. Yeah, haha, that was a job where you didn’t really have anything to do. So basically, I bought a clipboard and I was ready to go and [ZAK] was like I have nothing for you to do. So I ended up just stapling scripts that day (Dillon, personal communication, June 18, 2013).

Dillon quit after his first quarter on Weekend Now. He was unhappy with his position and did not feel a connection to the cast or crew at the time. When Sarah became producer she started lining up people she wanted to work with and sought out Dillon. Sarah explained,

I remember messaging [Dillon] on Facebook because I remember that he walked around with a clipboard. They gave him a [production assistant] job and that kind of commitment, that kind of work ethic, you know for such a small job, he
probably left because they were not giving him anything to do. That’s the kind of person you want around (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2012).

Dillon never wrote Sarah back on Facebook, until one day she saw him on a road near campus, “I was like, ‘HEY! DILLON!’ He was like, ‘oh, hi.’ I was like, ‘you, I want you to come back, I’m producing now, come back.’ And he had just said off hand, ‘when are auditions?’ and I told him.” Dillon found this encouragement exciting and said,

She said she really wanted me to come back, she thought she could find me a better job. So I said, you know what, I’ll come back. Then I saw they were doing auditions. And you know, I always liked the idea of being on camera, better than being behind. So I was like, what the heck, I’ll go, I’ll give it a shot, what’s the worst they could say – no (Dillon, personal communication, June 18, 2013).

The auditions for the 29th season of Weekend Now were held in the spring quarter of 2013. Sarah discusses seeing Dillon that day,

Then on the day of auditions I saw [Dillon] standing outside the door. And I was like ‘are you auditioning?’ and he was like ‘oh, yes.’ And I was like ‘ok.’ And in my opinion he was the best actor we have ever had on the show. I may have never run into him on [the street], and I may have never messaged him and all except for the fact I thought it was real good at holding the clipboard (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2012).

Dillon was happy and excited about coming back and auditioning for Weekend Now, “Well, I went in and apparently my audition went fantastic, because I got on the show! From there on out, it was just strictly acting. I came in every Thursday and helped with
cue cards. When I realized they liked me was [when] we had an actor, [Drew Smith], who was doing the hour-long [finale] for my first season on cast. Well, he unfortunately couldn’t do it, so out of everyone, they picked me to host the hour-long which was an honor and I guessed they liked me.”

Along with collaboration, pride can develop within the group. When I asked the assistant director, Andrew, what advice he would have for a newbie to join Weekend Now he said, “make something you are proud of.” Cast and crew members continually called the 29th season the best cast and crew ever. The head writer stated, “this is the best, I think this is the best crew, uh, and probably the best cast I’ve worked with.” Continually stating, “it’s probably the funniest season and episodes of Weekend Now in a long time.” The head producer affirmed, “all in all I think it’s going well. I can’t believe we have the audiences that we do and I think it’s the best cast I’ve ever seen.” The assistant director, Andrew stated, “it’s at its prime right now. And I hope it continues to be like this. I hope the content gets better and people just enjoy it.” The audience count was consistently in the 40-person range and each online episode was viewed on average 100 times.

Another important aspect of social skills is self-reflectivity. On Fridays during the rehearsals Sarah was by far the most visibly stressed person on set. She would walk around with her hands on her hips, sighing and angrily pushing back her hair. She had the look of, ‘what’s going to go wrong today?’ To my surprise Sarah explained she was very aware of her performance and wished she had dialed it back, she stated,

I think that was the biggest mistake I made in that show. Was just letting myself get too overwhelmed, too visibly. I thought it looked good, I thought I was
looking really good, cause everyone was seeing how hard I worked. Well, you also look kind of psychotic, [laughter] and like this is not very much fun. So I think that was the biggest thing I learned, to not do (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2012).

Her moment of realization of her behavior came from the bad news that both Chase (technical director) and Monica (associate producer) decided they were leaving the show after Season 29,

I learned that after [Monica] and [Chase] decided they were leaving. And [Dillon] talked to me about it, because I didn’t really notice it. In my mind it was something that was always done, when [Luther, the previous producer] would yell and freak out and snap and things like that and they would demand a lot. But I just thought that was how it was (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2012).

Sarah had a strong self-reflection and by the end of the 29th season had calmed down, at least visually on Friday’s. On the other hand, Luther was able to get away with this visible, aggressive behavior when he was producer, but Sarah took cast and crew leaving personally, holding herself accountable. Dillon also told Sarah her aggressive behavior was turning people off. Chances are he would have not told Luther the same, and would have told the cast and crew to get over it.

**Conflict management.** During the A-News segment of the fifth episode, Travis, the a news anchor, said the word, “cum.” Sarah explains, “what happened was, one of my actors said the C-word. Not the really bad one, but the other one, the one that
describes bodily fluid.” The joke was about the actor in the show *Malcolm in the Middle* and instead of saying plainly *Malcolm in the Middle*, the cast member Travis, accentuated Malcolm by saying Mal-cum. This was caught in the dress rehearsal and the producer, Sarah, said quickly stomped toward the cast and stated, “you absolutely can’t say that.”

All was well and good through the rest of the rehearsal until the live show. Travis decided to ignore Sarah’s demand and accentuated Mal-cum. It’s important to note, this accentuation did not apply to the joke, nor did it make anything funnier. Sarah never reprimanded Travis for the Mal-cum stunt. Sarah explains why she didn’t reprimand Travis and how she was contacted by BMW,

> Afterwards I was like, well, yeah, he said that, and I know it’s probably inappropriate. But is it inappropriate enough, on a cable channel, TV-14, discretion warning at the beginning? It’s not on the list of words I technically can’t say. Do I make [Victoria, the director] edit for an hour, instead of just letting it go. I let it go (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

However, BMW Productions Executive Board reprimanded Sarah heavily.

> [Sean, General Manager of BMW] sent me an email and was like, ‘after lengthy discussion and multiple meetings, we have decided, due to poor content, you’re going to submit your script to us every week for revisions and changes’ (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

Sarah began to unravel,

> I was like, if you’re gonna talk about doing something so drastic to a show that you don’t know anything about I want to be included in that discussion. If you’re
gonna have lengthy conversation, I want to be consulted (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

Sean told Sarah, “this goes into effect tomorrow or we cancel the show.” Sarah, and other long standing members of Weekend Now told me the last time that the board reviewed sketches was around seven to eight years ago when a white student dressed as Oprah Winfrey. After that particular performance there was an entire student movement to get the show cancelled. I observed no student movement because of the Malcolm in the Middle statement.

During the meeting between Sean and Sarah, there was an argument about who was being more unprofessional. Sarah described the conversation, “I was like, ‘if you want to do this, here are all the problems I have.’ He was like, ‘you’re being unprofessional, and I told you the way it’s going to be, that’s the ways it’s going to be.’ And I was like, ‘you’re being unprofessional by not discussing this with me before hand.’”

Sarah mentioned all of the issues that may happen if the BMW would decide to pull a sketch or change something last minute,

If they make changes – when we do re-throughs we take times –they might change something radically different and completely change how long the sketch is, which means my rundown is going to be completely wrong – or, you’re going to cut a sketch in general and I’m going to replace it with something our cast didn’t like, and didn’t think was funny. So they are not going to perform well and people aren’t going to like it as well cause it’s not as funny. I’m sorry, but 14
people is a pretty good judge of what is funny  (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

The entire writing staff and cast vote on the sketches to be used in the show. Sean then said a statement to Sarah that still gets ridiculed by the cast and crew of *Weekend Now*, he said, “I don’t think this show is ever funny.” Sarah retorted,

I was like why isn’t it funny? [Sean] was like, ‘well, the mail-order-male sketch, where they were speaking weird, it’s offensive.’ I was like, ‘why is it offensive?’ He was like, ‘because they are speaking in foreign accents for no reason.’ I was like, ‘they are speaking in foreign accents because they are mail-order-men and it’s a play on mail-order-brides.’ And he was like, ‘it’s not funny.’ And I said, ‘I’m sorry you don’t think it’s funny, but just because you don’t think it’s funny doesn’t mean that you can tell us that it’s bad’ (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

The situation had suddenly blown up larger than just the *Malcolm in the Middle* joke.

Now the entire integrity of the show was at stake and Sarah felt the general manager of BMW disrespected the show. Sarah conceded to send the script every week to Sean and myself. I asked her why she added me to the emails and she said she felt better having an outside person seeing the email. Keep in mind, at the time I was not an instructor and had no type of authority at the University.

I told [Sean], I will send you the script, but I only want to hear [changes] via personal text or personal call, do not email the *Weekend Now* Gmail, do not tell anyone else, talk to me personally, I only want to hear your opinion, if it is
something blatantly offensive or blatantly obscene and I mean like obscene (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

Sarah also tried to keep Sean’s comment of not thinking Weekend Now was funny from the cast and crew. This proved impossible and the cast and crew found out like wild fire and suddenly sketches were being sent in titled, “King Sean.” The sketches were never used in a show, but allowed for venting and frustration to be exercised by the writers.

**Collaborative storytelling.** Everyone working at Weekend Now influences the storytelling and narrative of the show. In the writers’ meetings there was always an eye out for inside jokes that an audience might not understand.

“Never write inside jokes, I think a screenwriting professor taught me that. And it’s such a good point. I’ll be at writer’s meetings and people will be like, ‘oh let’s write this,’ but we have to remember that we are not Saturday Night Live and we get a new audience every Friday for the most part. So, sometimes, if we do a joke that is a call back to what we had done before, you have to think, ‘is the audience going to get it, is it funny on its own’ (Kristen, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

This was stated by Kristen, a current cast member, writer and the future producer of the show. She continues on, discussing the thick skin writers must build with their own sketches,

Also, one of my favorite quotes from Tina Fey is ‘never be too precious about your writing.’ Some sketches are going to suck and you have to let them suck. So if you write something, don’t think it’s your baby. OH, and people are going
to change it. And if it doesn’t get on the show, don’t be upset about it. I guess always trying to write the best most funniest thing I can think of, but thinking about it on a bigger scale, is this going to make the audience laugh or is it just going to make my friends laugh? I guess you always have to think of the audience, rather than what you think is funny (Kristen, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

Dillon, a cast member, discusses the change from a typical theater production to that of the live studio production,

What was odd was that medium of the camera between me and the audience. And I know on stage you can cheat a little bit, but on set that [camera] is seeing every move you make. So, one time it was a zombie sketch and we ran through it all day, all day and all day. The performance came and I was the father zombie and I had to sit down in a chair. And there was no chair, so I did this 30-second rant of there not being a chair. And that actually got more laughs than the writing! (Dillon, personal communication, June 18, 2013).

Bringing his theater skills of the ‘show/sketch must go on,’ Dillon began blurring the lines in the studio by forgetting about the cameras and entertaining the live audience. I could not find this particular sketch, nor could he remember which season it occurred.

