WHY STAY: YOUNG INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS IN CONTEMPORARY HAVANA

by

Jessica A. Burgess

A thesis submitted to the Department of Cultural Studies

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(October, 2015)

Copyright ©Jessica A. Burgess, 2015
Abstract

This project, containing a written thesis and documentary film, investigates contemporary film production by young Cuban filmmakers in Havana, Cuba. In the changing audiovisual landscape young filmmakers are often positioned as ‘independent’ cultural producers. Social, political and economic relationships to institutional structures have encouraged initiatives within the filmmaking community. Young filmmakers participate in these initiatives forming new spatial, social and financial relationships on and off the island. These connections are facilitated through growing access to media and technology as well as a desire for engagement with global film markets. These factors also influence the types of images young filmmakers seek to produce as well as their production methods.

The documentary film entitled *Por Amor al Arte* follows the experiences and films of five young filmmakers in Havana, Cuba. The documentary further addresses the question: How do young Cuban filmmakers produce films away from the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), the dominant film institute, within the contemporary Cuban context? And do they have the desire to continue to produce film in Cuba and why? Because the Cuban film industry continues to function on the centralized model established after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the ICAIC maintains its position as the sole producer and distributor of Cuban cinema. Due to scarce resources and little economic support in the 1990s many of Cuba’s filmmakers sought alternative methods to produce their films away from the ICAIC. Today young filmmakers benefit from certain resources and approaches developed in the 1990s, while new struggles emerge within a contemporary context. Filmmakers who produce away from the ICAIC, however, do not have legal standing in the country and cannot operate as independent production companies. Furthermore, most productions are created and screened in Havana, Cuba, which privilege those who live in the city. Young filmmakers in Havana negotiate these factors and consider the possibilities of staying in Cuba to produce their work.
Acknowledgements

I would like to recognize my supervisor, Dr. Susan Lord, for igniting my interest in Cuban Cinema. I am grateful for her support and invaluable guidance throughout the completion of this project. Thank you to the other members my examination committee: Dr. Jennifer Hosek and Dr. Dorit Naaman for their critical insight and comments. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the many outstanding professors who have taught me throughout my academic career including, Dr. Villia Jefremovas, Dr. Laura Murray, Dr. May Chew, Dr. Zaira Zarza, Dr. Derek Redmond, Dr. Peter Baxter, Dr. Alex Da Costa and Dr. Martin Hand. Thank you for the words of encouragements and valuable discussions over the years. I owe special thanks to my instructors from the Cuba Course: Dr. Zaira Zarza, Dr. Susan Lord, Dr. Karen Dubinsky and Dr. Jennifer Hosek. Your passion and dedication to educating students about Cuban Culture was truly inspiring and the key motivating factor behind this project.

My sincerest thank you to the staff and students of the Cultural Studies Department for the support and the company over these past two years. To Michelle, Alex, Noelle, Nicole, Filza, Meaghan and Adam, thank you for your constant encouragement and perspective. I would also like to thank Brendon Wilson of Beechwood Productions for his time and effort in the editing of Por Amor al Arte.

I am indebted to my Cuban Family Jimena, Boris, Julia, Lourdes, Rolando, Gisela and Norberto who graciously accepted me into their homes with such kindness. To my dear friends Adrian, Carolina, Camila, Neissy, Reymel and Susu, I thank them for their overwhelming support during my multiple visits to Cuba. And, a special thank you to Michelle Szemberg who made my trips to Cuba possible and who believed in this project since day one.

To my parents, Owen and Joan and to my brother Graham, who have continually stuck with me down whichever path I am taking. Their love and support have been tremendous throughout the completion of this degree. And, to my grandmother, who I miss very much, thank you for always understanding and always believing in me.
This project is dedicated to those filmmakers who participated and who provided distinguished
insight into their world. Your patience and openness made this project possible.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures ......................................................................................................................................... vi
List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................................................... vii
Chapter 1 Introduction and Historical Context ................................................................................ 1
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 1
  Revolutionary cineaste to Street Filmmaker: National narratives in Cuban filmmaking .................. 5
  Chapter Outline ................................................................................................................................. 13
Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework ..................................................................................................... 15
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 15
  Theoretical Approach ........................................................................................................................ 17
  Methodology and Methods ............................................................................................................... 24
Chapter 3 Data Analysis .................................................................................................................... 32
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 32
  Deconstructing ‘independent’ ............................................................................................................ 34
  La Ley de Cine .................................................................................................................................... 39
  Collaboration with the ICAIC: The Muestra Joven festival .............................................................. 41
  A critical look at Northern funding for the development of young Cuban filmmaking .................. 52
Chapter 4 Image Analysis ................................................................................................................... 58
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 58
  Positioning Por Amor al Arte: A collaborative documentary practice ............................................ 60
  The potential to stay: Young filmmakers explore different forms of aesthetic, genre and narrative in a changing audiovisual landscape ...................................................................................... 61
Chapter 5 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 78
References ............................................................................................................................................... 82
Appendix A List of Semi-Structured Interviews ............................................................................... 87
Appendix B GREB Approval ............................................................................................................... 88
List of Figures

Figure 1: Montero shows Leonadi completing her tasks while she begins to ask Leonadi about the challenges of her pregnancy (Abecé 2013).................................................................63
Figure 2: Leonadi describes her pregnancy to Montero. The audience hears both women’s voices (Abecé 2013)..................................................................................................................64
Figure 3: Arevalo arranges the opening shot in the bus terminal (2015).................................................................66
Figure 4: The camera is above Nani as she groans in her bed (Nani y Tati 2013).........................................................68
Figure 5: The two characters meet the old man in the square in Gibara, Cuba (Quieres que llores? 2012).70
Figure 6: Gloria dines with Chan (Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang 2014)..................................................................75
Figure 7: The camera follows Gloria through the bar (Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang 2014)...............76
List of Abbreviations

ACAV – Asociación Cubana del Audiovisual (Cuban Film Commission)
ACPC – La Asociación Cubana de La Prensa Cinematográfica (The Cuban Cinema Press Association)
EICTV – Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (International School of Film and Television)
ICAIC – Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry, or Cuban Film Institute)
ICRT – Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión (Cuban Institute of Radio and Television)
ISA – Instituto Superior del Arte (Higher Arts Institute)
FAMCA – Facultad de Arte de los Medios de Comunicación Audiovisual (Faculty of Arts of Audiovisual Communication)
Chapter 1

Introduction and Historical Context

Introduction

It is the opening night of the 13th annual Muestra Nacional de Nuevos Realizadores (National Exhibit of New Filmmakers) or Muestra Joven, the audience packs into the Cine Chaplin and the evening opens with a silent film, Mienteme bien Jackie Chang (2014), co-directed by Adolfo Mena and Grethel Castillo. The film follows a photographer’s encounter with a young prostitute, dramatized through swaying shots in a vibrant, sultry nightclub, an original musical score, and a sexual encounter in a minimalist apartment with an all-white interior. “The story could happen in any city¹” (May 22, 2014), Castillo told me in one of our interviews, revealing what she identifies as a ‘universal’ quality about her film, yet she remains confident in her goal to stay in Cuba to continue her work. Coming of age in a time where changes in the narrative of cultural production and its producers has been slowly emerging since the Special Period (Hernandez-Reguant 2009:3), the youngest generation of cineastes is looking to express new stories in different ways, and from multiple positions, always within Cuba.

This project is comprised of a documentary film and a written thesis. The documentary allows for a more focused approach to some of the themes most prominent in the lives of young Cuban filmmakers. It follows the personal experiences of five young directors and looks at some of their first projects as filmmakers. The written component provides an in-depth analysis of the data I collected during my time in Cuba with contemporary filmmakers as well as others in the filmmaking community, most often in Havana.

In the contemporary Cuban context the term ‘independent’ is anchored in political, economic, social and spatial conditions whereby those who practice independent filmmaking do not definitively oppose the dominant structure. Because the nature of filmmaking is collaborative, productions that can

¹ All translations unless otherwise indicated are my own.
take on larger budgets almost always come in contact with industry, either corporate or state-run. To explain how this concept relates to young Cuban filmmakers, it must be deconstructed within the conditions of a particular context. I argue that the term ‘independent’ is not applied to a fixed category, but to a temporary position. Through this concept young filmmakers position themselves in relation to a larger, shifting perspective of the contemporary culture. I draw from Stuart Hall’s perception of cultural identities to support my thinking. Cultural identities according to Hall are not fixed to an essential past but are rather a matter of ‘becoming’, transforming within the context of history, culture and power (1996:213). In this sense the concept of the independent filmmaker is not a position one can find and secure. These concepts are the, “names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (ibid.).

This project began as an investigation of the practices of young independent filmmakers in contemporary Cuba, those working away from the state-run Cuban Film Institute called the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), and how the current social, political and economic landscapes inform these filmmakers’ desires to stay in Cuba to produce their work. To accomplish this, I began to consider the ways in which state authority influences filmmaking, how films have historically constructed a revolutionary Cuban identity (Chanan 2004:7), and more recently how globalization affects cultural production. It is with this assumption that I address a change in the narrative of cultural production. My analysis therefore examines young filmmakers’ relationships to power as informed by their ties to state institutions, networks among the independent filmmaking community, educational opportunities and international connections. These themes are also reflected in the images produced by young, independent filmmakers. I critically engage with the images of five filmmakers to analyze how the particular stories, genres and aesthetics they strive to convey intersect with their expressed desire for a future in Cuba.

Among the fifteen interviews I conducted, I selected five interviews with young independent filmmakers of diverse backgrounds (for example, with regard to their privileges, educational
opportunities) as case studies for the purpose of my documentary film. Through the interviews I began to understand their processes as emergent artists in contemporary Cuba. Initially I ask: How do young Cuban’s make their films independently? What are some of the struggles these filmmakers face in the Cuban context? And, why do they want to stay? I then question how the work of these filmmakers illustrate some of these points and speaks to a variety of stylistic interests in young independent filmmaking. My documentary entitled *Por Amor al Arte* explores the significance behind the phrase, translated as “For the Love of Art”, as one rooted in a complex and unique cultural history, as well as a set of opposing and similar personal opinions on Cuba’s contemporary film industry.

This chapter is divided into three sections to establish the study of contemporary Cuban film within the historical context, as well as an outline for the subsequent chapters in this paper. I engage with various conceptual frameworks to understand how filmmaking has been explored over time and place. I will also address how these frameworks have been rearticulated, making them visible today and situating the filmmakers I interviewed along with their practices within a larger changing framework worthy of further investigation. Prominent Cuban scholars such as Michael Chanan, Julianne Burton, Ana López and Joshua Malitsky explore a post-revolutionary Cuba through critical analyses of the paramount works of directors working during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. They reveal the radical political and social aims for filmmaking based in Marxist film theory through historical analysis of film in Cuba. More current studies by Ann Marie Stock, Cristina Venegas, Hector Amaya, Ariana Hernandez-Reguant, Laura Zoe Humphreys, Zaira Zarza, Susan Lord and Ruth Goldberg among others have discussed how gender, racialization, education, migration, technology and neoliberal globalization intersect with changing material, social and political narratives of cultural production affecting more recent generations of filmmakers. These scholars acknowledge binaries of state versus independent practices, and the fear of capitalism versus the goal of defending cultural identity (Stock 2009; Hernandez-Ruguant 2009). They recognize that presenting these arguments as dichotomies depoliticizes and dehistoricizes the practice of filmmaking by disengaging with the particular moments that contribute to the discussions of cultural
production in Cuba. Where I will build on these dialogues in my analysis is through my conversations with young filmmakers, arguing for a need to re-articulate and re-position cultural production and its producers within the constantly shifting material and socio-political contemporary audiovisual Cuban landscape.