The writers most significant ‘first’ was a sketch done in Week 6, Episode 2904 with ‘fluppets.’ Fluppets were hand-made sock puppets, which were grimy curmudgeons. Weekend Live episode aired on 10/5/12 and 8 days later on Saturday Night Live, Christina Applegate’s opening monologue was a song and dance with ‘Fruppets.’
Fruppets were the autumnal alternative to the Muppets—featuring Kirby the Toad, Fuzzy the Badger, and Gronzo, a sick-looking rat-thing (Nicklaus, 2012). The students, needless to say, were impressed with themselves at not only a similar idea being done on a national stage, but that they had the idea first.

At least twice in their season they used a Saturday Night Live sketch idea and added in their own storyline. The ‘Scared Straight’ sketches from SNL featured a character named, Lorenzo Macintosh (played by Kenan Thompson), a prison inmate, and who ever is the host of the week as the other prison inmate. Together the prison-duo scares at-risk-teens about the life behind prison walls. The crew of Weekend Now did a nearly identical sketch (Episode 2901) with their only black performer, Brian, playing a ‘Lorenzo’ like character with the host of the week scaring some kids straight about not going into prison. This mimetic performance utilizing Brian, who really does look like Thompson, shows homage to SNL as well as an easy mimic to pull off. They didn’t have anyone within their cast that could be a good as many of the other cast members on SNL – nor could they pull it off. However the ‘Scared Straight’ sketch is a simple plot, simple set, and something they knew they could pull off, and maybe pull off and gain a laugh.

Adaptability. During my interviews everyone gave me one piece of advice they would suggest to newbie’s joining the show.

Dillon’s advice was,

Be flexible. You will never start out where you want to start out. I wanted to be an actor and I had to pay my dues that first quarter. If I had never done that Sarah
wouldn’t have remembered me and I never would have came back, then I never would have auditioned (Dillon, personal communication, June 18, 2013).

Kristen, who was on cast and wrote for the show stated, “Just go for it. Don’t have any hesitations. Be willing to have an open mind, to try a bunch of things even if you don’t want to do it.” She continued to describe her own experience,

For me I didn’t want to be on cast, but once I was on it, I gained a lot of confidence and I’m a lot more comfortable in front of audiences. Just try it out; you’ll learn something about yourself. Even if it’s not something you think you want to do just give it a try. Be open-minded (Kristen, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

Kevin, the trainee assistant director, stated, “I would say, that they should be open, they can’t be close minded. They have to be open to basically everything.” He continued again, to describe a what-if scenario,

Cause, if you’re on camera and we are short someone in the booth, you might have to jump off camera and join the booth and you do a different job. It’s a lot of fluidity. It’s not a solid structure. The idea is that it’s a solid structure, but it’s not, because something will always go wrong. So you always have to be prepared to be uncertain about what you’re doing, I guess open-minded ness is a quality you need to have (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

Victoria summed everything up succinctly, “work as hard as you can.”

**Summary of learning.** Overall the students are learning a large amount working for *Weekend Now*. The most curious idea is they learn as much as they want to learn. A
student’s learning is completely hinged on what the individual student wants to do. If they want to grow in positions they can, if they want to leave they can. Technical learning was not a heavy focus of learning for almost everyone on set. Instead it was learning about working with others, learning how to react to situations and how the group as a whole runs as a fluid machine. The most committed, focused students grow into leadership roles and gain more control over the show. Victoria called Weekend Now a “learning community,” Sarah called Weekend Now a “learning environment” and Andrew called Weekend Now an “educational setting.” The overall goal for the majority of leaders on the show specifically referred to Weekend Now as learning. Those who ‘work as hard as they can’ begin to reap the benefits of learning in a student-led environment.

Creativity

This section will outline the themes of how students negotiate and enact creativity within Weekend Now. As described in the literature review section, creativity can be a problem solving action and learning to problem solve is a highly experience-driven application.

RQ2: How are students negotiating and enacting creativity in the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?

The crew of Weekend Now had their share of constraints on technical resources, autonomy and specific changes that occurred during the 29th season. The themes analyzed will be creativity through constraint, compromise, creative concepts, structural changes and a nothing left to lose.
Creativity through constraint. The most obvious and most discussed constraints to the Weekend Now crew were technical. Most mentioned the Ikegami cameras, probably purchased in the late 80s-early 90s. The Ikegamis are full broadcast cameras in terms of professional options to control the visual image. When the purchase was made these cameras were the best for their cost. Each camera had its own control box in the control room, run by the engineer. From the control room, the engineer adjusted the white balance, iris, video gain and shutter. This left the camera operator to control the movement and focus on the camera. A large, thick cord ran to each of the cameras. This cord gave the cameras power, audio transmission abilities and allowed the engineer to control the image settings. Unfortunately, these cameras were standard-definition, not high-definition, making them seem antiquated. The look of the show using the cameras was best described by cast member, Kristen, “our cameras make it look like a 70s sitcom.” Because of this, all but one person refused to use any of the Weekend Now footage on his or her demo reels to find a job. Dillon, a cast member, did say he would use some footage on a reel, but only to showcase his acting ability. Everyone else said they would only discuss their roles on Weekend Now to potential employers. The overwhelming feeling was the look was not professional production at all; visually the students do not see the merit of showing the actual show footage to potential employers.

To work to solve this issue, the producer, Sarah has been in discussion with the BMW Production Executive Board about the Standard Definition cameras and the antiquated studio gear. She explained that, “BMW gets their money from SAC [Senate Appropriations Commission]—you have to have a certain amount of people and you have
to fill out a SAC Pack – and tell them why you need it and why it benefits students.”

BMW fills out funding request, or SAC Pack, for all ten shows under their umbrella. By having so many students working within their shows, they have received on average 85% of their funding requests for school year 2012-2013 (SAC, 2013). It was unclear from talking with the Weekend Now students if they are consulted for any of the purchases requested by BMW to the SAC. Sarah stated, “They get a very nice budget, they do, but they spend so much of it on stupid shit – like in my opinion the studio cameras are so bad.” Looking at the available funding for BMW from the SAC they received a total of $11,619.29 for both Fall 2012 and Spring 2013. This would not even cover one high definition studio camera for the studio, let alone two more cameras, a high definition video switcher and a high definition tape deck. Sarah could not tell me the actual budget allowances that BMW had or what they used the money for. Needless to say, Sarah’s efforts were fruitless.

In video courses students were taught what looked good in a high definition 16x9 aspect radio video image, but in the multi-camera space they were still using standard definition 4x3 aspect ratio equipment. The students were knowledgeable enough to be aware that their show did not showcase the highest digital quality. Therefore, they worried their work would not be taken seriously if shown to a potential employer. What the cast and crew failed to see was their knowledge of multi-camera television shooting and technique was professional and taught through students, not faculty. This in and of itself is worthy of explanation to future employers.
The age of the cameras posed another problem in terms of maintenance and upkeep. The producer, Sarah said,

I was literally in there with a screwdriver yesterday, yanking the focus. Unless you tighten [the back focus] like before dress and before the show. Like what happens is you can zoom all the way in on someone’s face and get focus, ok cool. But then if you just hold it, you can watch it slide right out of focus. So I have to keep going in and tightening up the back focus on the cameras. And it’s annoying, cause the freshman [are running camera], [Victoria] is yelling at them to focus, and they are like ‘I did, I really did’ (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

This particular back focus issue creates a miscommunication as well as frustration between the camera operators and the director.

Besides the standard definition look of the show, the studio space is small for having three working sets, three camera operators, two boom operators, other cast and crew and a live studio audience. The limitations of the space make the look of the show even worse for the cameras. Cast members are typically only one foot away from the walls of the set, which create distracting shadows. In addition, the color choice for two of the sets, a golden rod yellow color and a lime green, make for horrible production values. The bright colors reflect the lighting back onto the cast turning them green and gold, as well as having bright spots on the backgrounds that make the shots look blown out. Producer Sarah discussed some drawbacks of the look and space,
It’s hard to light something that small. It looks bad and there is just nothing you can really do about it. I’m not saying I don’t have the best lighting guys, but I’m saying they do the best they can. And it’s very hard because first of all we have broken lights, and second of all it’s teeny tiny.

Sarah continued on,

I can only do so much in terms of set direction and art direction and things like that. Because even if I wanted to dress something up really, really well, I have got to think how fast can I get every single piece off and where am I going to put it? Where we used to put them was in front of the double doors, but now we have two audience rows there. It’s just closing in (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

The summer before season 29, Broadcast Media Works shifted around the control room in Studio C, to give more space to the students working within the control room. Instead of having the booth all the way on the 6th floor, they moved it to the tiered area between floors 5 and 6. This gave the control room more space, but took away space for the audience numbers. The larger space for the control room workers was welcomed, but the stress it placed on audience location was unwelcomed. The director, Victoria, was not involved with the decision to relocate the control room space, but felt the consequences of the set up quickly:

One change I didn’t like was they separate engineer and playback—so we need one more person over there and we have to have one person for lighting – so then we need two more person for each show, which is hard. Especially at the end of
the semester when people quit and they don’t come, so sometimes figuring out the crew call is a little bit hard (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Victoria never addressed this situation during the semester; she always had enough crew to get through each show. At the end of the season, she was training Andrew to become director, and offered him this advice, “when [Andrew] became director I told him to combine engineer and lighting, so that take one less person. I don’t know if he did.”

Since the production quality of watching the show outside of the studio in a standard definition format was dissatisfying by many of the students’ standards, the main focus was then to cultivate a larger in-house audience to watch the show every Friday evening. The underlying logic was to get a live audience in to hear and see the sketches, the ultimately creative aspect of the show. This was done through Facebook events and word of mouth. Every interview I conducted included a comment regarding the limited seating for the audience. The limitation was made worse by moving the control room coupled with the increase in audience size for the 29th season. Kristen, a cast member stated, “we used to have that classroom for people to sit, but they made that the booth, so we don’t have as much seating for a audience.” Kevin the trainee assistant director stated,

It’s gonna get more difficult this next year because our season finale we had to put people [the audience] in the booth because we were out of space. We are not getting less people we are getting more people. That’s fun, but it’s also not fun cause we can’t fit them all (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).
Statements of goals were made,

I could do so much more with this show, if I had a bigger studio, because what it comes down to is that the studio is too small. It’s too small for the crew, it’s too small for the audience that I have now, it’s just too small (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

This was from the producer, Sarah, whose main goal was to get people to watch the show live. A cast member, Kristen, stated “I really want the show to grow, and have a bigger audience. But in order to have a bigger audience we have to be able to accommodate them.” These are strong reasons to leave the show and join something else, if a student cannot have something to show for running camera, lighting design or producing which looks like the current television standards, than why stay?

Although all students working on the show had at least one negative constraint concerning the space or equipment, what this group was able to produce week after week with no faculty advisor or professor around was astounding.