The young filmmakers with whom I spoke negotiate their positions within the Cuban audiovisual landscape, while carefully avoiding definitive labels for them and their work. When addressing work as independent filmmakers, they often employed terms the terms commercial and universal stories to convey their desires for a more accessible cinema for both international and local audiences. As this paper reveals, young filmmakers temporarily implement particular terminology in order to be able to access film markets away from the island and in order to negotiate their relationships to shifting Cuban cultural landscape. However, throughout my discussions with young filmmakers, they simultaneously resist being categorized as independent filmmakers and maintain that external market forces do not solely drive their artistic practices. At certain points they may find particular vocabulary effective to convey their point, while they oppose the same choice of wording in another conversation. Thus, my analysis reveals the contradictions that arise and the tensions between categories in flux as young artists reconcile their positions as Cuban filmmakers.

It is important to mention that my research took place primarily in Havana, and that the artists in my research are based in Havana (although not all are originally from this city). The emphasis on the city of Havana is in part due to limitations of the scope and time of the project and partially due to the city itself being a capital urban space and thus the home of the ICAIC, both national and international festivals, cinemas, close proximity to the International School of Film and Television of San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV) and the National Faculty of Audiovisual Communication at the Higher Arts Institute (la FAMCA), as well as many opportunities to interact with tourism industry points (bars, galleries, cafés, etc.). This reveals the importance of place and space in time and their socio-economic and political significance to the cultural community.
Revolutionary cineaste to Street Filmmaker: National narratives in Cuban filmmaking

In this section I focus on the study of Cuban film in both the context of post-revolution and the Special Period and into the early 2000s. At this point, I identify that my research contributes to the current discussions on the changing narrative of cultural production in Cuba and how this reshaping of national identity through global processes and the mobilization of transnational connections has manifested itself in the youngest generation of filmmakers (Stock 2009). Here, however brief, it is useful to mention what Burton identifies as a pre-revolutionary (early 20th century) Cuban context for film production. As Hollywood was experiencing the “monopolizing eye” of Edison’s Motion Picture Patents Company in the early years of the American movie industry, many independents came to Cuba to establish themselves (1997:125). The result was an industry run by foreign businesses, both American and Mexican. Burton’s research thus characterizes the initial time after the revolution as a point of, “explosive optimism and a great sense of release” (ibid.:132). The years leading up to and directly after the revolution in 1959 defined the revolutionary artist as one situated within the class struggle and as a participant rather than detached, passive observer (ibid.).

The ICAIC, was founded only three months after Fidel Castro, the leader of the communist party at the time, took power on January 1st 1959 (Chanan 2004:7). As Chanan indicates, ideology, economics and politics took on aesthetic forms within this new post-revolutionary context. López sums up the post-revolutionary Cuban aesthetic experience as, “the first Latin American nation where it was possible to construct a new cinematic culture on a national scale by reorganizing all aspects of the cinematic experience” (1997:136). The ICAIC played a role in the ideological dispute through which new cultural politics were defined. Accordingly, films could not be used as economic productivity as they were purely regarded as art. They could therefore not be “reduced either to purely didactic functions or to

---

propaganda” (ibid.:137). The aim was to undermine the powers of commercial entertainment cinema and to create a more critical viewer (Chanan 2004:27).

Language of resistance in the earlier accounts by academics of Cuban cinema after the revolution suggests a movement across Latin America. López speaks to the New Latin America, also recognized as a pan-Latin American movement, dedicated to the people of the continent and their struggles for cultural, political, and economic autonomy (1997:135). A prominent Cuban filmmaker, scholar and former head of the ICAIC, Julio García Espinosa, wrote For an Imperfect Cinema (Por un Cine imperfecto) in 1967, which became a widely regarded text during this transitional time. By coining the term Cine Imperfecto he reflected on the practices of the revolution and guided the ICAIC’s mandate. It is here where the narrative of revolutionary cinema forms from within a Cuban context. Espinosa urges the cineaste to commit to the revolutionary struggle by acknowledging the audience’s active role in the transformation of the spaces they occupy. He states that, “Art cannot exercise its attraction without the cooperation of the subject” (1969:75). He involves the subject or audience into the filmmaking process, placing emphasis on the process rather than the perfect finished product. Espinosa states that, “Art has always been a universal necessity; what it has not been is an option for all under equal conditions” (ibid.:75) This is the site of a new theorization of popular cinema, one addressed by many scholars of that time. Tomas Gutierrez Alea, in his article The Viewer’s Dialectic, also wrote his understanding of popular cinema in the socialist context. “Finding ourselves in the midst of a revolution”, he argued, “and at this particular stage of building socialism, we should be able to establish the premises of a cinema which would be genuinely and integrally revolutionary, active, mobilizing, stimulating, and of course – popular” (1988:111). The term ‘popular’ is, therefore, defined in this situation as a ‘people’s film’.

Amaya points to the historical discourse of freedom in a post-revolutionary Cuba. Castro was not concerned with freedom in the interest of the self. As Amaya notes, “Castro argued that creative freedom was ahistorical and had to be subsumed to the security needs of the revolution” (2010:21). Amaya argues that Castro’s tactics were not unique to the Cuban context, but rather apparent among the work of many
socialist thinkers (ibid.:33). In the aims to construct ideas of citizenship, Castro used culture as, “a hegemonic way of structuring taste, objects, and institutions” (Bourdieu 1993, 29-73; Bourdieu 1987, 201-5 qtd. Amaya 2010:33).

Burton addresses the emphasis on documentary film motivated by economic and ideological factors. What was considered necessary for the production of a fiction film, such as big budgets, elaborate scripts, costuming, large studio sets, etc., was then considered non-essential. She notes that, “in a society which subscribes to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, it is believed fitting that creative activity be based on the confrontation with material reality” (1997:126). The first signs of “street-filmmaking”, later redefined contextually by Stock, arose as Burton describes the impulse to document the, “euphoria of the rebel victory and popular response to the resulting social transformations brought aspiring filmmakers out into the streets” (ibid.:126). She argues that, above all, artists had conceived filmmaking a vehicle for personal expression (ibid.).

Malitsky expands on the importance of documentary as an ideological tool, stimulating a population through images of a rising communist nation. Malitsky suggests a comparison between Cuban and Soviet cinema in the early years each country’s revolution (2013:4). Both groups supported political and aesthetic experimentation in filmmaking that led to the hopes of developing new men and women of the revolution (ibid.). Malitsky analyzes state-sponsored newsreels and documentaries of the post-1917 Soviet and post-1959 Cuban revolutionary contexts. He argues that both nations carved spaces for national and international consciousness alongside particular local identities to counter imported “false images” of fiction films and to address specific the needs of the nation state (2013:13). His comparison between Cuba and the Soviet Union also speaks to cultural production that occurred in other countries of the Eastern bloc, such as East Germany.

Chanan identifies in the mid 1970s a “challenge” in making film that is entertaining (2004:332). Cubans, he says because of the isolation forced upon them, were receiving purely fictional images from abroad (ibid.). Cuban filmmakers were consequently confronted with a battle between two kinds of
image, or two types of cinema, documentary and fiction, which, “appeared fundamentally like a struggle between authenticity and falsehood” (ibid.:333-334). The question of the “power of the narrative film” preoccupied Cuban filmmakers because of what Chanan indicates as a continuous strong response to classical Hollywood cinema (ibid.:345). The documentary filmmaker Sara Gómez attempted both documentary style and narrative style in her last work, *De cierta manera*, by addressing what Chanan calls the, “particular experience of the Cuban Revolution” (ibid.). It is with this film, and its various critiques, that Chanan illustrates this inclination towards narrative practice. It is clear the tactical attempts to engage Cuban audiences in new ways came about early on in Cuban film after the revolution. However, underlining discourses, as Chanan indicates, were still rooted in the narrative of Espinosa’s *Third Cinema*.

In Cristina Venegas’ article *Filmmaking with Foreigners* she acknowledges that state support for the ICAIC insulated Cuban filmmakers up until the 1980s from the concern of market driven industries (2009:38). The sense of autonomy that existed in this structure was in the form of three groups each led by a prominent filmmaker of that time. The state allocated the funding, but left the groups to workshop the projects, which, “fostered creative renewal through an intimate artistic culture, mentorship, and professional partnership…without subverting revolutionary values” (ibid.). Venegas argues that this ‘safety net’ allowed the ICAIC to further establish an international reputation (ibid.). Notably, the ICAIC established the Havana Latin American Film Festival in 1979, now titled on their website as the International Film Festival of New Latin American Cinema or “Havana Film Festival”. However, this state-structured film environment fell apart at the start of the 1990s or what is known as Cuba’s Special Period. The Special Period began as a result of the break up of the Soviet Union and marked a period of severe crisis affecting all aspects of Cuban life (Stock 2009:1). It is crucial to note that in spite of what occurred in the Special Period, post-revolutionary Cuba was not isolated. After 1959, the country was an ally to other socialist, non-aligned Latin American and European nations. Today many budding filmmakers and those approaching the height of their careers were either born into or came of age during
the Special Period. This period therefore shapes their understanding of Cuba’s position on the international stage.

The ICAIC experienced fundamental changes, which would alter their relationships with Cuban filmmakers during the Special Period. Co-productions with (mostly) European and Latin American countries became an asset to the industry (Venegas 2009:40). The filmmakers themselves began to further explore alternative methods of production during tight economic circumstances. This marked a departure from earlier social pressures and revolutionary ideologies in the aims of exploring new narratives that separate the state and the self (Venegas 2009; Hernandez-Reguant 2009). Films reflected shared feelings of isolation among the Cuban population due to strict international policies, the continuing Embargo and restricted travel regulations. Fernando Perez’s Madagascar, for instance, appeared in multiple academic discussions surrounding the Special Period, as it explores these new narratives. Stock notes the scene in which the main character Larita stands with her arms outstretched facing the sea. Larita, “seeks to embrace the unknown, to simultaneously be “here” and “elsewhere” (2009:3). Similarly, she does the same action on top of a building in another sequence, joined now by others in the same stance throughout the city, representing a “joint invocation of the unknown” (ibid.). Stock makes the connection between these bodies and television antennae to illustrate the feeling of disconnection in, what was about to become, a highly digitized and connected outside world.

As social and political landscapes began to shift drastically, the state would have to incorporate new global connections into their socio-political agenda. As Hernandez-Reguant indicates, “tensions that ensued in the clash between old socialist ethics and capitalist practices set the stage for a decisive shift in signifying practices of authorship” (Hernandez-Reguant 2009:2-3). Practices of digital media and a growing elite community due to external professional relationships would be mediated by state intervention and re-worked into the national discourse (ibid.).

Elite communities founded in new partnerships, as defined by Venegas, were the alternative the support structures for filmmakers from previous state backing (2009:41). They were the professional
relationships that filmmakers were dependent on in order to continue to make film (ibid.). This led to script changes or the need to include an actor from the co-producing country (ibid.:40). These partnerships were harder for the state to control, as the ICAIC too was relying on co-productions. Digital media and technology, however, became a part of official discourse in the mid1990s with the advent of the Internet (ibid.:44). The Festival de Cine Pobre or Low-budget Film Festival was created to incorporate both the accessible and cost-effective nature of new technology while aligning itself with the notion of an Imperfect Cinema. The festival encourages a departure from the elitist model, supporting the belief that with little money one can produce art (ibid.:46). Venegas states, “the festival gave a thematic nod to the past while incorporating the present in order to foster a critical and creative engagement with new conditions of globalization” (ibid.:48). As she then articulates, “in Cuba, digital media technology is officially cast as an instrument of the state in the pursuit of public benefit, encouraging personal expertise and use for the common good” (2010:69). She makes it clear that the state recognizes processes of globalization emerging in Cuban context as a potential avenue of reinstating revolutionary values.

Although digital media was incorporated into the state’s national agenda to promote the fight for Cuban culture, increased politicization of culture in the late 1990s produced underground networks of technology and alternative spaces for film practice. Venegas argues that the media-scape of Cuba is shifting out of a necessity driven by politics and a form of entrepreneurship, known as cuentapropismo (self-employment), where Cuban cinema must navigate its own complexities for its survival out of the Special Period (2010:49). This presents a binary, which Hernandez-Reguant identifies as, “to go global or to defend identity” (2009:72). These ‘alternative’ or ‘underground’ spaces as they are termed by Venegas, Hernandez-Reguwart and Stock, are important to highlight as having mobilizing capacities. Historically, the ICAIC has been criticized for being a predominantly male centered institution with little gender or racial diversity among its most accredited filmmakers. The possibilities associated with the shifting landscapes also meant possibilities for marginalized individuals to occupy new spaces in film production
in Cuba, or at least spaces for a dialogue to occur. Filmmakers like Gloria Rolando established their own production companies during this time (Venegas 2009:46).

EICTV has been studied as a historical space of creation (Lord and Zarza 2014). Lord and Zarza look at the EICTV as an, “example of how spaces – made by collective human agency in the forms of institutions, social action, and political mobilization – contribute to the formation of identity” (ibid.:201). The school was established in 1986 as “The School of Three Worlds” and was later changed to “The School of All Worlds” (ibid.). The school supports transnational practices within its international framework (ibid.:200). They recognize that the “patriarchal nationalism” of the revolution, which had spoken to women’s equality and autonomy in Cuba, had instead limited access to meaningful roles within cultural production (ibid.:205). EICTV, they argue, is a space that allows for “possibilities and motilities” (ibid.) for female filmmakers.

Another space that provides young filmmakers with a place to screen their work annually is the Muestra National de Nuevos or Muestra Joven. Stock’s investigation into the work of Street Filmmakers looks at the Muestra Joven as a place where, “cultural workers can engage in polemics and intervene in politics” (2009:239). She further argues that these artists seek to place themselves within the framework of cultural production as a generation that is not directly linked to revolutionary ideals (ibid.:238). Street Filmmakers are ready to use these spaces to voice opinions and push for change. The festival, as a branch of the ICAIC, has its office in ICAIC headquarters and therefore encourages relationships between the state and young filmmakers with their focus on new and young cultural producers under the age of thirty-five (ibid.:240).

Occasionally, during my discussions with young filmmakers, they would refer to the Muestra Joven as though it were separate from the ICAIC. It is important to note, however, that the Muestra Joven was created by the ICAIC to maintain and build ties with the young filmmaking community in Cuba. It has done so by providing support, though not always financial, to young artists and continues to employ filmmakers each year to encourage participation in and growth for the festival. Though I did not formally
interview ICAIC employees working in the Muestra Joven office, young filmmakers spoke highly of the chief festival staff. The director of the Muestra Joven, Marisol Rodríguez, works year-round with festival participants and is considered a reliable and supportive member of the ICAIC for young filmmakers. Moreover, she provides free Internet access during the festival where young filmmakers can send their films to international festivals and begin to promote their work. Industry professionals as well as Street Filmmakers who participated in the Muestra Joven, began to market Cuban films, further contributing to the rapid changes in the island’s audiovisual landscape (ibid.:261).

Humphreys cautions against the potential narratives implied when discussing the new market value of Cuban films. She argues that casting intellectual and cultural production on the island within a dichotomy of either complicit with the regime or resistant to socialism and the revolution ignores the ambivalence that many Cuban intellectuals continue to feel towards the revolution (2012:7). Her findings address a simultaneous attachment to the revolution as well as the criticism from Cuban intellectuals on how socialism has been instated (ibid.:6). Both Humphreys and Stock identify the importance of understanding these artists as political actors who are able to negotiate their identity in relation to their positions as cultural producers.

Goldberg has recently addressed the need for a change in the legal structure for independent cultural production. Recently, both emerging and established filmmakers have come forward to discuss the direction of a national film industry as it has begun to transition towards an uncertain future (2014:61). A group known as the Assembly of Filmmakers has formed in the past three years to, “demand the creation of new legal structures for independent film production on the island” (ibid.). However, production continues regardless of changes in legislation. *La Ley de Cine* (the film law) is considered a first step towards a more structured national industry.

The current law (Ley 169 of March 20th, 1959) remains as it was created in 1959 after the founding of the ICAIC. In a 2011 report on existing financial mechanisms for audio-visual content in Latin America, Lilianne Rodríguez, the legal advisor for the Production house of the ICAIC, indicates
that the ICAIC considers audio-visual production in three separate blocs: those productions made by the ICAIC, those for television, and autonomous productions (111). The term autonomous in this instance is understood as, “…productions realized by persons working individually or in small creative collectives” (ibid.). This implies the state’s awareness of separate existing approaches. However, the ICAIC maintains control as the dominant institution in the production of Cuban film. Without a legislation that includes, represents, and protects independents, how do contemporary independent artists fit into the narrative of a national cinema? Young filmmakers coming of age within these nuances are situated among multiple cultural and historical narratives.

**Chapter Outline**

In addressing a brief history of several recent approaches to the study of Cuban film, it is with my attention to material, social and political factors and their alignment with historical moments in Cuba that I tease out current narratives concerning cultural production. Subsequently, this paper is separated into five chapters following this introduction. In Chapter Two I present my conceptual framework, for this project. The purpose of the chapter is to draw upon theoretical discussions from both a poststructuralist and postcolonial approach and engage with ongoing debates on the subject of institutional power and cultural identity. Where these two themes intersect I address theoretical gaps in my poststructuralist approach. I deviate from my Foucauldian analysis to examine cultural identity, as it is addressed in postcolonial terms. Furthermore, I employ thesis of globalization to address neoliberal influences on cultural production. I therefore adopt an interdisciplinary critical cultural approach to my research analysis. I then explain my methodological approach to this paper as well as the making of a short documentary film *Por Amor al Arte*. I detail the mixed-methods approach of my critical ethnographic methodological framework as well as the collaborative, two-way learning experience fostered by incorporating documentary practice into my framework.
Chapter Three is an analysis of the filmmaking processes as articulated by those I interviewed for this project. Using these interviews in conjunction with my observations, I contextualize the production processes of young filmmakers within an emergent set of power relations. First, I reposition the concept of the ‘independent filmmaker’ within a contemporary historical context. Secondly, I examine the current debates surrounding a new film law, the importance of the Muestra Joven festival, educational opportunities and relationships to foreign funding. Each of these examples reveals a new set of social, political and material power dynamics worthy of critical investigation. This allows me to continue my analysis by looking specifically at the perspectives of five young independent filmmakers.

In the fourth chapter I conduct an image analysis, using five films produced by five different directors as case studies. These are the directors and films featured in my short documentary, Por Amor al Arte. It is here I discuss how their images represent and are informed by their interpretations of everyday life, identify and futurity. I also indicate why I chose specific images and individuals for the documentary, exploring in-depth how their opinions on the changing cultural landscape, as emerging, independent filmmakers, speak to one another and differ from one another. Where these different opinions concerning Cuban film intersect, I engage with concept of the ‘global art-house aesthetic (Favlicov 2010, 2013) in order to deconstruct Eurocentric understandings of contemporary Cuban film.

My concluding chapter revisits the concept of working independently in a time where audiovisual production in Cuba is developing faster than the country’s centralized structure. Through my observations it is clear that cultural production has become part of the narrative informed by a relaxation of travel regulations, relations with foreign countries, a growth in international popularity through festival distribution, and an emphasis on producing different kinds of films that engage audiences while informing them. However, restrictions imposed on Internet use and an outmoded state structure of cultural production creates a unique reality on the island, while also hindering emergent filmmakers’ exposure and understanding of other possibilities for future film production and distribution opportunities.
Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The context outlined above serves as a backdrop in which to anchor the following theoretical framework in its historical setting. I employ an interdisciplinary approach grounded in the politics of cultural production. This approach is predicated in the understanding that Cultural Studies is, “concerned with describing and intervening in the ways cultural practices are produced within, inserted into, and operate in the everyday life of human beings and social formations, so as to reproduce, struggle against, and perhaps transform the existing structures of power” (Grossberg 2010:7-8). The interdisciplinary nature of Cultural Studies thus allows me to analyze filmmaking as mediation in the process of producing meaning. I ask: How do political, social and economic forces govern cultural production? And how does cultural production help to articulate the historical power relations existing in contemporary Cuba? To answer these questions, I draw on critical cultural modes of analysis to understand how cultural producers, their products and the systems within which they practice work to inform the desire to continue filmmaking in Cuba. I also explore how narratives of cultural production change for emerging artists working in an increasingly neoliberal system influenced by globalization and western-centric audiovisual modes of production. I therefore historicize cultural production in a specific contextual moment. Furthermore, I understand the term independent to imply a sense of agency, which indicates their active roles as social actors and influences their creative decisions.
My main concerns, in the following chapter, stem from the question: How do certain forms of institutional power (formal and informal) inform (and continue to inform) people’s desire to make film? As previously indicated, the Special Period saw a rise of cuentapropismo, which became a practice among small collectives working away from the ICAIC. The Street Filmmakers in Stock’s investigations are fully engaged in independent productions working under informal casa productoras (production houses). They employ other independent filmmakers, rent equipment from one another and draw funding from international sources, indicating a network running mostly separate from that of the state. Legally, casa productoras are not state approved. If possible, these groups will register their companies in another country to legitimize their practice outside Cuba. In this sense, the term independent is attributed to an internal social group, “capable of identifying common interest and mobilizing to change their situation”. These collectives have “their own internal class, ethic and gender fractures” (Li 2007:26). I am also motivated by the ways in which agency plays a role in the process of identity production. A postcolonial approach allows me to situate the construction of identity within the historical context of globalization. This creates a heterogeneity that is to be negotiated within the existing resistance to “Other” forms of cultural transactions, such as a resistance to Hollywood (which has also occurred in the past). Resistance to the Other, it is argued, has become increasingly challenging in the era of globalization. One can continue the process of cultural production from the point of physical rootedness in the Cuba, while exercising a new sense of the artist-self as both independent and mobile in the global context.

It is here I situate these processes within a history of Eurocentric thinking. I indicate that at this moment while Cuban filmmakers are engaging in more than just a Cuban setting through either international travel to festivals, international travel in general, co-productions and exterior
financial bursaries, there are unequal power relations at play informing the production process and content and thus the producer themselves becomes located within these power struggles.

**Theoretical Approach**

The production of the ‘cultural’ is rooted in the process of meaning making. Poststructuralism, “rejects the underlying stable structure which founds meaning through fixed binaries. Meaning is unstable, always differed and in process. Meaning cannot be confined to single words, sentences or particular texts, but is the outcome of relationships between texts that is, intertextuality” (Barker 2000:18). In other words, how one constructs meaning through the creation of film for example is not necessarily in resistance (against) or a process of categorization (both forming binaries) but rather understood as a negotiation within which power – material and discursive – effects this negotiation. My framework engages with both poststructural and postcolonial perspectives. I draw primarily from the work of Michel Foucault in my analysis of power and discourse in cultural production.

Foucault’s understanding of power in relation to subject has also been criticized as having excluded a subject’s agency within his framework. A subject’s ability to identify a certain way or to practice according to this identifier or “label” creates social groups sharing this common identifying factor (themselves or attributing it to their work) with its own internal “structure” (Li 2007:25). To address this gap I engage with Hall’s notion of cinematic representation to address an anti-essentialist position on cultural identity and in order to create an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of both cultural production and cultural producers, which I see as inextricably linked to one another. Here, I introduce Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) notion of the five ‘scapes’, to understand cultural production as it pertains to his theory on
globalization, as I seek to understand the material and discursive transformations taking place. As an extension of Appadurai’s thinking, I employ Néstor García Canclini’s thinking on artists working within a globalized, multicultural industry. This allows me to analyze the impact distribution, festivals, and international critics have on cultural production. Canclini argues that these forces prefer to keep Latin American artists within the borders of exotic culture and otherness (Canclini 2002:186) The above framework allows me to deconstruct narratives in relation to Cuban cultural production and the young, independent filmmaker individual as they fit into the larger societal structure. Addressing theoretical gaps the approaches above enables me to interrogate dichotomies and historicize cultural producers and their work.