**Compromise.** It was clear there were some instances where creativity had to be stunted due to building codes, rules and production values. There was one sketch during the semester about a hurricane coming to shore while people were chatting on the beach. Cast member, Amy, played the hurricane. She wore a white-haired wig and was dressed in a blue shirt, which had strips of fabric flowing around. She would randomly come into the frame and twirl around the people on the beach. The head writer, Zak, wanted there to be hurricane sounds of wind and rain whenever she came on screen. This was nearly impossible for the audio board runner, Jon, a shy student with stark blonde hair and a
quiet voice. Jon explained quietly to Zak he could either play the audio into the live-to-tape recording and it would be heard online, or he could play it on the studio speaker PA system, but it might not be picked up by the microphones. This particular problem is a space issue, the studio PA system is not set up to have sound recorded on microphones. The speakers are on the wall near the control room and about 30 feet from where the students were doing the sketch. In the end, Zak decided it was more important for the live audience and the cast members to hear the hurricane and ran the risk of not picking up the sound in the digital copy.

The producer, Sarah said of Zak,

I think a lot of my relationship with Zak was reining him in, he would want to go so big with the creativity and I would say no because of fire codes or something. Or he would want to go so close to the edge with content, and I would say, no.”

Dillon a cast member, seconded this reining in, but wanted to see more technical folks at the writers meetings,

It seems that sometimes we would need something on set but the tech people wouldn’t allow it. There would just be a lot of miscommunications. I would have had more tech people come to the writer [read through] that would have probably been the best move. That way if some writer gave this complexly, ambiguous, erroneous sketch idea, a tech person could have killed it right there or crafted it in a way that was more applicable to the camera (Dillon, personal communication, June 18, 2013).
Three of the students within the cast (all sophomores) said they were leaving the show because of the restrictions from BMW and the studio space. From Matt, a cast member, “It’s more like – it will be sketch comedy, but it will be like on our own terms. And no restrictions from BMW and stuff, cause they, we can’t do a lot of what we want to do on the show.”

Creative concepts. The writers showcase the largest amount of creative ideas in the beginning of the semester, but do not have the ability to pull them off or pull them together. In the first writers meeting there were over forty ideas written on the white board with 20 cast and crew in attendance. Some ideas were combined together, but the head writer circled all ideas to be written out into sketches. Not one of the forty ideas was used as a sketch in the first show! As the writer meetings went through the semester, fewer people attended. I assume part of the slowing attendance was the simple fact their sketches were not apart of the show, or they just did not finish writing. This brought the number of ideas lower (around 15 ideas each session), but the most committed students were writing the sketches. Ideas pitched within the meetings began making it through the writing stage to the show rundowns. The cast ended up primarily writing each show. Crew did not put time into coming up with ideas or writing. A cast member, Kristen, wrote a particularly creative sketch titled ‘Dudes Night,’

One was called ‘Dude’s Night’ it was me and my roommate Amy, dressing up as guys basically. What I’m most proud of is if I write something and people start to quote it afterwards. Like, even now people are like ‘and it all comes full circle,’ that was a quote from ‘Dudes Night’, so hearing people quote something and have
it become an inside joke, and I wrote it, I’m like oh, that’s cool (Kristen, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

Zak, the head writer, monitored the writing and acting heavily. During rehearsals he watched closely for acting, blocking (for the in-studio audience) and line delivery. During the rehearsal of a hurricane sketch, Zak stated, “You guys should acknowledge that THAT is Hurricane Sandy.” In this particular sketch the cast member, Amy, played the hurricane. Zak stated, “Like, Oh, the Wind and the Rain – like make it clear, She IS a hurricane.” Amy added, “Ok, when you come in, I’m going to be blowing on your ear until he says, ‘what is that?’ and then I’m gonna run away.” Laughter by cast and crew. “Um and then when you say, ‘she’s a home wrecker,’ should I go across the back holding a broken house or something?” Zak immediately agreed.

Sarah, the producer, made sure not to waste the cast and crews precious time, I wanted to change the schedule. I didn’t think there was any reason to have a writers meeting and a pitch meeting. They always did it cause that’s what SNL did, but it just wasn’t necessary to drag everyone out there and to not do it (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013).

Sarah made additional changes to allow for greater planning and creativity for not only the cast but also the crew, I wanted to get the script out faster; we used to get the script out the night before. And everyone asked, ‘why do you think the cast will look at the script?’ and it wasn’t that we thought they would look at it, it was that the director had more time to do blocking. It gave the director more time to do blocking, instead of
doing it on Thursday night. This way they [the writers] got [the script] done often at Wednesday around 1am, you know, when they had the script out. Then [the director] had a whole day to decide blocking, props, and what we were going to do. It just made that a lot easier (Sarah, personal communication, June 20, 2013). Sarah’s logic was correct, however suddenly the deadline of writing sketches moved up 24 hours. This might have been another reason the writing crew became small and smaller.

**Structural changes.** The University switched from a quarter system to a semester system during the 29th Season of *Weekend Now*. This resulted in a noticed structural change for the seniors, juniors and sophomores. The freshmen of the *Weekend Now* crew had no previous experience on set so these structural changes did not affect them much at all. The sixth show of the semester, shot on October 19th, was during the 8th week of the semester. When *Weekend Now* ran on quarters, this would have been the last show of the season before a long winter break, returning in January. The show lost three participants from the prior production, bringing the cast and crew numbers down to 51 people. This was also a midterm point in the semester, and courses could have redirected focus from the show to any midterm assignments outside of the show.

Week 8, Friday October 19th, I arrived promptly at 2:00 P.M. and there was only one other student in the studio, Tim. Tim, a junior, never had any specific position throughout the semester, only doing odd jobs where needed; in fact he only showed up for half of the shows. He had Pink Floyd playing through the in-house speakers, a slow, psychedelic rock sound. Tim was slowly moving things around in the studio to get ready
for the show. Other students arrived slowly and leisurely and sat down anywhere they could, a noted change from previous shows. There was a calm, tired air surrounding the studio. By 2:30 P.M. everyone had arrived and scattered throughout the studio, sitting on the couch, at the A-News table, in the audience area and in the booth. Faces were tired, blank and focus seemed to be elsewhere than the studio. Conversations were unhurried, calm and a bit silly, a surprising amount of giggling occurred. Even the producer, Sarah, sat calmly and didn’t object to any of the lounging. The group slowly started to rehearse the hurricane sketch.

This show proved to be a turning point in the attitudes and behaviors of the cast and crew as a whole. The exhaustion felt by the majority of the cast and crew seemed to pop a bubble of stress that could loom over Fridays because of the personality of live-to-tape shows. In turn, their narrative was more creative and focused, the lack of yelling from students kept everyone in a good mood throughout the whole evening. After the show was finished and the last session of notes took place, Zak, the head writer put on a pink tiara and Victoria, the director put on sunglasses over her normal glasses and each of them posed with a camera that they had put a baseball cap on. With their guards down, as a group they began to trust each other and relax. This suggests the exhaustion while working to meet deadlines can be beneficial to creativity, and allowing for greater freedom from stress, can inhibit creativity.

**Nothing left to lose.** The last show of the semester was special to the cast and crew. It was the final show for director, Victoria and head writer, Zak. Victoria wrote a nice note in the final email for the crew call,
Here's season Finale ladies and gentlemen!! This is my and [Zak’s] last episode, and some of the cast members too. This is the last email you get from me, too. I was going to send out a sad email or something, but my creativity just ran out for creating the crew call. I want to say is thanks everybody for working so hard on the show. We couldn't have done the show without each one of you. Let's finish this finale with really really really good quality!!! (Victoria, email communication, November 30, 2012)

The show was an hour long instead of half an hour. This was typical of the season finales. They worked with their smallest crew of 38 participants and were the most efficient I had observed. This could have been for many reasons: smaller crew, the familiarity they developed by working together all semester and the group focus of ‘let’s get this done!’ Rehearsal went well and was fast. In fact, the control room was so anxious to get the show done, they wanted to cut off the opening stand-up routine but the producer vetoed the idea.

As the season finale’s countdown began, everyone was ready. Banter, the first sketch, began off well, however, halfway through the sketch two of the camera’s video signals went black, then graphics went blank and the TriCaster (the video switcher) completely malfunctioned. The group in the control room never gave up. Victoria still called all the shots for the cameras and cued everyone but the show was doomed. Chase, the technical director, fiddled with the TriCaster for the better part of 15 minutes (15 minutes into an hour show), but could not get it to read the camera’s video signals. Then, halfway through the show, the TriCaster decided to reset itself. The producer ran to ask
what was happening, and Kevin, the assistant director stated, “the TriCaster is fucking up, that is all we know”. Everyone, amazingly, still did his or her jobs. Kevin kept track of time and reminded everyone they were one minute heavy, Victoria kept cueing the shots and the technical director, Chase, worked to fix the TriCaster. If this had been the first show of the semester, everyone would have been screaming, but they were surprisingly comical and focused throughout the doomed episode.

The trainee assistant director, Kevin stated

The season finale, when the TriCaster stopped working, I thought that was fun.
Like at first I thought it was really scary, but then I realized it was just for fun, so going along dealing with the problems, I mean it’s best to figure out the problems when it doesn’t matter as much, compared to later in the future where, granted that is going to TV, but I mean like if you’re going to a paid job and that happens to you, it’s best to have the experience. So that changed my attitude from Oh my God -- to -- all right, let’s go with the flow (Kevin, personal communication, June 12, 2013).

This was another big change in the attitudes of the cast and crew. During the final notes session for this show, Victoria stated,

Ok. That’s a great show. [laugher from everyone] Ok. That’s the most fun show I ever done. It was just like ‘Oh, this camera is lost. That camera is lost. We finished the show! We had the credits! So that was good. [group laughter] (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).
This received a large follow-up of laughter from the cast and crew. They ended up using the dress rehearsal footage as their final show.

**Summary of creativity.** The students are negotiating creativity by first acknowledging their constraints and shortcomings on the show. Creativity as a process is through problem solving the changes and constraints facing the show. Overall evidence suggests the students do want to show off their creative talents for a live audience, rather than showing someone the taped version of the show. They find their creativity is shown most during the live shows and for the live audience. Thus, the live shows are promoted more and growing the audience is the main goal of many of the members I interviewed. This also pushed for more creativity and detail in the sketches themselves. The more technical students did not exhibit much creativity in their respective areas, but the writers and cast members exhibited much creativity. In moments of true exhaustion and panic, the group stayed calm, collected and were able to appreciate this as a learning experience and remembered there were no strong repercussions for failing in the environment of *Weekend Now*. This allowed for a greater feeling of freedom from mistakes and therefore became more creative as a whole. In other words, when the students realize they are in an environment where they cannot fail, they have nothing to lose unless they do not try.

**Gender**

This section will outline the themes of leadership influence, roles, chivalry and professionalism in regards to gender influence on participatory roles within *Weekend Now*. As described in the literature review section, the ratio of gender in both film and television is unbalanced. This section is to reflect and answer the third research question:
RQ3: How does gender influence participatory roles within the student-led experiential learning environment of *Weekend Now*?

Gender influenced a few specific roles within the *Weekend Now* environment; these roles tended to be technical and non-technical starting positions. Before delving into those specifics, this section will start with the leadership influence focusing on the head producer, head writer and director. Second, explore the overall gender breakdown for all of the roles on *Weekend Now*. Third, specifics of roles that held a primary female or male positions. Finally, how chivalry presented itself within *Weekend Now*.

**Leadership development.** The leadership for the 29th season of *Weekend Now* consisted of producer, Sarah, head writer, Zak, and director, Victoria. Each of these three positions contributed the most to the overall organization and narrative of the show. The producer scheduled the day-to-day events, maintained the schedule, ensured that people were doing their jobs and served as the main liaison with BMW Productions. The head writer was in charge of the narrative and script for the show, and chose which sketch ideas would be written up and which members of the cast would play which roles. The director was in charge of crew selection for every show, assigned positions and maintained the knowledge on each of the positions. This was the first time in *Weekend Now* history that two of the three leadership positions were women. A brief history of each of these people and their growth in *Weekend Now* is below.

**Producer.** Sarah learned of *Weekend Now* during a freshman tour of the University and met the producer of the show at that time. As a freshman, Sarah joined *Weekend Now* in the fall of 2010.
When I came to college, I was like, I’m gonna write for TV… and I was like, I love SNL and comedy, I’m gonna do this. I started as a writer for a while. And I got three or four sketches in, and A-News jokes sometimes. And I was on cast when I could (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Sarah was of average height, Caucasian with curly dark-blonde hair, grey eyes and fair skin. On Fridays she consistently wore dresses with black hose and black flats. Her clear, loud voice would travel throughout the studio in a split second. In the beginning of the season, she was often seen bordering between frantic and organized with her hands strongly grasping her hips or head.

Sarah started her tenure on Weekend Now as a writer for two seasons and then auditioned for the cast. After joining the cast she learned,

That year they only had like 11 people audition, which they hid from us really well, they didn’t want us to know that. But people were texting me and like you’re still gonna audition right? So, they really needed girls. There were four women and one of them left and there were only three of us (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Sarah was then on cast for two seasons and decided to apply for the producer position, which was coming open. At that time, Sarah was a sophomore and the other person applying for the producer position was a fifth year senior named Nick, who had been working on the show since he was a freshman. Sarah stated,

I didn’t really like the way things were going and the exec board had made comments that they would cancel the show if no one else but Nick went up for
[producer], that combined with, ‘oh I don’t want the show to be over and I think I
could do a much better job,’ so I decided to run (Sarah, personal communication,
August 20, 2013).

Sarah was completely confident she would not get the position because of her
sophomore status and Nick’s experience; however, she ended up being chosen for the
producer position. There were political ramifications that she had to deal with because of
this decision by the board, further discussed in the learning section of this chapter.

Sarah explained her presence on the show helped other females who joined, she
stated,

We would have girls that would come into the writer’s rooms all the time and
they would feel so intimidated. I really feel like me as producer made people feel
like there was someone on their side. Arden [freshman, cue card holder] would
say that all the time, how scary [Zak] was and how they were so glad that I was
there. Because they felt that there was someone who could see their point of view
(Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Sarah took the role of a protective mother of the show itself. Shielding the cast
and crew from the criticisms of Broadcast Media Works (BMW). She taught others who
wanted to be Producer the cultural expectations of them in terms of dress and
performance. On set she did not have a clique or a close friend to chat with, being on set
was all business and Sarah was focused on bringing a show to life. I think this distance
was purposefully created to put her attention and energy on creating a show and having
the cast and crew proud of what they accomplished.
Head Writer. Zak often reminded me there was nothing else he would rather do than write comedy. A tall, large and towering man with dark curly hair and dark eyes, Zak always wore corduroys, a button-up long sleeve shirt and a tie or bowtie. He was Caucasian with a Russian family background. It was not his voice that was typically heard, but his deep, broad honest roar of laughter during rehearsals and the live tapings. Zak was the only critic, and his only acknowledgement was laughter. If he did not laugh, he worked to make the sketches funnier to him. He had been involved with the show as a freshman writer in the Fall of 2009 and joined the cast in Spring of 2010, becoming head writer in Winter 2011. His influence on the narrative was heavily felt and mentioned by both cast and crew throughout the 29th season. One Friday, a doctor’s appointment made him late by two hours arriving around 4:00 P.M. The cast kept their normal rehearsal schedule, but commented that without Zak there laughing and giving feedback, something was missing.

With Sarah as the protective mother, Zak seemed to take on the role of “must please father.” The show was Zak’s and everyone was submissive to his changes, sketches and anecdotes. I did not witness Zak’s growth to this influential position, only observing his last season with the show – and his influence was the strongest. Zak was the only person who could challenge Sarah. During one of the notes sessions after the dress rehearsal Zak was discussing a sketch. Zak was worried about a pause in the rehearsal and didn’t want dead air with no one talking. Sarah jumped in out of turn said, “it’s gonna be another of those shows where if your in a sketch, I might have to point at you and do this [hands moving in a circle motion].” Zak quickly jumped in, “you’re
gonna do this and you’re going to ignore it and just keep going.” Big laughter from the male cast, then Zak went on with his comments. This was common for Zak to either make a derogatory joke or ignore Sarah’s concerns. Another notes session Sarah stated, “Ok, ah just a couple of quick things first. I know I say it all the time and everyone does it anyway – Do Not Bring Open Drinks In Here.” Zak quickly follows up with, “Yes, ma’am.” Earning him a chuckle from crew/cast.

**Director.** Working on the show since her freshman year in Fall 2009, Victoria was an Asian female with a thick Chinese accent and a deep, strong, loud voice. From China, English was her second language. Of average height with long straight black hair and black-rimmed glasses, Victoria always dressed stylish and comfortable. During the dress rehearsals and live shows, she would command her camera persons with force, but then apologize after the show if she yelled too much. Victoria always worked in the booth, with the exceptions of one show,

I barely worked on the floor. I always be on booth. So I didn’t know what was going on down there. I only be on floor once, yeah. Before I want to be director I wanted to do camera once (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

In the booth Victoria manned all of the various roles available: technical director, assistant director, lighting, and engineer. In Fall 2011, one quarter before both Sarah and Zak earned leadership roles, Victoria became director. Victoria also was in charge of principle photography (cinematography) of the new *Weekend Now* opening title sequence. This title sequence was beautiful. The shots were professional quality, creative and clean.
Indicative of roles within *Weekend Now*, Victoria rarely worked on the floor of the studio and Sarah and Zak never worked in the booth. A female held the position before Victoria and trained her. Sarah was unsure if she was the first female producer of *Weekend Now*, but did know there were five male producers before her. No one knew if a female had ever held the position of head writer. Victoria stated about her working style with Sarah and Zak,

> Because we all started together, we were pretty much the oldest ones in the show. So we kind of like grew up together and were in charge of the show, so we were pretty good. I enjoyed working with them. They are pretty funny and they teach me something too. More American humor, haha… When I was working with [Zak] and [Sarah] we could all discuss and we were all part of the show, we are all equal (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Victoria held neutral ideas of gender, as if Victoria did not see or notice gender differences or discrepancies within *Weekend Now*. When I asked her what advice she would give women joining *Weekend Now* Victoria stated,

> Women, hmmmm. I was impressed with these freshman because a lot of women took part of the major roles, they came to set-ups often, and even though they don’t do set ups they do cue cards. Like work as hard as you can. It’s no different from a man because you are all coming to college together and you know pretty much the same thing. So you don’t have to worry about that you don’t know anything because if they know something, then you know. You are learning together (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).
Victoria when pushed to discuss Sarah and herself in two of the powerful positions Victoria said,

    I think because we a learning community, like a university, we are all, like since it’s me and [Sarah], and she’s a woman, we are in charge. We don’t have those things like man is better than woman (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

In Victoria’s view, women do not have the presumption that a man is better than a woman.

**Gendered roles.** Overall the entire gender breakdown of all cast and crew positions averaged female participation at 48% and male participation at 52%. Overall, this breakout puts the creative media industry’s gender numbers to shame and posits that at a quick glance, the students are not reflecting media industries’ ridged gender roles. See table 3 for each episode’s gender breakdown throughout the entire semester. Overall numbers were equal in terms of gender and steady with that equality throughout the semester.
Table 3

*Gender Breakdown Cast/Crew*

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<td>2910</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Female | M = Male
Counts are based on the crew call list communicated via email as well as in the opening and closing credits of the recorded show. The writing team was not added into this table, only the head writer. The study is looking to see what the students were learning on set, within a collaborative group, and writing is considered to be an independent activity not occurring on set.

Gender counts are from all of the crew call emails that were sent out by the director [Victoria] on Thursday evenings. The roles designated within the crew call were: director, assistant director, technical director, tape operator, engineer, lighting, audio, graphics, floor manager, camera operators, art direction, cue card holders, set
movers, and production assistants (See Appendix G for the final crew call email and see Appendix E for role responsibilities). The director decided the roles in the crew call and emailed the call out. The role decisions for the first two shows were created from student interest forms, which were filled out at the first meeting. After the first two shows, Victoria said roles would typically stay the same unless someone requested something different.

Women and men were equally represented within *Weekend Now* participation, however in certain positions within the show, women were underrepresented and in other positions men were underrepresented. The following positions were held by only one person throughout the entire semester and did not have any other students shadowing them to take over the roles: producer (female), head writer (male), assistant producer (female) and graphics (male). In addition the producer, head writer and graphics held their positions from the previous quarter.

The roles that were more or less spilt between both genders were camera (42% female, 58% male), unit/set mover (40% female, 60% male), engineer (female 50%, male 50%), tape operator (40%, 60%) and cast (43% female, 57% male). Victoria told me there are always a larger number of men trying out for the cast, so they end up casting more men.

The roles that had more than one person working in them and consisted of one gender were the positions of assistant director (100% male), technical director (100% male) and art direction (100% female). During my interview with cast member Dillon, I found he was a big part of the art direction group, but never received credit in the call
sheet or in the credits. I noticed him working with Julie with props, but it seemed he was always getting ready for his own sketches. Dillon stated, “It was [Julie] and I on props. [Julie] was very artistic, and I was like, we can put this together, and bam.”

**Primarily female roles.** The roles that were heavily occupied by female, but had many people cycling in and out of the positions were production assistants (90% female, 10% male), and cue card holders (81% female, 19% male). These positions were soft-skill based, meaning there is not much technical expertise needed. Cue card holders typically wrote the sketch on poster boards and then held and cycled them during the sketches from which the cast would read. Female cue card holders accounted for 35 throughout the semester, while there were eight males. Remember the number reflect a count of how many people held the role throughout the semester, not individual students. On average there were four cue card holders working a show.