Foucault argues that power is something performed. Sara Mills (2003) points out that, “Power should be seen as a verb rather than a noun, something that does something, rather than something which is or which can be held onto” (ibid.:35). From Foucault’s work Power/Knowledge he expands on this notion, allowing us to visualize power in relation to the individual. He argues, “Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization . . . Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application” (Foucault 1980: 98). Power is seen here as a system of relations spread throughout the society, rather than simply as a set of relations between oppressed and the oppressor (Mills 2003:35). This adheres to the deconstruction of opposing binaries as a way of conceptualizing power. It is performed rather than achieved or held by the state. Relations of power are among the most-hidden meaning and the task is to locate forms of power and the ways in which they are negotiated with and by individuals or other agencies (ibid.:36). These negotiations can be understood through Foucault’s concept of ‘discursive knowledge’.
For Foucault (1972), ‘discourse’ concerns both language and practice and refers to the regulated production of knowledge through language, which gives meaning to both material objects and social practices. He understands discourse as language’s ability to constructs, defines and produces knowledge in comprehensible ways while at the same time rendering other ways of reasoning incomprehensible (Barker 2000:20). In certain social and cultural settings, discourse determines what is appropriate to say and where, as well as who can say it (ibid.:79). Addressing discourse involves a historical investigation of power and the production of subjects through that power (ibid.:20). Power is not a centralized force but dispersed through all levels of a social formation (ibid.). Additionally, power is productive of social relations and identities (ibid). For Foucault, power brings subjects into being (1972:80). The mutual relationship established between power and knowledge is so that knowledge is indivisible from regimes of power (Barker 2000:80). Discursive knowledge is formed within the practices of power as a result of the development and creation of new techniques or power.

Tania Li intersects Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony with Foucault’s understanding of power in order to address the “multiplicity” of power. As she states, “powers that are multiple cannot be totalizing and seamless…The multiplicity of power, the many ways that practices position people, the various modes “playing across one another” produce gaps and contradictions. Subjects formed in the matrices…encounter inconsistencies that provide grist for critical insights” (2007:25). When powers are experienced as diffuse, or indeed not experienced as powers at all, they can become the subject of critical consciousness, meaning the ability to question their social and historical situation. Exposing how power works, unsettling truths so they could be scrutinized and contested was as central to the political agenda of Foucault as it was for Gramsci (ibid.). Although Foucault does not elaborate on how these insights might become
collective, Li makes the connection that “to the extent that practices of government form groups rather than isolated individuals, critical insight is potentially shared” (ibid.:26).

Foucault understands subjects to be formed by practices of which they might be unaware, and to which their consent is neither given nor withheld (Li 2007:25). Power works through mundane and routine tasks (ibid.:25). Here, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony builds on Foucault’s observation, as Gramsci’s hegemony is not used to describe a fixed condition, but rather as a way of talking about “how power is lived in particular times and places”, as an amalgam of coercion and consent (ibid.:24-25). Li argues that both work together to argue that certain practices reveal a visible power by triggering conscious reactions described in terms of “resistance, accommodation, or consent” while other forms of power are distributed, as are people’s engagements with them (ibid.:25). The combination of approaches alerts us to “the constellations of power in particular times and places, and the overdetermined messy situations in which creativity arises” (ibid.:26).

The materiality of power at a local level can be understood as the relationship between contested sites of identification and power (for example gender and power), not assuming that power is simply located in institutions (Mills 2003:36). Judith Butler (1993), for example, sees gender identity as something one performs in a particular context rather than as something someone possesses. It is here, in the context of identity construction, where I deviate from Foucault’s understanding that subjects are formed by practices of power of which they might be unaware.

Drawing on Foucault’s notion, Hall investigates identities as, “points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (Hall 2002 qtd. Barker 2000:6). Building on this anti-essentialist conceptualization of identity I draw on Hall’s
(1996) representation to understand identity as “a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside of representation” (210). Foucault sees identity as a way of exerting power over people keeping them within a set of fixed boundaries, a process that may have historically been the case in post-Revolution Cuba. This does not account for agency, or as Hall would understand this debate, it does not provide an understanding as to how and why certain discourses are adopted by some subjects and not by others (1996:211).

Recognizing the “emotional investments by which subjects are attached to discourse” (Barker 2000:179) allows me to engage in debates surrounding agency, which I will return to shortly.

I examine identity as ‘production’ rather than alluding to cultural identity as a discursive practice in the creation and maintenance of power over a population. Cultural identity is organized around points of difference as well as similarity (Barker 2000:176). This process of ‘becoming’ reflects an identity that is constantly being produced and never complete. (Hall 1996:210). In the Cuban context this ties into the process of film as an avenue for identity production and can be used to address how, historically, film production and viewing is an ideological tool for national agenda development. Hall first notes that, “…our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as “one people”, with stable unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history” (ibid.:211). This conception of cultural or national identity played a critical role in the postcolonial struggle and building of a revolutionary ideology (ibid.). However, Hall identifies a second avenue for textual images as a resource of cultural identity production. In this second sense, cultural identity is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place time and history and culture. Consequently,
Cultural identities come from somewhere and have histories. As such, and as it is historical, it undergoes constant transformation (ibid.:212). Cultural identity in this sense is subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power (ibid). As Hall understands, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past and the present (ibid.:213). Cinema here is not viewed as a “second order mirror held up to reflect what already exists” but as a form of, which one is able to construct new kinds of subjects, to enable the filmmaker to those points of identification, those positionalities Hall calls, “a cultural identity” (ibid.:221). The ability to produce one’s identity through the negotiation of the histories of discourse and culture therefore implies a sense of agency.

Cultural arrangements are not confined to geographical boundaries, or that of the nation-states. Rather, they are affected by globalizing forces in the form of economic, ideological, technological and media flows, which breakdown linear structures of understanding (Appadurai 1990). I use Appadurai’s concept of mediascapes, technoscapes, and ideoscapes specifically, to assess the nature of digital media’s impact on independent filmmakers’ ability to create. I also use this argument to build on the point that filmmakers exercise agency in contemporary Cuban film production.

Appadurai’s conceptual framework applies his five *scapes* in order to explain the flow of information in the age of globalization. While acknowledging that there have long been translocal interactions, today these interactions happen more intensely (Appadurai 1990:27). Historically, he identifies cultural transactions between social groups in the past as having generally been restricted, sometimes geographically and other times by an active resistance to the ‘Other’. The inclusion of digital media in today’s world, however, creates communities with “no sense of place” (ibid.:29). This suggests what Appadurai calls rootlessness, either a physiological distance
between individuals and groups or an extreme electronic proximity. Both are identified as central problems of cultural processes today (ibid.). Each of Appadurai’s scapes addresses the speed and capacity at which information in the form of ethnoscapes, technologies, finances, ideologies and forms of media travel across previously impervious boundaries in today’s world (ibid.:34). Mediascapes in particular, “provide (especially in their television and film forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed” (1990:35). Though Appadurai’s scapes are inextricably linked, the use of mediascapes and technoscapes allows us to understand how experimentation with different forms of genre and aesthetic quality emerges in contemporary Cuban productions.

Ideoscapes are the models representing what one might call Western modernity or, “concepts of democracy, liberty, wellbeing and human rights, which transcend the definitions of particular identities” (Canclini 2002:180). Canclini builds on Appadurai in his article “Remaking Passports”. Canclini is concerned with the polemic that exists for the artist working in the globalized context of a multicultural landscape, one historically othered in European contexts (2002:181). He argues that the deterritorialisation of art is only partially a product of the market (ibid.:184). Building on both Hall and Appadurai, he understands identity as “constituted not only in relation to unique territories, but in the multicultural intersection of object’s messages and people coming from diverse directions… One is amazed at the preoccupation with centering the artistic discourse from national niches” (ibid.). He reveals the unequal power relations in the context of reformulating visual thinking by identifying three tendencies in the “artistic/camp context”. Firstly, that the public, “continue to demand from art that it is representative of a pre-nationalized globalized identity”, while secondly, “the artist who relativizes national traditions
has difficulty being accommodated by state promotion which expects work from its creators that have the capacity to show to the metropolis the splendor of many centuries of national history” (ibid.:186). Lastly, Canclini highlights the fact that Latin American artists who work within a global and multicultural context and who interact with the, “strategy of museums, galleries and critics of the metropolis”, encounter those same voices who, “prefer to keep them as representatives of exotic cultures, of ethnic alterity and Latin otherness, that is, in the margins” (ibid). Both a poststructural and postcolonial approach heightens critical awareness to the changes in socio-political and economic outlooks in a more globalized contemporary Cuban context.

**Methodology and Methods**

Employing a critical ethnographic approach with an emphasis on a collaborative methodology through documentary filmmaking, the qualitative methods used in the design of this project includes: the making of a short documentary film, fifteen in-depth semi-structured interviews, archive consultation and participant observation. My research took place on two separate occasions in Cuba, totaling five months of fieldwork. This methodological approach aims to uncover how young Cuban filmmakers interpret the significant material and social constraints (gender, race, class) while working as self-identified independents and how they wish to continue to navigate and develop their creative process in Cuba. Furthermore, their objective is to discover stories and images that communicate aspects of contemporary daily life, identity and futurity with the intentions to continue to make films in Cuba. My approach to critical ethnography incorporates the consideration that the filmmakers themselves hold the most knowledge and the most understanding of their craft. Their position in relation to myself as a researcher is not based in a socio-economic situation, but based in knowledge or education and
necessarily power, making my participants ‘power holders’ (Desai and Potter 2006:4). In addition, the research method of filmmaking provides a potential platform to allow their voices to be heard while also providing an analysis from my position and perspective. In this sense: I embody both filmmaker and anthropologist in my methodological approach.

Out of the fifteen interviews, eleven were with young filmmakers between the ages of 22-30 years of age and who have directed both short and feature-length films, while the five filmmakers included in the documentary are between the age of 22 and 28 and currently possess at least one short film as young, independent directors. I also spoke with four independents currently working as producers, directors, teachers or mentors both within the Cuban film community and internationally. Their opinions, as ‘established’ filmmakers, on the transitions taking place in Cuban cinema right now provided valuable insight in conjunction with the conversations with more established filmmakers. Similarly, the conversations I had with industry professionals such as film critics, festival workers and professors at the EICTV and FAMCA added to the dynamic discussion on the future filmmaking generation.

I began with the first round of interviews in a semi-structured, open-ended format that allowed the participants to further engage with the questions being asked and allowed me to probe for more in-depth responses. DeWalt and DeWalt further argue that, “If the goal is to understand the way that participants view a phenomenon, then it is important to allow the flow of conversation to reflect those aspects that are salient to the informants” (2011:139). Therefore, my second round of interviews considered both my initial research questions coupled with revisions informed by the participants’ indications of what they felt they needed to address in the interview, ultimately fostering a two-way learning experience with participants.
I consulted the films made by those participating in the project both through the ICAIC at the office of the Muestra Joven, the EICTV, and by way of USB drive. Analyzing the filmmakers’ work allowed me to relate our conversations, their personal histories and draw trends and analytic conclusions between the two. Scholars such as Gillian Rose (2001), Sarah Pink (2009), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2002) among others have identified the study of visual culture as a useful way to understand contemporary societies (Rose 2001:6). ‘Visual Culture’, according to Karen Cham, is the understanding of art as a social practice, conditioned by social, economic and ideological factors (2009:17). As she states, it is:

…to be studied within a broader anthropological notion of culture, where all forms of representation are understood as a structure and process of ideology… It is now conventionally where art, design and media artifacts are seen as part of a larger cultural history and the whole of cultural production and consumption is subsumed into particular instances of the dialogic sign systems of society (ibid.).

The way in which the visual becomes important to cultural production is dependent upon its position within a specific culture or intersection of cultures. Rose uses Donna Haraway’s term ‘Ocularcentrism’ to define the contemporary, unregulated visual gluttony in modern culture. She argues it creates hierarchies of class, race and gender while itself claiming not to be a part of the hierarchy (Rose 2001:9). The task is then to differentiate the social effects of these multiple visions by recognizing that there are many ways of seeing the world (ibid.).