During the first two shows, the assistant director, Andrew continually suggested to anyone who wanted to be on cast to work on cue cards. Not only was this recommended as the best way to learn about being a cast member, but also helped individuals understand what the cast went through on the show. Andrew, explains the best way to become part of the cast:

With acting, anyone who wants to, uh, do that, and also learn some of the tricks of the trade, I recommend you, uh, it’s not recommended -- We will ASK you to do cue cards, write scripts. If you do not know how to do cue cards, chances are you’re not gonna be that, uh, you’re not gonna understand what acting in the studio is really like. So if you are, if you wanna be an actor you have to write cue
cards for this coming season. That will definitely help understand, you know, what actors go through (Andrew, personal communication, June 13, 2013).

The show always seemed to be short on female cast members, yet it was emphasized to hopeful future cast members that they do cue cards. There were a total of four to five females working on cue cards each week – none of who were in the cast. With these numbers, I assumed there would be a plethora of females trying out for the cast.

The new cast for the 30th season includes three new males added that never held the cue card holder position. Those males were instead previously boom operators or camera operators. The males found a way to dodge the rule or perhaps just were either ignored by the producer, director and assistant director who never took notice they did not run cue cards, whereas the new females on the cast previous held the role of cue card holder.

When asked about this discrepancy, Victoria stated,

For the fall semester a lot of people won’t come at 2 o’clock, so I only have those people [who can arrive at 2:00 P.M.] on camera, everyone else can only be cue cards. I can’t have them not be at rehearsal and do the show. When we were on quarters, the media school barely had classes on Fridays (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Victoria, as director, was in charge of choosing who would run camera, do cue cards and work in other roles. She continued to justify her choices,
If they are writing cue cards it’s Thursday night, the people who are on cue cards for the show that means they can’t come before 3. That’s why they are on cue cards. Also, we told them they can be more involved with out of studio stuff, because they have class on Friday and cannot work other jobs (Victoria, personal communication, June 6, 2013).

Sarah, the producer, was also asked about this discrepancy. She stated, During set up the guys would do all of the set stuff, they would carry everything. And the girls would go and write the cue cards because they had better handwriting. And guys can lift things. That’s just the way it was (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Pressing Sarah further, with the question of what about the direction given to the freshman at the beginning of the semester – if you wanted to work on cast you needed to do cue cards. Sarah stated, There were girls who wanted to stay and they were encouraged to, it just became very clear that the men didn’t want to write things and the girls didn’t want to lift things. And the girls made a connection to the cue cards and that side of it. And the men had more a connection to the hardware. And that may have translated to I put these sets together, I’m gonna hold boom. I’m gonna help move things, I’m gonna do camera. Whereas the girls were like I’m gonna get props together, I’m gonna do the stuff that is away from the floor. It probably translated a little bit like that (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).
Observing on the situation it was not fully clear if the women knew they could do other positions aside from cue cards, or if they would have taken other roles.

**Primary male roles.** The roles that were primarily held by males, but had many students cycling in and out of the positions were audio boom (8% female, 92% male), audio mixer (9% female, 91% male), lighting (8% female, 92% male) and floor director (18% female, 82% male). See table 4 for specific table. Three of these four positions were technical heavy: audio boom, audio mixer and lighting. The audio boom operators held the microphone over the cameras the entire show. When asked about the numbers involved with audio boom operators, director, Victoria mentioned, “so, I try to avoid female for boom because that’s really hard to hold.” Audio mixer was one guy, most weeks, except for the last show when a female shadowed him. Lighting referred not only to the lighting board (turning the lights on and off), but setting up the lights on Thursdays, which required climbing ladders and carrying heavy studio lights. Sarah, the producer, explained why she thought the gender numbers were like this:

I think where [the unbalanced gender numbers] came from is often times there were girls who were interested in being on cast, but really didn’t want to do anything else. I think, I’m not making excuses, but it seemed to be a big trend. We had men who did join cast, but they would step up and do other jobs (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).
Table 4

*Gender Breakdown through Roles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>% Male</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Producer*</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cast</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<td>92%</td>
</tr>
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<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera Operator</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: continued

*Gender Breakdown through Roles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>% Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit Manager/Set Mover</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cue Card Holder</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Assistant</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>517</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Position remained one person the entire semester

**Chivalry.** Week two of the semester for students and episode one for the show, this is the largest cast and crew they will deal with throughout the semester. The studio is loud, busy and cold, new students walk in and seem confused, no one is greeting them and no real order is occurring. Order and direction seem to be occurring with the seasoned students, but they are not talking to the confused students. Sarah, the producer tells me, “this is the first night with the new studio control room, it’s not normally like this.” Sarah is dressed in a black dress, heels and black hose – she’s showing two new female crew members, Paris and April both in short shorts and tank tops, how to run a boom microphone and where they should stand. The floor director, Chase, wearing khaki pocket shorts and a black t-shirt, jokes with two guys about farts while making an elephant sound. A boom microphone is typically a 12-inch microphone attached to the end of an 8-foot or 12-foot pole. This allows for the microphone to be placed close to the
actors for voice recording. The set up of the microphone and pole are not heavy on their own, but the length of time needed to hold the system steady requires endurance. Paris and April seem caught up and continue on through rehearsals holding the boom microphones over the actors’ heads.

Sarah speeds up the group and yells to move on to the next sketch, which will be on the yellow/golden rod flat. Zak, the head writer, walks over to Chase, “the flat is golden rod [deep laughter].” The flats are the background walls painted with various colors or textures. This particular flat was painted a yellowish-gold color called, ‘golden rod.’ Moving from the A-News flats to the golden rod flats required movement of all three camera operators, boom operators, and new cast members. As everyone gets settled and the rehearsal starts, Chase is told from the control room to tell the boom operators to get the boom microphones even closer; they cannot hear the actors clearly in the control room. Chase walks up to Paris and grabs the microphone to adjusts it himself, as if the Paris is also the boom pole/inanimate object and adjusted without consenting with Paris. Paris looks confused, but says nothing to Chase. Chase says nothing to Paris.

The control room seems to be happy with the boom placement this time. Rehearsal goes well for this sketch. For the next sketch the crew must wait on a cast member to arrive. Chase, the floor director, gets bored and starts to do push-ups in the middle of the studio. Everyone ignores him. In fact, I observed this behavior on many Fridays, where Chase would do push-ups or sit-ups in the middle of the studio.

Suddenly, in the control room there are complaints that Camera 1 and 2 are not working. In the studio, Sarah, the producer, calls Sean. Sean is a fulltime student and the
technical manager for the studio, he also built the studio set up over the previous summer. I never saw him on set with *Weekend Now*. Over the phone, Sean claims everything works, Sarah begs to differ. Sarah then walks through the studio up to the control room to provide better details. Sarah walks by a conversation with Chase, the floor director and Monica, the assistant producer, Chase and Monica both become quite. As Sarah moves into the control room Chase, the floor director, calls Sarah a ‘shrieking harpy’ to the assistant producer, Monica. Monica laughs and calls Sarah, ‘queen of the night.’ A few minutes later the cameras begin to work after a hardware restart and Sarah begins to yell they will start running a sketch, and the studio starts moving quickly to set up. Chase accidently knocks over a chair, and then makes a large dramatic kick to the same chair. The associate producer, Monica, picks up the chair and continues on as if nothing happened.

Sarah, the producer, was the most outspoken about gender issues within the group and from her perspective within the media industry,

Well, [Kristen] was hosting and I just remember [Zak, head writer] being concerned, like ‘I want to make sure you get enough sleep, I want to make sure we don’t give you too many parts’ things like that. And she was like, ‘that’s so nice, he’s so nice, Zak is like my brother.’ And it’s not that that’s not a nice feeling it’s just that when you fall into this, especially in comedy, when you fall into this role of this ‘oh, it’s so nice that all these boys think of me of their little sister and they want to take care of me.’ And I feel like sometimes girls, especially younger girls when they first start out in the industry they mis-read that
kind of affection as a good thing. But it’s implying that you are not capable and that you cannot take care of yourself and you have to have someone else take care of you (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

**Professionalism.** During the fourth show I asked Sarah why she was always dressed up on show days. She stated, “it’s tradition, all the Producers and Head Writers have always dressed up on Fridays.” The very next week (the week I was absent) Sarah asked the Associate Producer, Monica, to go home and change from the jean shorts she was wearing to something more professional. Monica at the beginning of the semester expressed an interest to Sarah that she wanted to take over as Producer when Sarah left. In lieu of this interest Sarah made Monica Associate Producer so she could begin shadowing Sarah.

And when Monica became associate producer. I told her on show days, don’t wear jeans, and don’t wear short skirts. And she came in wearing like a jean skirt, that day I was just like, I’m not gonna make you change now, but if you have some time at dinner I want you to change into pants. It’s not appropriate for you to be wearing jean skirt in this job. And it was the biggest deal! (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Monica declined to do an interview and in addition I could never get her to chat with me on set. She typically stayed within a small social group of three of the male cast. This clique was not happy with Sarah in her role as a Producer and they kept their distance from me when I was present.

Sarah explained her justification for the request,
I wouldn’t have even made a deal about it if she hadn’t expressed interest in being producer after me. I was tying to make sure she didn’t fall into a habit of not dressing in a professional manner during show days. That was also a leading factor in why three cast members left and didn’t like me, because then Monica was pouty all the time about me being too hard on her (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Sarah felt she was being a mentor to Monica, and Monica rebuffed this mentor relationship. Andrew, the Assistant Director, was able to comment on this particular story,

And they [three cast members] had some problems with [Sarah] and because we have these groups of people and to a degree Sarah did make some statements that were not the best things to say. She sent someone home when she was wearing jeans on a set when, she was a production assistant. And um, I think that yeah, she came in wearing jeans and she thought she should be more dressed up and she sent her home. I don’t think [what Sarah did] was appropriate (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

Andrew had no idea Monica was an Associate Producer on the show, with hopes to become producer. When he explained the story he said Monica was a Production Assistant, which is the lowest role on the show. Monica was not open nor shared her aspirations with the exception of Sarah.

Sarah continued to have cognitive dissonance about asking Monica to change and Sarah developed unintended consequences from the request.
Everyone thought that I was such a bitch, because I told her to change. In my mind it wasn’t a big deal, in my mind I was trying to uphold a level of professionalism on a sketch comedy show with a bunch of 19-year-olds and all I want is for them to follow the dress code that I have told them a head of time. And it was very very stressful that everyone made such a big deal out of that, because to me it was not a problem. It was something I told her, and she agreed and then she didn’t do it. I still don’t understand, why, uhhhhhhggg. That entire thing made me crazy (Sarah, personal communication, August 20, 2013).