The majority of these discussions are positioned in Western history. Shohat and Stam understand the visual as one of the many strategic points of entry into the historical moment of the visual, while also understanding the implications of the term itself. ‘Visual’ is a term that is linked to certain ideology. It therefore affects the ways in which its methodology is also applied in cultural practice. The emphasis should not be on its primary points of origin (Shohat and Stam
2002:56), but rather in understanding the implications of how it is put into practice in cultural production. Shohat and Stam have provided a way of re-envisioning the global politics of visual culture (ibid.:57) that is imperative to my approach in the analyzing of these films. Both institutions I visited necessarily curate the materials I view. The selections that participants provided also place value on certain works over others; emphasizing the relatively narrow number of films from young filmmakers I was able to view.

My participation in the field on set, through attending several festivals, and participating in various filmmaking exercises allowed me to develop a certain level of membership within the filmmaking community. Here, participant observation allowed me to ask better questions, reduce error and close the gap in accessibility of information (Bernard 2006:80). Building a rapport with members of the community was a crucial element to achieving this level of participation. Snowball sampling through the contacts I made early on in this investigation both in Toronto and in the first few weeks in the city of Havana I was able to meet young cineastes by way of introduction through well-known members of the community. My connections linked me to a particular class of people involved in filmmaking, exposing a level of privilege, and shaped also by the spaces in which we interacted, for example, cafes, galleries, studios, bars, and festivals. These are also privileged places based in economic and social status within the community. In this way they can be redefined and function as non-static, continuous processes or events (Pink 2009:97). Although I will speak to this point later in my analysis, it begins to reveal my position as researcher within this context.

I am not Cuban. I did not grow up in the same historical context as the filmmakers I interviewed. My exposure to Cuban culture has been, necessarily, curtailed by time, budget, and the vicissitudes of everyday life. I have learned to speak and understand idiomatic Cuban Spanish
in the field and therefore relied on a significant level of patience from the participants. With my privilege as a Canadian, female, white, middle-class, post-secondary educated student I sought to consistantly engage in self-reflection in attempts to understand my positionality within the context of my research and in relation to those I worked with. My age and status as a student-filmmaker were qualities that my participants found relatable, and I was often invited to events in the community and included in relevant discussions while spending time with participants. I shared personal information such as past films or spoke about my life in Canada. I appreciated that this mutual sharing of each other’s ‘worlds’ (Apentiik and Parpart 2006:36) allowed for both parties to develop a sense of confidence and trust in one another. I honored this trust through my return trip and continued contact through email and social media.

Through recognizing my positionality it is clear that the nature of this research is inherently subjective. Clifford Geertz (1973) suggests that all ethnography is interpretation and that, “anthropological data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (qtd. Behar 1996:5). Ruth Behar then notes that one’s engagement with an experience in the field and the interpretation of the observed event will have consequence for the observed (1996:6). The anxieties I felt returning from Cuba and being able to ‘properly’ discuss the research I did holds true to what Behar recognizes as a practical problem of the methods used in ethnographic research. How then, she asks, “do you write subjectively into ethnography in such a way that you continue to call what you are doing ethnography?” (ibid.:7).

Paying attention to Behar’s question, I used the camera as a method of exploring, “a particular relationship formed by a particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place” (ibid.:5). Documentary film practice and ethnography have historically informed one another’s methodologies (Nichols 1991; Barbash and Taylor 1997; Ruby 2000;
Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009). Approaching this project through filmmaking acknowledges the inextricable link between the film being made and the participants in the frame (Barbash and Taylor 1997:70). This necessarily involves a reflexive practice both on the part of the filmmaker and the subjects in the film. Nichols argues that vital to critical ethnography filmmaking is the “development of a more self-conscious ethnographic cinema that acknowledges the conditions of its own making” (1991 qtd. Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009:114).

I acknowledged these limitations in the filming and editing processes. The film will be screened after the completion of my degree and uploaded for online viewing. Because it will be made available to the public, I was careful to prepare questions with participants ahead of time to make sure they were comfortable answering. Balancing, “the public’s right to be informed with the individual’s right to privacy” (Ruby 2005:209) became an important step in the process of filming. During the production of the film I also chose to work with producers, camera operators, studios and film students within the Cuban film community. Their involvement facilitated access while shooting in certain locations and eased language barriers while ‘on set’ (Barbash and Taylor 1997:73). Editing additionally places emphasis on certain answers, and plays with the flow and structure of my conversations with these filmmakers. I cut the hours of footage into three coherent chapters to address key trends and themes in my findings. I also include my own voice in a narration throughout the film. This acknowledges my presence as a filmmaker and my “insider-outsider” position (Barbash and Taylor 1997:410) clarifying my relationship to the project as well as my personal conclusions from my investigations. The interviews, conducted in Spanish, have English subtitles on the screen translated by myself and with the help of Susu Salim Zaldivar, a Cuban producer, and Zaira Zarza. A certain level of “editorial discretion” was
exercised in attempts to communicate colloquial phrases from one language to the other (Barbash and Taylor 1997:422) for screenings held in both Canadian and Cuban contexts.

Through collaborative and critical ethnographic filmmaking I follow and build on Stock’s aspirations to humanize the artists. She reveals that there is a tendency in prior academic work to depersonalize Cuba and Cubans, which takes away any diversity for its citizens. Therefore, an important aim is to explore each individual’s experience as it relates to the larger networks they have created as artists. When selecting the five filmmakers for the documentary, I focused on those who worked as directors making fiction and non-fiction works. In many cases I happened to work with certain individuals due to technicalities such as availability, my abilities to get in touch with them during the time I was there and their willingness to participate on camera. Initially while deciding which filmmakers to contact I consulted the catalogs from the past five years of the Muestra Joven. Due to time constraints and geographical location I could only ask a relatively small number of filmmakers to participate. I also realize that my decision to work with directors for the documentary unveiled the realities of gender and racial minorities among the filmmaking community I had come to know. The spaces I worked in, principally in Vedado and with access to contacts through the Muestra Joven, furthermore contributed to these social dynamics.

Although the questions in the documentary do not directly address dynamics of race or gender I observed that white, male filmmakers were dominant within the community of young directors. The documentary does, however, follow one fiction and one documentary female filmmaker of colour in a manner that highlights the potential constraints and choices intertwined in the lives of young female filmmakers (Aune 2008:3). The five filmmakers in Por Amor al Arte mirror real dynamics of gender and racialization within the young filmmaking community in
Cuba. This observation, in relation to my experience, is a reflection of the arguments made by prominent scholars who have explored historical gender and racial power dynamics present within the ICAIC. Through their discussions of alumni female filmmakers of the EICTV, Lord and Zarza articulate new forms of citizenship created by these women in the age of globalization (2014:214). As cultural producers, women filmmakers from the EICTV challenge the dominant patriarchal structure produced within a revolutionary context. The female documentary director of colour with whom I worked was also a graduate of the EICTV. Similarly to Lord and Zarza’s findings, I recognize that her work shows a, “…translocal aesthetic that…is articulated through the production of onscreen spaces of intimacy and thresholds of belonging” (ibid.:200). Today there are both gender and race-related power imbalances within the different spaces occupied by young Cuban filmmakers. However, it is clear that in certain spaces, such as the EICTV, female filmmakers, and more specifically those of colour, rearticulate their positions as cultural producers and bring about a “generational and gendered consciousness” in the contemporary audiovisual context (ibid.).
Chapter 3

Data Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter I aim to build an understanding of a particular moment in the Cuban audiovisual landscape. Using my research from 2013-2015, I analyze the positioning of young Cuban filmmakers within social, political and economic conditions of this context. Through participant observation in the field and in-depth semi-structured and structured interviews with filmmakers I begin to examine how relationships intersect and overlap, each one admitting characteristics or impacts, which are constantly changing (Lynch 2011:20). My analysis is borrowed from Foucault’s understanding of power as, “the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization” (1990:92). Building upon Foucault’s notion, Li emphasizes that these relationships are not seamless (2007:25). There are breaks and inconsistencies where initiatives can form and question dominate forces. I call upon specific examples of this to illustrate the shifting impacts of both local and global power relations as well as how in specific instances where individuals or collectives mobilize and change their situation (ibid.:26).

In my analysis of young independent filmmakers’ relationships to the ICAIC, I look at current debates surrounding the concept of the independent filmmaker. I further examine how state legislation affects filmmakers’ relationships to this concept by looking at the proposition for a new film law. Furthermore, I critically examine the Muestra Joven Festival as a point of collaboration with young filmmakers between them and the ICAIC. Though the Muestra Joven
acts as a crucial space for young filmmakers, the annual event has constructed elite spaces within
the young filmmaking community, whereby only certain filmmakers have access or permission to
occupy specific zones at specific times throughout the week of the festival. Subsequently, my
focus shifts to different educational opportunities for filmmakers, with an emphasis on workshops
run separately from the EICTV and the FAMCA. A combination of learning now comes from
within schools as well as training “on the streets”. Workshops held on the streets help to reduce
the generational gaps between the older, more established filmmakers and those who are just
emerging either as students or self-taught artists. Workshops also facilitate knowledge exchange
between generations.

In order to finance their projects young filmmakers often receive support from
international grant programs. In particular, the Norwegian Embassy established a grant program
in the year 2014. I deconstruct the more recent role of the Norwegian Embassy on the island in
Cuba to address young filmmakers’ relationships to the possibilities of a more global existence
for their works. Here, I propose a critical look at how funding from external parties can hurt
artists, as they do not have legal standing as independent filmmakers in Cuba. These examples act
as important points of contact in young filmmakers’ relationships to multiple powers. I consider,
however, that as an ethnographic study, my analysis selects only a few key examples as case
studies. As Tania Li notes, “An ethnographic study is always selective”, in that it does not intend
to grasp all things at once (Li 2007:28). My aim in this selective process is to attend to the,
“particular histories, landscapes, memories, and embedded cultural ideas…to grasp how power is
lived, produced and contested” (ibid.). With these examples I argue that emerging initiatives
provide young filmmakers with the potential for a future of filmmaking in Cuba. Yet, with no
new legislation that gives independent filmmakers legal standing, young filmmakers are subjected
to new power dynamics. These initiatives must therefore be cautiously considered in order to position young filmmakers within sets of social, political and material power relations.

**Deconstructing ‘independent’**

In the following paragraphs I readdress the concept of the independent filmmaker and argue for its purpose as a *position*, which young filmmakers can occupy in this particular moment in history. From this position, they have the “capacity for agency” (Li 2007:228). They are not shaped purely by one relationship to power, but are positioned as an outcome of situated practices. Independent filmmaking is, therefore, an example of how power works positively to create new conditions (ibid.:192). However, when it comes to understanding the process of filmmaking outside the ICAIC many artists recognize the lingering discourse established in 1959 when the ICAIC was created. Those filmmakers I spoke too still understand the existing discourse as one rooted in the founding law of 1959. As one young director Angelo del Castillo described in his recount of that historical moment,

*In 1960 the television program “Lunes de Revolucion” (Revolution Mondays) aired, showing a short documentary that was called “PM”. This observational documentary showed workers at the Puerto de La Habana after their workday in celebration. This marked a pattern in Cuban culture and led to Fidel Castro’s famous speech “Words to the Intellectuals”, in which he draws attention to the fact that above all Cuban culture should be revolutionary, stating that “…Within the Revolution, everything, outside the Revolution, nothing”, thus prescribing to a particular cultural politic for our country* (April 29, 2014).

Foucault’s duo of power/knowledge reminds us that when the representation of culture is ruled in a regime of power, individuals internalize that knowledge (Foucault 1980 qtd. Hal11996:15).

Considering there has been no change in cultural legislation, the ICAIC, being a state-run
institute, still aligns its core values with those indicated in Castro’s Words to the Intellectuals. Although the current law in place maintains this political agenda, the strict model of “Within the Revolution, everything, outside the Revolution, nothing” was challenged when the state entered a dysfunctional period in Cuban history. Whereas pursuing cultural production out of self-interest may have been considered as counterrevolutionary in earlier decades after the revolution, independent production today is part of a more nuanced discussion than simply ‘within’ or ‘outside’ of the revolution. Foucault takes issue with opposing models such as the strict categories of ‘within/outside’ present in the Words to the Intellectuals. This dichotomy indicates that power is something one holds or uses against someone in a repressive manner (Taylor 2011:4). My intention is not to define young filmmakers as workers within or outside of the revolution, but rather to understand a quasi independence, which forms away from an institution that was built as a result of the revolutionary movement and that upholds the same principles from 1959.

Many academics and filmmakers in Cuba question the term independent as one that is suitable for identifying those who work away from the institution. A widely known film critic, Juan Antonio García Borrero, alternatively refers to the process as ‘cine sumergido’ (submerged filmmaking) (2015), while scholar Stock coined the term Street Filmmaker (2008) to identify what she witnessed in the early 2000s as the beginnings of production away from the ICAIC. Terms such as ‘underground’ (Reyes 2015) and ‘alternative’ (Duno-Gottberg and Horswell 2013) have also been used in the discussion. Although I did not set out with the intention to uncover the meaning of independent filmmaking, I discovered that identifying one’s process under a certain label is an important aspect for young filmmakers, as it helps them identify with a group of people.

---

3 For example, the Special Period of the 1990s saw an increase in production outside of the ICAIC. Stock further investigates filmmakers in the Special Period and into the early 2000s.
working under the same conditions. They have come of age with an understanding that filmmaking opportunities lie away from the ICAIC and that great films are and have been made independently. Though the lines are often blurred between the roles of state, education and foreign participation in the production process, the increase the number of people who are making films due in part to popularity, technological advancement and foreign interest have perpetuated the use of this term both in Cuba and in the other countries. Intellectuals and film critics, such as those mentioned above have been encouraged to question how and why this term has been adopted into current narratives of Cuban filmmaking. I propose that reducing the argument to a dichotomy between independent projects and state projects dismisses the many power relations that contribute to the construction of a particular context. Within and as a result of these relationships, initiatives have emerged. Many young independent filmmakers participate in these initiatives as they explore new ways to express themselves within the Cuban context.

Yet the term independent should be used cautiously and should not be equated with total creative or personal freedom over one’s work. It is understood as a concept that mobilizes individuals within the context of multiple powers (Li 2007:281). Luis Duno-Gottberg and Michael J. Horswell state that:

> It would nevertheless be a mistake to reduce the notion of alternative cinema to those works that are produced outside the State-sponsored circuits. It is an illusion to think that the growing availability of private funding/capital would generate total freedom for filmmakers. As the State withdraws, other powers come in, with new demands… **What is really new, what would bring about new forms of seeing and telling stories, is thus beyond the mere problem of governmental support/sponsorship/control/ of the film industry** (2013:102).
Here, they have introduced new power relations found within the negotiations of multiple systems at work. This shifts the conversation towards initiatives created by young filmmakers used to mobilize new forms of expression and different ways to approach filmmaking in Cuba.

It is possible to argue that the ability to produce new forms of telling stories and different perspectives works in part as a result of government control, support and sponsorship. As many young filmmakers seek to distance themselves from conventional modes of production, they explore alternatives. As Director Luis Ernesto Doñas (La Trucha 2014) put it, “People are conditioned in a way by the institution. Because [the institution] is not making different types of film, those working outside seek to make other kinds of films” (June 4, 2014). Juan Carlos Ceballos (Quieres que llores? 2012), another filmmaker who is younger than Doñas explained how he understood the future of filmmaking,

_I think that right now independent production is distancing itself and more people are making independent film in Cuba...I think it’s moving a bit more in that direction...the future of film in Cuba I think resides more so with us, the independents. I include myself in that because I think the future is also in the hands of the young filmmakers. We are trying to do something here (April 26, 2014)._

Doñas however cautioned against strictly identifying one’s self as a filmmaker working definitively outside the ICAIC. This perpetuates the notion that only a centralized model can hope to exist for the Cuban filmmaking industry. What is produced outside that model therefore risks its ability to be considered Cuban film.

_HERE, right now the mentality exists as such that... there is only one producer: the ICAIC... It is a vertical way of thinking. Nothing is horizontal...we need to change that. There shouldn’t be these categories of independent, or industry it should just exist as Cuban cinema (June 4, 2014)._
He wondered why filmmakers consider themselves independents. Further investigation probed that it was not the desire to be considered independent by others, but a process of recognizing the sets of conditions under which they work to get their projects finished.

Castillo (Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang 2014) is a young director who said she does not prescribe to a particular label, but rather focuses on how the project will get done. Castillo when asked why she wants to make independent film responded,

\[I \ do \ not \ completely \ identify \ as \ an \ independent. \ These \ are \ just \ new \ labels \ that \ exist \ now \ as \ independent \ or \ as \ institutional, \ I \ just \ want \ to \ make \ film...why \ do \ people \ assume \ that \ I \ am \ making \ independent \ films? \ No, \ it's \ just \ a \ result \ of \ the \ possibilities \ I \ have \ had...I \ want \ to \ make \ film... (May \ 22, \ 2014).\]

The conditions which Castillo refers to are those set by the law presently in place, one that does not give independent filmmakers legal standing as filmmakers. When asked to define their roles in relation to these external legal and economic factors, it became challenging for some participants to articulate their positions using definitive labels. They occasionally occupy different positions depending on the project, whom they are working with or on what production exercise they participate in, all the while trying to represent themselves as artists with unique perspectives and stories. Without having developed a structure of support for younger generations, inconsistencies of power have formed and have allowed filmmakers to seek out their own tactics of production. The subsequent sections will speak to the specific examples of political, social and economic relationships to power through of the points of contact with the proposed changes in the film law, The Muestra Joven, which is currently under the supervision of the ICAIC, educational workshops and foreign funding opportunities.
In the following sections I will address young filmmaker’s multiple relationships to power through four examples of both state organized and informal initiatives. These include: The most recent Declaration for a new Film law, filmmakers’ connections to the Muestra Joven as a branch of the ICAIC, workshop opportunities from both experienced casa productoras and filmmakers, and the establishment of a new grant from the Norwegian Embassy. These examples act as case studies in my analysis of emergent political, social and economical factors that influence young filmmaking.

The Assembly of Filmmakers released the Declaration of Cuban Cinema in May 2015. The Assembly, also known as the G-20 (a group of selected representatives of the Assembly) is a group of industry professionals addressing the growing concern for a new film law that would write independent filmmaking into the constitution. The G-20 argues that the legislation for filmmaking established in 1959 is outdated because it does not give legal standing to independent filmmakers or to the casa productoras. At present they cannot legally hold bank accounts for their production houses, import production equipment or protect their works against pirating. These are all factors that inhibit formal production and distribution. The current centralized model also disallows filmmakers from applying for permission to shoot in public areas in the country; they must go through one of the institutional bodies (the ICRT, the ACAV, the ICAIC, or either the EICTV or the FAMCA) in order to secure permissions to film.

This is not a surprise. The Assembly of Filmmakers was founded in 2013 and since then the state, while taking a generally benign view of the illegality and choosing language that structures the independents into a national cultural discourse, at the same time does not completely promote the Assembly’s actions. As del Castillo also indicated, the state absorbed
individual cultural freedom and adopted culture into the narrative of the revolution (Amaya 2010:18). The current legislation, as mentioned in Chapter one, still aligns cultural production with the state’s post-revolutionary agenda (Rodríguez 2011:112). The ICAIC recognizes in this document ‘autonomous’ individuals or collectives (ibid.:111). During my time in Cuba I did not encounter any recent accounts of severe repercussions for filmmaking under these autonomous circumstances. This leads to the understanding that production houses operated by independent filmmakers, and independents themselves are “permitted, but not promoted” (Egozcue 2012:151). Hence, the G-20 has voiced their concerns for the current state of independent filmmaking.

The G-20 propose to officially alter the national discourse on the basis that, in many ways, independent filmmaking already has:

The best proof to offer is the fact that we have been waiting for a decade for the creation of a functioning legal framework for independent producers, who are responsible for most of the film we make [in Cuba], and where most young filmmakers insert themselves in the landscape. All those we work with and have spoken to remind us of the importance of resolving this anomaly, but underneath there is an obvious challenge in assuming the ownership model that the claim entertains and of course are certain insecurities surrounding the content these producers will produce and continue producing should the law pass (G-20 May, 2015).

Through Foucault’s notion of discourse we see that, “Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it…discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (1990:92). More specifically Foucault’s analysis of power and discourse opposes what he terms the “juridico-discursive” view. He opposes the view that power always takes the form of a rule or law. It is clear that although the law does not include independent filmmakers they are fighting against the binary structure they feel the original law created.
Binaries such as within/outside independent/state produce the logic of censorship through disallowing certain things to be said or denying their existence (Lynch 2011:17). Foucault states therefore, the effort of resistance is an expression of power (Feder 2011:63).

The discussion of the film law has made its way into more visible spaces, such as panel discussions at the Muestra Joven. However, Claudia Calviño, a member of the G-20 and producer of the casa productora Producciones de la 5ta Aveniva, indicated that there are not enough young people who are involved in the debate. She says,

> I think it is a problem of communication and I think it is hard to insert oneself into the discussion. But it should be in everyone’s interest because it would benefit them...I was at The Higher Arts Institute not long ago for a conference and [the students] did not know that there was recently a meeting on the subject and that they could have gone... (April 13, 2014).

In the following section I address the Muestra Joven as a key space where many social interactions take place between young independent filmmakers, ICAIC representatives, members of important casa productoras and other young filmmakers. The festival is a crucial space for networking, and provides screen time exclusively for young filmmakers under the age of 35. Within the festival however, there is still no formal recognition of independent filmmakers, even though the vast majority of those working at the festival and participating are working as independents.

**Collaboration with the ICAIC: The Muestra Joven festival**

The Muestra Joven festival held annually in early April takes place in the neighbourhood of Vedado in Havana. Vedado is home to the majority of important figures in filmmaking as well as the ICAIC. Though young filmmakers can also participate in the Festival de Cine Pobre and
the International Film Festival, most aspiring filmmakers view the Muestra Joven as the most significant film festival for young people in Cuba. At the 2015 14th annual Muestra Joven I noticed many more of the filmmakers I interviewed were working in the ICIAC festival office than had worked at the Muestra Joven the previous year. Whether they were exhibiting their work as participants or simply working for the festival, it was perceived as one of the only opportunities to gain recognition as a filmmaker in Cuba and, as many hope, the beginnings of international recognition.

To critically examine the role of this festival it is necessary to examine the privileged spaces it creates within the filmmaking community. In examining power at a local level, Foucault postulates that power is not the, “privilege, acquired or preserved of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions” (1990:26). If we examine the role of the Young Filmmakers’ Film Festival we can analyze how it operates by, “educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs” (Li 2007:5). Throughout the week, the festival organizes a set of priority spaces, which are exclusive to certain members of the community. The parties, events and screening, though not uncommon to any festival worldwide, make one’s physical presence as important as the screening. The Muestra Joven has established itself as the most important festival for young filmmakers, making the Vedado suburb of Havana a hub for connecting with others and potential exploring potential work opportunities. The festival location among affluent, privileged Cubans living near ICIAC privileges certain filmmakers over others who are not geographically situated close to central Havana its cinemas, bars, and art galleries.