**Summary of gender.** Overall this evidence suggests that women held powerful positions within the show in terms of crew, content, image and cast. The show also became more inclusive on and off set based on statements of how the show ran before. Cohesion on set grew throughout the semester built by two of the three main roles being held by women. However, through all my interviews, gender was not something the majority of students seemed to think about or consider. The person who saw gender issues most strongly was Sarah, the producer. Victoria, the director, barely thought in terms of gender except for the clear bias of running the boom microphone, and that chivalrous acts kept women feeling unequal or weak within their roles. Outward comments on gender were few and far between on set and it was challenging to get many members to discuss gender during interviews.
Chapter Five: Discussion

While the results of this qualitative study are not projectable to the population of all student-led production crews, they provide much needed insight into the current experiences of women and men in experiential creative learning environments. The purpose of this case study was to explore the themes of experiential learning, concepts of creativity and issues of gender within a student-led production group, Weekend Now. The group created and produced a 10-episode season during the Fall 2012 semester. This chapter includes discussion and implications of the major findings, limitations, future research and suggestions to both universities and Weekend Now. The first section of this chapter discusses major findings in all three areas of experiential learning, creativity and gender. The second section explores limitations of the study and future research direction within all three themes. The final section gives direct recommendations to universities seeking to implement experiential learning projects as well as growth ideas for Weekend Now.

Experiential Learning

RQ1: What are students learning in the student-led experiential learning environment of Weekend Now?

Students are learning a substantial amount through hands-on practice and execution within Weekend Now. The narratives of learning were broken down into five categories: job duties, collaborative social skills, conflict management, collaborative storytelling and adaptability. Weekend Now participants were focused on the final product, the show. The show is the binding element and is a common goal stretching
across all positions, interest and outcomes. The students always finished the show, I am not sure if much of anything less than a tornado would stop them from doing their final show Fridays at 7:00 P.M.

**Job duties.** In the environment of *Weekend Now*, the individual student mandates her or his personal learning. Including how involved she/he becomes, how focused they are in their roles and where she/he wants to focus her/his learning within *Weekend Now*. Students, whom apply themselves the furthest, learn the most about how a particular role operates. In other words, the students learn as much as they want to learn and student learning is completely hinged on individual actions. If students want to grow within their positions they can and if they want to quit *Weekend Now* they can. Technical learning, such as camera operation or switcher controls, was not a primary focus of learning for the majority of students on set, instead learning focused on the ability to work with others, introspection about how one reacts in various situations and how a group works together to run as a fluid machine.

Gender differences showed up within specific job duties. Kevin focused on learning the technology to grow in his job and Kristen focused job performance to grow. These two sought out these types of learning experiences which is not surprising given that males tend to focus on the equipment and females tend to focus on more social or soft skills. The main way to learn a role was through observation of someone within that particular role. Many students found this the best way to learn. Sarah did not have someone to observe for her position; she suddenly became lead producer and was not fully certain what to do. She first took a logical step and talked with the former producer,
but he was unwilling to help her in her role. Sarah had to use her personal creativity and problem-solving skills to be producer. For Sarah, the first female producer, to be faced with this roadblock was not surprising given she was a woman.

**Collaborative social skills.** Social gatherings outside of the environment of *Weekend Now* gave the students a way to bond, network and find chance occasions to collaborate with others on the cast and crew. Parties typically were held after the Friday show at someone’s house. This directly mimics the parties of *Saturday Night Live* after their airing every Saturday evening. Students who did not drink or did not want to be around that type of behavior felt the consequences. Andrew did not have very many strong friendships on set, but he did try to create non-drinking environments for the cast and crew to hang, but these never surfaced. The relief felt after a week’s worth of work put into this show gave way for a release of stress by way of their parties.

As Sarah looked back on her performance as producer she wished she had not been so visibly overwhelmed. In contrast, this is how she remembers the previous producers acting on the set. Yet, when she performed the role in the same way, others took notice and told her she was driving other students away from the show. I never met Luther, nor was able to ask him about his behavior on set and if he had wished to conduct himself in other ways. Sarah truly felt bad for her actions, where Luther was immune. If Luther had been told that his actions were driving students away, he clearly did not change. But more importantly, knowing about gender bias, Luther was allowed to be visibly overwhelmed, yell and lead with a firm hand. Sarah was not afforded this luxury.
**Conflict management.** Students produced a positive experience and developed approaches that prevented negative experiences in the absence of an instructor. *Weekend Now* is one example of a student’s ability to conceptualize her or his own experience, understand that experience and reflect and adjust to make the experience better. Certainly, not all students participating will fully reflect, but many have and did.

A terrible joke from a lonely cast member, spoken on air, brought the executive board, BMW, to focus heavily on *Weekend Now*. Sarah, the first female producer of *Weekend Now*, was suddenly the first producer to have to submit all scripts for review to BMW before each Friday show. If she did not comply she would become the second producer threatened with cancellation of the show. Her actions, she shared with me, always seemed like the best way to deal with presented situations. She was also the most openly reflective of her time on the show, her actions and what she would have done differently.

**Collaborative storytelling.** The cast, head writer, producer and director expressed the importance of improvisation on the show more than once. If cast could improve when the sketches grew silent, they were doing a good job. Many of the theater students who were on cast knew the need for the ‘show/sketch must go on.’ They practiced the importance of reacting, not just performing. Sometimes their sketches were quiet funny to me and I would laugh out loud at their performances. Beyond their more original sketches they would lean on mimetic sketches taken from *SNL*. Mimicking simpler sketches kept the show within a ‘safe’ box of potentially funny material.
Matching an already created character well led to unoriginal content, but with the safety of laughter in the audience.

**Adaptability.** Students learned how to be adaptable within the environment of *Weekend Now* as well as learned to trust the process. From Cooper and Tang (2012), one of the personal attributes to predict career success in media professions is adaptability. In addition, the students who worked in more powerful positions, producer, head writer and director on *Weekend Now* were more likely to solve problems on set and posses the authority to solve those problems. Lower ranking roles suggested ways to solve technical or personal problems, but ultimately the enacted solutions came from students in the more powerful roles. Students in more powerful positions experience results of their adaptability more than other students. Not one cast or crew member said making *Weekend Now* was easy. What the majority of cast and crew shared with me was the importance of adaptability on set. Being able to role with the punches, find a solution to a problem and overall work as hard as you can to grow in this show.

At this point I want to reflect on the learning of both creativity and gender on the set of *Weekend Now*. On a fundamental level the students learned, whether consciously or not, that creativity comes from the top down. The head writer gets to write and choose what is funny enough material for the show, the assistant producer was the technical spots-man who solved the most technical problems onset with the producer being the liaison to the largest technical issues (cameras, switcher system). Students stuck to the typical patriarchal organization, knowing or unknowingly. Female leadership could be ignored or discussed in a negative light. The individual cast and crew worked within
their own socially constructed gender norms and stereotypes and did not do much to push past norms and stereotypes within their production.

Creativity

RQ2: How are students negotiating and enacting creativity in the student-led environment of Weekend Now?

In terms of creativity, Weekend Now, is not genuinely new as Csikszentmihali (1996) would encourage, but instead similar to Saturday Night Live (SNL). When Weekend Now first began, students based the entire production structure on SNL’s structure. This was done in order to facilitate practicing what the professionals did. Themes of creativity through constraint, compromise, creative concepts, structural changes and nothing left to lose emerged throughout the season.

Creativity through constraint. Students of Weekend Now negotiated creativity by first acknowledging their constraints and shortcomings on the show. Creativity exhibited itself through solving problems such as changes and constraints facing the show. Constraints consisted of material limitations, such as old cameras and equipment, temporal limitations, with time constraints on the show and student’s schedules and spatial limitations, such as a small studio space. Overall, evidence suggests that students do want to demonstrate their creative talents, but for a live audience, rather than a taped version of the show. They find their creativity is demonstrated most in the live show setting, performing for a live audience. As a result, live shows are promoted more and growing the audience is the main goal for many of the members I interviewed. In moments of true exhaustion and panic, the group stayed calm and collected and was able
to appreciate the show as a learning experience. Students remembered there were no strong repercussions for failing in the environment of Weekend Now. This allowed for a greater feeling of freedom from mistakes and therefore allowed for more creativity as a whole.

Students were able to create parodies of current events happening at the university. In addition, students were motivated by interest, enjoyment, satisfaction and the challenge of putting together the show. With hopes of sustaining a less stressed crew, the producer, Sarah, tried to keep external pressure, such as Broadcast Media Works, a secret from the rest of the team. The constraints within the space and technical tools did not stop the cast and crew from making the show, but students continually said it impacted their success and size of the audience.

Compromise. Creativity showed through the active compromises the cast and crew made for the show. Learning the limitation of their production system with sound and in one instance making everything black and white, proved too advanced for any of their skill levels. The problem is they began to make compromises just before the show or dress rehearsal. The producer, head writer and cast did not invite technical types to the read-through to help plan the show in the actual studio. Leaving out this pragmatic voice created more issues in the studio, but issues were always was resolved.

Creative concepts. In the beginning of the semester ideas were created easily, but did not come to fruition. This is not surprising, because students have the biggest ideas at the beginning of semester, but when they are required to actually pull them off reality hits in. As the writing crew got smaller and smaller the cast wrote more and more
of the sketches. This increased their chances of being in sketches and kept control of the narratives. Kristen wrote a sketch with herself and a fellow female cast member in drag, titled, *Dude’s Night.* This was a lasting sketch, with the cast and crew quoting lines from it throughout the semester. She only got two sketches on the show that season and one of them featured two females dressed up as men, the other sketch was for male-nail-polish. Pushing the idea that the main perspective for comedy was only for a male audience perpetuated by Zak.

**Structural changes.** The day of the sixth show, which would have signified the end of the season if the students were still on a quarter system, was a treat to witness. Not only were they tired and hoping for Thanksgiving break, but also they loosened up and started fully functioning as a team. The moment they let their guard down because of exhaustion they truly became a cohesive team. The exhaustion while working to meet deadlines was beneficial to loosen up stress and promote creativity.

**Nothing left to lose.** I teach in my writing courses to get a character to a place where they have nothing left to lose, leaving anything as possible. The last night, during final show, and the production switcher broke to the point of no return, everyone was screaming, but the chaos was more comedic than panicked. The cast in the studio had no idea the control room was completely dead. The crew in the control room tried everything they could and focused on their roles where the studio was concerned. This commitment and ability to maintain composure during a monumental studio breakdown showed they learned the best lesson of all, this was a learning environment and there were no large repercussions for failing.
Characteristics of *Weekend Now* can be compared to the characteristics of the creative industries. Specifically, constructing common creative constraints such as deadlines, time limitations and prop/equipment limitations can be beneficial to students’ education as they simulate industry expectations. Despite constraints the group has created a routine for a reliable show and has continued to maintain the reliability and growth of an audience. Students can come and go as they please with the show. While a student leaving a leadership role in the middle of a semester is highly unlikely, freshmen routinely leave the show without prior notice.

**Gender**

RQ3: How does gender influence participatory roles within the student-led experiential environment of *Weekend Now*?