Thinking back to my experiences at the Muestra Joven in 2014 and again in 2015, it was clear that events had become much more exclusive as the festival gained in popularity. In 2014, I had been given an access pass from one of the coordinators of the festival, Jorge del Sol, which
allowed me to enter all cinemas, parties and conferences without waiting in line. In 2015, I had the same pass, but I was unable to move as freely through the spaces of the festival as I had the previous year. I was not allowed to go to the fifth floor of the ICAIC without first calling up to the receptionist and stating my name and reason for being there. My friends and contacts in the industry, who were now working for the festival, however, wore t-shirts with the Muestra Joven logo on the front and some had different access passes. Similarly, I attended a party at the Fresa y Chocolate café across the street from the ICAIC offices. While waiting in the crowd to enter I noticed the coordinator, del Sol, and some filmmakers moving through the crowd to gain privileged access to the café. One of those filmmakers recognized me and brought me to the front of the line, where del Sol was able to convince the doorman to let me in.

When afforded, these social aspects at the festival are vital for some young filmmakers. Daniel Arevalo (Casting, Ext., Día 2012) is a filmmaker who works off and on for the office of the Muestra Joven. He regularly attends social events at the festival and indicates that,

> The festival is considered the space where you can have access to those you might not see in your everyday life. For me in Havana I rarely run into young filmmakers and I never talk to them about what I want to do or how important collaboration could be. This dialogue doesn’t really exist. And, in the festival we are all close and we can talk and try to involve ourselves in each other’s work, we need to fight for this a bit more (April 26, 2014).

They also have the chance to participate in pitching competitions for projects in development. Within the event entitled Haciendo Cine filmmakers can qualify for the opportunity to pitch their work and possibly receive support for their projects. Arevalo stressed that he would like to see more of these pitching competitions, however some filmmakers such as Mena (Nani y Tati 2013, Mienteme Bien Jackie Chang 2014) and Ceballos were slightly more critical of their experiences. Ceballos indicated,
I went to the pitching and all I got was 600 pesos Cubanos, some help with costuming and permissions to shoot, which didn’t allow me to complete that particular project...they [ICAIC] should pull their resources for only one project instead of giving only a small amount to 10 projects...then we could all work on that project (December 12, 2014).

Mena had a similar experience, gaining even less support for the project, Nani y Tati 2013. However, with the financial support of the Norwegian Embassy he was able to complete the project. He stated:

When I presented Nani and Tati the only prize I was given was from the Musical Editor of Cuba (Editora Musical de Cuba), which was permission to use three Cuban songs for free. This wasn’t worth anything to me in terms of the project because there isn’t any music in the film, and there never was supposed to be any. But the fact that an established institute had taken interest in the project meant that others took the project more seriously (May 22, 2014).

The filmmakers lucky enough to participate in these competitions throughout the weeklong festival, must be in a position to present their work in Havana. As I was living in Havana, many of the young filmmakers with who I came in contact inhabited a geo-social point of privilege. They are living in Havana and Vedado and can attend the festival annually and make the connections that might advance their careers. Many have attended the EI.CTV, the FAMCA, or have had opportunities to participate in various workshops put on by filmmakers in the city. They live closer to tourist hotels where there is public access to Internet, although Internet is not free.

During the Muestra Joven festival in 2014 I met Harold Diaz, a young independent animator from Santa Clara. Diaz, a professor of architecture at the university in Santa Clara, subsequently wrote in an email describing his situation as a filmmaker living away from Havana.

Cuba is divided into two large sections: Havana and the rest of Cuba. In the rest of the country almost everything works differently and there are certain alternative that just do not
exist...Cuban film is concentrated in the capital of the country. I think that in the rest of the provinces all of the filmmakers are independent. But there are a large number of people who have a real passion for filmmaking. They do what little they can with what little they have. And the majorities do move to Havana eventually. Everything is easier there: there are events, specialist, schools, etc. It’s hard to produce outside of Havana.

Diaz went on to explain how because of his teaching post, it is possible to develop his skills and perfect his craft in Santa Clara, where he and some colleagues run a casa productora, but he emphasizes that the only place to find a job as an animator is in Havana.

Larger, more established and equipped casa productoras, such as Producciones de La 5ta Avenida, which I have previously mentioned, El Central producciones, and Estudio 50, to name a few, reside in Havana. These houses produce the majority of recent Cuban cinema and are staffed by some past Muestra Joven participants. Consequently, the Muestra Joven has incorporated many of these larger production houses into festival events. Most of the larger houses have exhibited and distributed films internationally and have become well connected to Latin America, North America, and Europe. For filmmakers such as Mena and Ceballos, among the other young filmmakers I spoke with, this festival still acts as the sole link between the local Cuban filmmaking networks and the possibilities of international connections.

Many of these filmmakers who now align themselves with a major casa productoras are working with bigger budgets and as a result, with producers from other countries to find funding (Stock 2009:202). Production houses such as Producciones de la 5ta Avenida are collectives resulting from a shift in historical apparatus of Cuban filmmaking. Though it is not technically legal, houses like 5ta Avenida operate similarly to small independent production companies in other countries, for example establishing a unique brand identity, contracting out services, and

---

4 Harold Diaz, email message to the author April 2014.
working with foreign funding agencies in coproduction endeavors. In the early 2000s, Stock saw these collectives begin to take shape. She spoke to filmmakers who are now at the forefront of forming production houses in Cuba, but who at that time aligned themselves with street filmmaking (2009:193). In 2015, filmmakers are dedicated not only to working with local filmmakers, but with extending their collaborations across national borders and inserting their films directly into the international market. Dean Luis Reyes indicates there are over eighty production entities producing films in Cuba away from the centralized model. Most notably he refers to Producciones de la 5ta. Avenida who’s statement indicates:

Our work is mainly with independent film productions, aligning with the necessity to diversify and give incentive to projects through a creative workspace and through collaboration between Cuban filmmakers. With our agile and effective production techniques, our intention is to channel bold and fresh projects to integrate into the international market that would otherwise be very difficult to create. (Statement from Producciones de la 5ta Avenida qtd. Reyes 2015).

These “agile and effective formulas” align the growth of digital technology and the cuentaproismo in filmmaking, by offering services and technical support for both local and international collaborations. There are no repercussions for working for one’s self as a filmmaker. Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue reports a similar development during the Special Period. Egozcue notes that economic disparity throughout the 1990s, and the decline of state intervention, a private sector emerged (2012:151). However, no clear legislation protected or recognized the incentives (ibid.). Although these private sectors mostly concerned goods and services it illustrates the parallels between what occurred with small business models during the Special Period and the current model of the casa productora.

Appadurai theorizes how certain globalizing forces restructure the State’s position. They are pressured to stay open due to the forces of consumerism within media, technology, travel and
a democratic ideology (Appadurai 1990:40). Even in non-Western countries where, “contests over the ideoscapes of democracy are fierce and fundamental, and where there are radical disjunctures between ideoscapes and technoscapes (as in the case of very small countries that lack contemporary technologies of production and information)” they are not excluded from these consumerist desires (Appadurai 1990:40). The emerging private sector eventually altered the government’s decisions to include certain private business models. What is important to note, is the difference in thinking today versus the early 1990s. Today many private sectors are promoted by the state. Egozcue argues that promoting the self-employed model reflects an important paradigm shift away from an understanding of the dichotomy state/market, whereby they must always stand in opposition. (Egozcue 2012:151). What Sanchez indicates is a change in discourse influenced by a democratic consumer ideology. He does so by summarizing Raul Castro’s opening speech at the Sixth Party Congress in April 2011. Castro indicates that, “the role of state institutions and enterprises is moving from a centralized economic model to a decentralized system, emphasizing the need to eradicate the widespread attitude of waiting for decisions to be made at higher levels” (ibid.:157). Casa productoras function almost exactly as legal enterprises working under the model of cuentapropismo yet, they are not currently permitted the same legal rights. This causes many problems for casa productoras that provide extensive services and technological support to the filmmaking community in Havana. El Central for example, is known for its technological expertise and rents the highest quality audiovisual equipment in Cuba.

The head of El Central, Oscar Ortega, explained that the production house came out of what he identified as a need for a higher standard of technical precision among audiovisual productions in Cuba from conception to post production. He shared extensive knowledge about
current standards for production equipment, mentioning that much of what they process comes from purchases made by friends outside Cuba. “It’s hard but it is not impossible”, he states,

Still however there are no stores that exist in Cuba where you can buy this kind of equipment... People think that the embargo doesn’t exist anymore between Cuba and the United states, but it exists and it is very real. I cannot try a camera before I buy it because it isn’t here...so you have to do a lot of reading before hand to see if it is a good investment (May 28, 2014).

Ortega and El Central began to build a commercial clientele after the Austrian company Red Bull GmbH first hired them to shoot an event in 2010. This opportunity allowed El Central to seek out other international clientele eager to film in Cuba. They remain the most technologically advanced production house in Havana, at times renting equipment to the ICAIC. Its relative technological sophistication, in turn, allows El Central to maintain an international client base. El Central participates in what Venegas has referred to as, “an underground market of pirated connections” (2010:14). With Internet portals appearing more often at increasingly lower prices, although at two CUC per hour prices are still beyond the means of many Cubans (I. López 2015), this ‘underground market’ as well as the competition among Cuban producers is growing. What Venegas (2009) argues, however, is that even these expanding abilities to connect do not provide equal opportunities for all filmmakers, as hierarchies have already been established within communities of independent audiovisual workers. As Diaz previously indicated opportunities to connect as well as access to technological advantages and mentorship programs are centrally located in Havana.

El Central occupies an apartment in Vedado, only a fifteen-minute walk from the ICAIC. Ortega indicated that their relationship with the ICAIC is mainly a collaborative one, mostly supporting young filmmakers through mentorship programs and technical support on set and in post-production through the Muestra Joven and for the past three years through the Festival Cine
Pobre. Ortega is most interested in continuing this relationship with the Muestra Joven, especially with its *Haciendo Cine* program. “Young filmmaking in Cuba comes out of this section, *Haciendo Cine*...it has been a great way for them to pursue their work and complete their films” (May 28, 2014). With guidance and support from El Central young filmmakers often come to work at the El Central office and have access to their equipment.

In 2013, during the Festival Cine Pobre, El Central expanded its support for young filmmakers through short film production grants,

> These types of projects can, in a way, help boost production for young people... The institute will not be giving them money to produce so they have to do it through these festivals and through production houses like us... so it is thanks to these sorts of projects that a small group of young filmmakers can exist (May 28, 2014).

Ortega also indicated that these sorts of initiatives give young filmmakers a chance to learn what he said they might not learn in film school. Many of these initiatives act as mentorship programs for the self-taught young filmmaker. Older and more established filmmakers often organize similar mentorship programs or workshops. These workshops are open to the young filmmaking community and their times and planned whereabouts travel through word of mouth.

Jorge Molina (*Molina’s Boreales* 2014), an independent filmmaker and professor at the EICTV, organized a workshop I was able to attend in April 2014. He provided four separate teams of young filmmakers with an original three-minute script entitled @256 (2014) written by himself and another filmmaker, Arturo Infante. On the morning of the exercise I met with del Castillo and his team of participants at 8:00am in the lobby of the Higher Arts Institute (ISA). I took a “participant observer” role throughout the day, helping occasionally when I was needed to, but otherwise remaining a spectator. I did not interfere with any of the decision making, as I wanted to see how the director interacted with the group in terms of this process. After many
hours of trying to locate actors, and being forced by circumstances to change locations multiple times, we ended up shooting the short film in the ICAIC at the office of the Muestra Joven. We also screened the films the following week in that same office space. The team was committed to the project and not one person left throughout the fifteen-hour day. However, the process was not organized by way of strict production schedule or by assigned roles. There was a lot of talking, waiting, rehearsing, and lighting adjustment throughout the day. People adapted to various roles on set as needed. However, when the camera was turned on everyone appeared very focused and the shooting process went quite quickly. Molina was later clear in our interview that he found the version with which I had participant-observed to be the most visually compelling interpretation of the script. He was impressed by the group’s focus when it finally came time to shoot. He did, however, criticize the organization throughout the day, stating that it would not be considered professional in another context to conduct a shoot in this way (May 21, 2014).