Within *Weekend Now* the gender split averaged 48% female and 52% male. On the surface this showcases an above-average gender split, beating out not only the department but in film and television industry. This discrepancy suggests *Weekend Now* was able to attract a high number of females and retain them on the show. Not everyone working on *Weekend Now* was a production major, and not everyone was a major within the department. However, this show had the highest participation rate compared to all other shows produced by students in the department. The narratives of gender were broken down into five categories: leadership, female roles, male roles, chivalry and professionalism.

**Leadership.** In the world of *Weekend Now*, women held two of the three most powerful positions on the show. As a result, females looking to grow on the show could
observer evidence of growth opportunity. This suggests that subconsciously or inherently, women were excited about future possibilities within *Weekend Now*, because of the women running the show. Still present was a patriarchal structure with the narrative of sketches and overall acceptance on set. This season was Zak’s. Zak’s opinion mattered and laughter was his approval. Sarah on more than one occasion was ignored or openly disrespected by Zak. Sarah never questioned Zak openly that I could see. Victoria led with a silent leadership – everyone was secretly scared of her. When she talked, people listened. She was from China and therefore she first was the minority presence on set, and second, a female. Victoria was joked with because of her accent, but beyond that she earned everyone’s respect. Victoria also never challenged Zak, but played within his constraints on the set.

**Female roles.** The roles primarily held by females during season 29 were production assistants (P.A.) and cue card holders. In all of my courses, I teach the role of the P.A. as doing what ever is asked of you as quickly as you can and with a smile on your face. This is the entry-level position with the lowest status you can achieve and the position is incredibly passive. A P.A. does not make decisions but listens and follows directions. Cue card holders need good handwriting, which is a stereotypical female trait. The description by Andrew that being a cue card holder held the key to becoming cast in the future was deceptive. The leadership stated they always found it hard to find female cast members, but if their first job on set was to have no job, as a P.A. or writing out the script these were not glorious or thankful positions and may have lead to burn out.
**Male roles.** The roles primarily held by males during this season were audio boom operators, audio mixer, lighting and floor director. Immediately these positions have more control. The boom operators control what sound is heard, the audio mixer controls how loud that sound is, lighting is automatically designed and the floor director is in charge of keeping everyone organized on the floor of the studio. The female director, in a position of power, stated explicitly she kept females away from operating the boom microphone. Yes, the boom requires endurance, but there are ways to hold a boom so you can maintain the needed stamina.

**Chivalry.** Females on set had to watch out for the chivalry trap. The stating of a male ‘helping’ a female out of chivalry, manners or being a gentleman. If a cast or crew member takes over the role of someone else, that someone else will not learn, no matter what his or her role. Males on set tended to want to do the jobs for female counterparts, hindering their chance to learn on their own. Specifically when Chase physically reset the female boom operator, he did not give her the chance to make a change because he did not tell her what the criticism was. Chase took it upon himself to fix the situation and thereby taking the boom operator’s control away. Sarah also had many examples of males being ‘worried’ about a female’s performance from the ‘friend’ or ‘brother’ perspective. Some females might fall into the trap of a male colleague feeling they need to take care of the ‘girl’ in the room.

**Professionalism.** The week I was unable to observe the show, Sarah called the professionalism of the associate producer into question. Sarah tried to maintain the performance expectations of a producer on set by asking Monica to change into a more
respectable outfit. While I only have Sarah’s version of how she asked Monica to change, the residual effect of Sarah’s actions lasted long into the semester. Monica had a troupe of male cast members that rallied behind her and used this as the reason all four left the show after the season. Sarah was baffled, thinking that Monica truly wanted to become producer after her. Most interesting to me is when Andrew the assistant producer gave his version of the story; he thought Monica was only a production assistant on set. He has no idea she was observing Sarah to become the lead producer. Monica’s performance on set only put her at the P.A. level in Andrews’s eyes.

Gender issues were prevalent on the set of Weekend Now and the cast and crew did not seem to notice. Particularly the male students did not reflect on any type of gender bias or stereotype. Sarah also heavily reviewed her behavior and that of other females around her on set more so than the behavior of males. She seemed to hold females to a higher standard than her male counterparts.

**Opportunities for Universities and Students**

Student-led initiatives provide an exciting growing dimension in media education and there is significant potential for universities to be involved. The profile of Weekend Now is housed within a media program within a mid-western university providing a learning space and needed equipment. As shown, students that participate in Weekend Now benefit through improved skills and expansion of their personal knowledge, however the lack of supervision from a faculty member leads to poor reflection as a group. As such, media departments and universities should actively encourage and support these programs while allowing their autonomy.
Based on this case study the recommendations for universities are as follows:

**Create experiential opportunities.** Student-led shows and media programs should be encouraged and supported to provide an additional dimension to media education. Faculty support must include guidance, mentorship and consistent observation if not reflection from a faculty member. This is a logical step within media programs that provides experiential learning, immersive, collaborative, convergent media projects for students to work within various roles towards a common goal.

**Mentorship from faculty.** Faculty and staff should provide professional expertise in technical areas as well as soft skills related to collaborative team environments. Certainly, *Weekend Now* was able to survive on its own without an advisor, but having an advisor/mentor to ask about the bigger social skill issues, such as conflict management, would help the students grow and reflect, a key aspect to learning. Faculty and staff need to make sure not to take over the project, but guide and mentor students in leadership positions.

**Require course credit.** Course credit would necessitate an instructor to evaluate student learning within the environment. This can help with conflicts, problems and gender issues. Students at *Weekend Now* mentioned they would like to receive course credit for their participation.

**Faculty awareness.** This is key, faculty must be aware of the gender issues facing students in all areas of high learning. Requiring faculty teaching in production areas to take a cultural studies or gender studies course would be beneficial.
**Gender quotas.** I regularly enforce gender quotas in all production courses that I teach. Making sure there is always a female director, director of photography and not only an actor or a production assistant. This pushes females to break out of their boxes and take on added responsibility.

**Faculty sharing industry connections.** One of the best ways for students to begin their careers in the industry is through a strong connection. If faculty members have strong connections to the media industry, they should be open to helping students begin their careers. *Weekend Now* is an amazing opportunity to watch students and see if they have the skills needed to thrive in the industry and also decide if they are worthy of sharing those connections.

**Technical resources.** Technical support from departments and universities by supplying materials, work spaces and other resources as needed is essential in ensuring these types of activities are able to continue. This also allows students to take ownership and pride over the space and equipment they can call their own.

**Acknowledgement.** Departments and universities should acknowledge student voluntary services in support of these projects, and the skills students acquire for participation. Acknowledgement could be as simple as a pizza party for all experiential projects at the end of a semester to say good work to the students. In addition, this would help the students celebrate in a non-alcoholic environment, which was a concern for many students who did not attend the after parties of *Weekend Now.* Another idea is the hosting of an awards show at various levels and categories for student media projects.
**Additional communication courses.** Departments and universities should require students that partake in experiential learning environments to take a course in small group or large group communication, cultural and gender study courses. In addition, leadership seminars and management courses would also be appropriate. Having intrapersonal training and building critical thinking skills would help the students better navigate issues such as problem solving, conflict, leadership and many other communication skills.

**Career services.** Universities should guide students in articulating the benefits acquired from working on media projects and how they can effectively communicate this experience to future employers. This can be applicable to more than just media fields. Ensuring students understand how to talk about their experience as a skill or a past job can help in consideration for the position they seek.

Based on this case study, recommendations for *Weekend Now* as a group are as follows:

**Faculty mentor.** Find, engage and keep the faculty advisor up-to-date with the direction, focus and future plans for *Weekend Now*. Monthly or weekly meetings with the leadership team can help with communication, problem solving and gender issues. Students should also keep the faculty involved with what the group is doing, encouraging the faculty to invest time, knowledge and resources. In addition when leadership changes within the group, a static faculty mentor can provide consistency and visibility throughout the university.
Faculty and departmental visits. Engage, invite and allow staff and faculty to visit, observe and provide guidance to Weekend Now. This might be best coordinated through leadership roles.

Self and group reflection. Work to continually evaluate leadership roles based on experience, gender and future goals for the show. Hold ongoing discussions with the BMW Productions Management Team to ensure future goals are in-line with BMW Productions as a whole. Think of ways to better the experience for all students involved in the project.

Promotions focused at the university. Work on a promotions and marketing campaign in which Weekend Now discusses the benefits of high definition gear not only for the group, but also for other student-led shows, for the college and for the university as a whole. This could be coordinated with other shows and through BMW Productions to give a stronger voice to high-definition needs. This is the next step for focusing on a different type of audience other than those watching the live shows.

Limitations

This study’s limitations can help design future studies as well as reflect on my own research to become a better researcher. Gender was balanced for the group of Weekend Now on the surface, however gender balance is uncommon within the industry and within the department Weekend Now is housed. The Fall 2012 season may have been a large season for female participants, but the group might not hold this large of a female population in other seasons. Future studies of this kind would do well to look at a base
gender count between all projects of student-led productions and place each show in context of gender distribution.

As a qualitative study, data is open to the researcher’s interpretation. As the researcher, I worked to include my own personal context for reflexivity and explored my own personal biases while observing the group. At the beginning of my observation, I found stepping out of the role of an instructor and giving tips or suggestions was difficult but not impossible. Near the end of the observation I hoped to conduct more interviews, but the students became busy with other aspects of their education and time was hard to find. A limitation with the observation is that the observer “may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways” (Patton, 2002, p. 306). On more than one occasion the head producer, Sarah, said, “this is not how it normally is.” The researcher’s presence during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses. My presence may have caused unknown limitations.

Also my relationship with the head producer may have pushed other students away from talking with me during the observations. In fact, I know certain students who disliked Sarah for reasons outside of her control. Those students did not talk to me and actively avoided me on set. Particularly on the night I was not able to observer it seemed all hell broke lose between Sarah and her protégé on set. My absence was noted and more aggression and yelling occurred. I was not privy to all sides of all stories happening on set. Specifically not being able to interview the head writer means I’m missing a big piece of the story for this season.
The amount of collected audio data makes analysis and interpretation time consuming. Listening to over 30 hours of shows and deciphering who is speaking was incredibly tedious and difficult. Looking back, I would obtain less audio recording of the actual show and focus heavily on notes and voice memos recorded on my phone. In the end, I focused more on my notes than on the audio recordings, which were sometimes too noisy to comprehend.

This study confined itself to one student-led group at the university. Additionally, the study considered the experiences of the entire group of students working with the show. The study was limited to one show, *Weekend Now*. Within BMW Productions there are nine other shows that could have been observed for this study. Therefore, generalization to a broader population is not appropriate. Because of this study’s focus on a select group of students, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of student-led production projects. To obtain such generalizable results, a random survey of some kind should be employed. Looking back, the addition of a focus group with the students who worked on the show to talk through experiential learning, creativity and gender would be an added benchmark and provide group insight for the research questions. In addition, adding questions to the informal in-depth interviews to hit on characteristics of tolerance and cultural awareness could help not only with diversity but also gender.

**Directions for Future Research**

During the course of this study, several opportunities for additional research presented themselves; some related to this research’s findings and others related to this
research’s limitations. Adding a longitudinal aspect to the study seeing, where some of these students ended up after graduation, 5 years out of college and 20 years out of college. Asking the participants again to reflect on what they learned while working on Weekend Now and how it helped them in their current job/career. Additionally, if participants did not end up working in the media field, was Weekend Now a waste of their time? Certainly not every media major in the nation will obtain a job within media fields, but perhaps their experiences could apply to other industries and jobs. Finding where these students landed in their careers can provide greater insight into if they used what they learned, if they remember their experience and how it has or has not helped them develop their careers.

Future studies should explore the experiences of students across the nation within similar media education environments to establish a baseline of learning for student-led environments. In student-led environments with only males in leadership roles, is female participation lower? Are there gender differences between the college and universities within top-ten film school across the nation compared to mid-size and private institutions? Are schools in New York City and Los Angeles more likely to have diversity of production students, which levels off when students transition into the industry? Does the gender discrepancy start at the university level, perhaps even at the K-12 educational level?

Research is needed to look at gender diversity not only in an educational setting but more detailed gender research is needed at the industry level. Are films with more females in leadership positions holding a higher percentage of female workers? What
will push the industry to become more equal opportunity for both females and males? Are films and television productions created and written by women more likely to employ a higher number of women?

Can the academic setting start teaching students sooner that working within a diverse gender and race environment is common sense? How can we craft our own teaching methods and experiential learning opportunities for all students to appreciate individual contributions? To counteract the discrepancy of gender diversity, more women need to work in media industries and studies should continue to learn the stories and narratives of underrepresented voices. Students need to observe both females and males within all leadership roles, in all skill sets, as well as see diversity within race and ethnicity. Women and minorities need to see a representation of them within the industry to believe that their own success is possible. Within media programs, efficacy of gender diversity in small groups – specifically production teams should be looked into to find benefits and ways to help students work in gender balanced groups. As well as looking deeply into the technical and non-technical roles chosen by males and females and why they are chosen.

Finally, academia should begin an active criticism of the lack of diversity within film and television industries, forcing the discussion and promoting diversity. Most importantly, universities should begin to incorporate diversity literature into media industry conversations. Does diversity help society? Does gender efficacy help society? Will diverse voices collaborating on the creation of television and films help to grow the industry? Of course all of these things will help society and will showcase unique yet
common stories – but sometimes people, and academics need hard proof. The proof of gender efficacy, egalitarianism and diversity making a society stronger needs to be shown without the constraints of only seeing one voice. If we all agree the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public, how do we get Hollywood and Cinema to agree? Certainly, if I can see it I can be it, but how important is this. How can we convince the industry within a patriarchal society and a media system controlled majority by males? Recently, a potential merger agreement between 21st Century Fox and Time Warner, Inc came under scrutiny (Stewart, 2014). The merger would reduce control of the major Hollywood studios from six owners to five, and would reduce major television producers from five to four. What happens if one company owns nearly forty percent of cultural creative resources and distribution channels?

**Summary**

The information presented in this dissertation consists of various narratives of the 29th season of *Weekend Now* as interpreted by the researcher. The students create *Weekend Now* to be an environment similar to and mimicking the atmosphere of the creative industries, namely *Saturday Night Live*. The positive effects on students is a line on their resume, experience instead of class listing, learning the basics of a particular type of production and how to work in a team setting. The negatives on the surface are the high cost of equipment to stay relevant and to teach the newest technologies. The cast and crew of *Weekend Now* are fluid and ever changing with no true leadership ensuring future growth, a committee faculty member would change this. With each new season and
change of leadership, there will be new ways of creating and producing the show. The students running the show outwardly talk of working to make *Weekend Now* a professional environment, open for anyone to join and focused on a strong end goal of creating a television show. Yet, students holding power unknowingly put new members in stereotypical positions, enforcing the creative industry gender bias. Still, overall, many participants found the experience to be successful and beneficial to their educational trajectory.
References


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http://www.believermag.com/issues/200311/?read=interview_fey


Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions Survey" (IPEDS-C:91-99); and
IPEDS Fall 2000 through Fall 2010, Completions component. (This table was
prepared May 2011.)

Consumer Sciences 97(1), 73-75.

Oaks: Sage Publications.
Appendix A: Open-Ended Interview Guide

1. What have you learned being on Weekend Now?  
2. Why did you join Weekend Now?  
3. Are you continuing on the show? Why or why not?  
4. What role did you start in when you joined the show? How did you start doing other roles?  
5. What is your favorite moment of the season?  
6. What is something you would change about Weekend Now if you could?  
7. What were the biggest challenges during this season?  
8. How close is your crew, outside of this show?  
9. What was the best part of this experience?  
10. What advice would you give to new students/crews working on the show?
Ohio University Consent Form

**Title of Research:** Observation of Student-Led Creative Environments

**Researcher:** Elizabeth Pike

You are being asked to participate in research. To be able to decide if you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits, so that you can make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Explanation of Study:** This study is designed to gain a better understanding of how student learn on student-run film sets. If you agree to participate, you will be observed throughout the Fall 2012 season of *Weekend Now*. Your participation in the study will last throughout the Fall 2012 season of *Weekend Now*.

In addition to the observation, you may be invited to do an interview about your experience. This interview would last no longer than 1.5 hours.

**Risks and Discomforts:** No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

**Benefits:** This study is important to social science in media education because it can lead to stronger understanding how students learn and can be taught. Individually, you may benefit by reflecting on your own learning in student-led creative spaces.

**Confidentiality and Records:** Your interview and observation information will be used only with a pseudonym in the report. Furthermore, the audio and video recordings will be stored on password protected hard drives, which only the research team has access to. All data will be destroyed on or before May 1, 2013.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;
Contact Information: If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Elizabeth Pike, egpike@gmail.com, 614.271.2663 OR Roger Cooper, cooperr@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

• You have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
• You have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
• You understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study.
• You are 18 years of age or older.
• Your participation in this research is completely voluntary.
• You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature  Date
Printed Name
Appendix C: IRB Approval

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

Project Title: Observations of Student-Led Creative Environments

Primary Investigator: Elizabeth Gibson Pike

Co-Investigator(s):

Faculty Advisor: Roger Cooper

Department: Media Arts & Studies

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

8/12/12 Approval Date
8/11/13 Expiration Date

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix D: Student Participant Profiles

These profiles are based on Season 29 (Fall 2012). The sections with the [?] is information that I could not obtain because the student left the show before I could talk with them.

MDIA = Media Major
M = Male
F = Female

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Role(s)</th>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Time on FL</th>
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Appendix E: Roles of Weekend Now

Roles of Weekend Now. Roles are very structured on Weekend Now. This section provides an in-depth understanding of the roles and the responsibilities of each cast member and crewmember role on Weekend Now. Knowing the responsibility of each role assists in understanding the themes section subsequent in this chapter. Show positions, which are held the entire semester by one person, are: producer, head-writer, director, out-of-studio producer and cast members. The remainder of the positions discussed has more than one person filling the role during a semester.

Roles are very structured on Weekend Now. This section provides an in-depth understanding of the roles and the responsibilities of each cast member and crewmember role on Weekend Now.

1. **Producer**: coordinates all cast, crew, and production; ensures all deadlines are met; serves as the liaison between the show and BMW (Broadcast Media Works)
2. **Head Writer**: writes, edits, and develops scripts for sketches; ensures there is enough material to fill 30 minutes of air time; controls central narrative while working with writing crew
3. **Director**: creates crew call emails, choosing roles for all participants; controls camera direction and cast blocking; makes edits to live-to-tape show if needed
4. **Out-of-Studio Producer**: coordinates all production, editing, and planning of digital shorts filmed outside of the studio
5. **Cast**: performs read-throughs on Wednesday evenings, rehearses and performs written sketches on Fridays
6. **Assistant Producer**: works with producer to coordinate all production and planning

7. **Assistant Director**: monitors run time of sketches to determine if heavy or light on time

8. **Technical Director**: runs the video switcher; pushes the buttons to cue up and acquire the various camera shots and graphics from the director’s directives

9. **Engineer**: manages camera settings (white balance, iris, shutter, and gain)

10. **Lighting**: runs lighting board and angle lighting on Thursday evenings

11. **Graphics**: finds and creates graphics for an A-News segment; creates end credits for each show

12. **Floor Manager**: keeps everyone organized on the floor; serves as main liaison via headphones between control room and studio floor

13. **Camera Operator**: operates camera in conjunction with director via headphones

14. **Art Director/Make-Up**: decorates set, selects sketch costumes, provides make-up

15. **Unit Managers/Set Moves**: assists in moving cameras and cables, props, and set backgrounds when needed

16. **Cue Card Holders**: writes out cue cards for each script; holds cue cards for the cast during performances

17. **Production Assistant**: receives various assignments helping wherever needed

18. **Broadcast Media Works Executive Board (BMW)**: Umbrella student group elected to their positions; controls funding for all shows; votes for producer of all
shows under the umbrella; controls upload of digital copies for online distribution
Appendix F: *Weekend Now* Schedule Fall Semester Show Schedule

*Season 29 of Weekend Now Academic Semester Fall 2012*

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<td>10/12/12</td>
<td>2905</td>
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</table>
From: [weekend now] weekendnow@gmail.com
To: All Cast/Crew
Date: Fri, Nov 30, 2012 at 1:20am

If you can't be here tomorrow on time or at all, please contact me ASAP. 555-555-5555. For those who can, please please please come right ON TIME, because we have to start at 2sharp! We will be tight on time during run thru. By the way, just in case, eat before you come to run thru, we might have really really short dinner break. And please read this email all the way.

YOOHOOOO!

Here's season Finale ladies and gentlemen!! This is my and [Zak's] last episode, and some of the cast members too. This is the last email you get from me, too. I was going to send out a sad email or something, but my creativity just ran out for creating the crew call. I want to say is thanks everybody for working so hard on the show. We couldn't have done the show without each one of you. Let's finish this finale with really really really good quality!!!

**Director:** [Victoria]
**AD:** [Kevin]
**TD:** [Chase]
**Tape Op:** [Leslie]
**Engineer:** [Kari]
**Lighting:** [Clint]
**Audio:** [Collin] // [Jack], [Paul] (on Boom)
**Graphics:** Steve Martin
**Floor Manager:** [Travis] / [Paris]
**Camera 1:** [Joey]
**Camera 2:** [Westly]
Camera 3: [Chandler]
Art Direction/Make-Up: [Julie], [Kris], [Axel]
Production Assistant/Cue Cards Holder/Set Moves: [Mary Beth], [Sharon], [Jennifer], [April], cast member, everybody
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT/BTS/FIX STUFF: [Andrew]!
If you have any question and confusions, please tell me.

See you guys at 2 SHARP!!

[Victoria]