Claudia Calviño further probed this notion of organization. Calviño indicated that young filmmakers are not learning production practices outside what they can most easily master. As she stated,

There is information missing and a lack of knowledge... you can’t understand the film industry on a macro level if you don’t understand the different steps of filmmaking as in, first you have to make a production plan... The vision of how film is made it very limited. It’s as though you arrive at the production of the film only through pre-production, production and post-production, and all of the other stuff that happens before or after or even in between these steps is left out (April 13, 2014).

Both Calviño and Molina are graduates of the EICTV. Both have worked on multiple feature length and internationally successful productions. Molina was also teaching at EICTV at the time of our encounter. The EICTV is a unique point of contact for Cuban filmmakers, as they gain an international perspective through their education without having to leave the island. Those that
graduate gain a part of the school’s international recognition, while the school continues to support its graduates. Diana Montero (Abécé 2013), a recent graduate of documentary filmmaking from EICTV stated, “The school has a policy to always keep its doors open to returning students, so in some ways one always returns to the school, especially in Cuba where it is so hard to produce and above all when you are working away from the film institute, the ICAIC” (January 7, 2015). She also stated that the school was a great creative environment and encouraged her interests in exploring the stories of the characters that appear in her documentaries. They provided assistance to access areas in which Montero wished to film, and have continued to do so during the production of her current feature length documentary.

Montero has also had the opportunity to travel. The school has helped her apply for a scholarship to work at Concordia University this past winter 2015. When she came to visit me for a conference we did together in March, she told me that although the EICTV had provided her with opportunities to start her career, such as her work with Concordia University she was concerned with the fact that she had never learned any skills to market or circulate her work on her own. The steps that exist outside the pre-production, production, and post-production model are not well known among young filmmakers. Montero also revealed that this three-step model is not consistent because of the constant search for financial support. An example where this occurred was in her current project, Nido (Nest):

Right now I am in the production stage, but I have to stop production and return to the development stage to raise more of the budget in order to continue shooting. So really the filmmaking process isn’t divided and organized in a way that one can have a calm or ordinary life, with a clear perception of their income (January 7, 2015).

Where then do they look for this financial support? Montero, Ceballos and Mena are among the multiple young filmmakers who found funding opportunities with the Norwegian Embassy in
Cuba. In 2014, the Embassy inaugurated a grant for young filmmakers whereby filmmakers will formally apply for funding once a year for the project they are developing. In this next section I will examine the outline for this grant in relation to a wider discussion on foreign funding opportunities in Cuba.

**A critical look at Northern funding for the development of young Cuban filmmaking**

This section employs a postcolonial approach to examine the trends among independent filmmakers who fund their projects through co-productions, bursaries and grants, as well as through sponsorship. It is clear the ICAIC does not provide sufficient financial support for young filmmakers causing them to seek other ways to build their budgets. Despite a law that does not regard independents as legal subjects, there are no restrictions currently in place on one’s ability to accept funding from external parties (external from the state) for a project (García 2015:35). This dynamic does configure the habits of filmmakers by encouraging them to continuously engage in unequal power relations. As Castillo inferred, a young filmmaker’s attempts to raise money are always through the embassies, “... *It is really hard to put together your budget because a fund doesn’t exist, ... so where do the younger filmmakers end up? That is why they end up going to the embassies to help them with their budget to be able to realize their goals...*” (May 22, 2014). Embassies are the connections to international economies outside of the island.

The Norwegian Embassy brought some of its funding to the island by establishing the annual grant. In 2014 this was the first grant that where young filmmakers could directly apply, without having to employ a third party either outside Cuba or though one of the state’s
audiovisual institutors. The grant surpasses both geographical and political constraints for young filmmakers by providing foreign funding from within the island. When I contacted the Norwegian Embassy a representative, Erlend Skutlaberg, wrote in an email:

_The Embassy works to ensure that innovative cineastes with independent voices and thoughts can participate in public debate. In the past few years we have received many requests from young cineastes for financial support for their audiovisual projects. As the embassy does not have specialized personnel to truly assess the quality and ownership of all these requests, and to be fairer in the granting of subsidies we decided to create the Norwegian grant for Cuban Cinema...Our main goal is to: encourage filmmakers’ development and strengthen the Cuban film industry as a form of cultural expression, promote diversity and artistic integrity for the national audiovisual scene and encourage creativity, innovation and artistic expression._

He further indicated that the grant totaled 40 000CUC and was divided amongst fourteen projects last year. They will see an increase in funding to 50 000CUC for 2015. Of these fourteen projects, three of the young filmmakers I spoke with benefited in 2014 from the Norwegian grant for Cuban Cinema. Two more have benefits from the support Skutlaberg indicated, which were taking place before a more formal approach to funding was created. As Helena Rodriguez, a producer and recipient of this year’s funding indicated, “I think it is the first time that there has been a fund like this that we can apply to, whether your film is narrative, documentary or animation” (December 18, 2014) This is undoubtedly a positive occurrence for young filmmakers. With its intention to foster local filmmaking it outlines minimal guidelines for applicants and is fifty-percent dedicated to filmmakers under the age of thirty-five (Skutlaberg 2015).

---

5 Erlend Skutlaberg, email to the author April 2015.
This example is one of many annual funding opportunities aimed at Latin American filmmakers. Some of the more established filmmakers I interviewed have also had grants from the Hubert Bals Fund based at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (La Obra del Siglo by Carlos Machado) and Programa Ibermedia, which is a co-production film fund sponsored by Spain, Portugal and thirteen Latin American member countries (Juan de los Muertos through Producciones de la 5ta Avenida). Many of these programs have been criticized for taking on a ‘producer’ role in the relationships between global Northern and Southern nations (Ross 2011, Falicov 2007, 2010, 2013). The co-production model is one based in its status as the product of a hybridized, globalized context, often shot in different places, with actors from various countries and perhaps different languages are spoken (Falicov 2007:22). In some cases, the film’s construction and content is even affected by the practices of foreign support structures as they outline specific guidelines for the projects they will fund.

Miriam Ross’ analysis of the Hubert Bals Fund indicates a power imbalance that exists between Latin American producers and the Fund. She notes that the HBF works with developing countries that are “receiving overseas aid” (2011:263). Latin American filmmakers are aware that they are coming from a background of limited capital and are seeking monetary support from their “capital-rich benefactor” (ibid.:262). Economic standing is, therefore, the determining factor for the HBF. Furthermore the fund will only accept projects that are shot within the context from which the filmmaker originates (ibid. 263). The goal here is to promote local production. Ultimately, the filmmaker’s link to the international market is through the HBF, meaning that although the film production takes place on site everything that exists outside the process of making the film still remains outside the filmmaker’s immediate control. As a recipient of this
fund, Machado speaks to the problem of creative autonomy and authorship that filmmakers encounter when they have to rely on external financial involvement for their projects:

The good is that you get to make your film, thinking romantically; it’s a lovely thought because you get to do what you love. The bad? That again, you have to continue without autonomy. Something you could have done yourself you have to do through others. And those others have filters. Those filters need to make money. Not everyone will work with you out of friendship...you always find yourself in a position of trying to breathe properly...(May 21, 2014).

Independent filmmakers have very limited options for funding. Once the project is distributed both in and outside Cuba, will the filmmakers see any of the profits? Machado explains that the problem of authorship extends into circulation. I return to the point that independent filmmakers cannot hold bank accounts for the purpose of business transactions. They must seek out a third-party member to act as the business who then applies to the grants or if the grant is attached to a festival, the festival will take on this role as in the case of the HBF. Machado clarifies:

If you have a script and you apply to a fund through a business or someone who is not you, and that entity says they will help you with a percentage of the film and then you are awarded the grant to make the film. You have the property rights to the film in Cuba, however, if the film sells in other countries, you don’t profit...because the film is not yours (May 21, 2014).

In the case of the grant provided by the Norwegian Embassy, the filmmaker does not risk any authorship or distribution issues should the film happen to travel to other countries. On the other hand, the grant is about to enter only its second year and could take on more responsibility in the filmmaking process. Despite these possibilities this grant could begin to help young filmmakers understand how to organize and finance their own projects at the local level. It is inevitable that in order to produce productions on a bigger scale, filmmakers will have to seek opportunities
through a third party institution, such as the ICAIC, ICRT or the ACAV, as it currently stands in legislation.

In this chapter I have positioned young independent Cuban filmmakers within the political, geo-social, and fiscal conditions of contemporary audiovisual Cuba. I have addressed specific case studies to critically evaluate the multiple relationships these filmmakers take up within a particular historical and cultural context. Drawing attention to current debates surrounding the term independent, I have noted the importance of a new law that gives independent filmmakers legal standing. This has led me to my discussion on the current role of the Muestra Joven as a liaison between the ICAIC and young independent filmmakers. The festival supports young filmmakers primarily through exhibiting their work on national screens. They also provide opportunities for small amounts of industry support. The Muestra Joven also works with established casa productoras to bring more support to the young filmmakers, though casa productoras are not recognized as legal entities. These casa productoras operate similarly to the model of cuentapropismo and help foster informal learning environments, such as workshops for young independent filmmakers. Workshops help to bridge a generational and learning gap that exists between certain age groups and amid those who study in one of the Cuban film schools and filmmakers who learn on the streets. The Norwegian grant for Cuban cinema calls into question the overwhelming role international financial support systems play in the productions of young, independent filmmakers. This chapter has also revealed power imbalances, as financial supporters exercise ownership over a filmmaker’s work at moments where the Cuban filmmaker cannot. In the following chapter I turn my attention to the possibilities of a mobile, more global filmmaking subject. I will examine the current trends in aesthetic, narrative and genre from the positions of five young independent filmmakers. I will conduct an image analysis by deconstructing the short
documentary that complements the project, *Por Amor al Arte*. Adopting a postcolonial framework for my image analysis will unsettle any fixed notions set by the dominant Eurocentric constructions of visual culture.
Chapter 4

Image Analysis

Introduction

The following chapter focuses on the perspectives of five young independent filmmakers: Adolfo Mena, Diana Montero, Daniel Arevalo, Grethel Castillo and Juan Carlos Ceballos. Through an analysis of the interviews conducted and of a selection of films, one from each of the five filmmakers, I consider how certain power relationships affect aesthetic, genre and narrative choices in their films. I address key themes from our conversations and intertwine them with select images in a short documentary entitled, *Por Amor al Arte (For the Love of Art)*. The film provides a platform for the five young artists to critically engage with their approaches to filmmaking as young independents in Cuba. The documentary addresses the technicalities that young independent filmmakers face on a day-to-day basis such as: minimal funding for their projects, government restrictions on shooting in the streets, and the constraints on internet access needed to help circulate their work in festivals. Through these discussions, they begin to reveal the changes they would like to see in the future. The images intercut with their interviews reveal multiple approaches to aesthetic, genre and narrative, each of which contributes to new proponents of cultural identity. As Hall argues, “Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or structure, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*” (1996:213). I propose that young filmmakers take up certain positions that influence their choice of narrative or aesthetic preferences. These choices are based in their relationships to particular powers at play, in which certain relationships take on...
more significant roles when making these choices. I specifically draw attention to young filmmakers’ desires to create and see more ‘universal’ stories with ‘commercial’ aesthetics.

The growing interest in Cuban film by foreign markets and festivals invariably increases the possibilities of sharing their work and expands their networks in the field. Yet, within certain global interests there are power imbalances worthy of critique. The same Northern funding opportunities, (HBF and Cine en Construcción) which are aimed at Latin American countries further act to construct particular aesthetic, narrative and genre practices among Latin American filmmakers. As many young filmmakers rely on the possibilities of external funding for their work, they may adopt certain patterns of filming into their individual and cultural cinematic representations. I adopt a critical postcolonial lens to probe globalizing forces and their intent to keep the “exotic other” in the margins (Canclini 2002:186). Appadurai theorizes that these forces reveal themselves at the points of exchange between different cultures. However, Shohat and Stam urge that the ‘Other’ is formed not in the exchange of ideas and/or knowledge, “but in the unequal terms on which the exchange takes place” (1994:31) They call into question a Eurocentric analysis of visual culture, arguing that this model only recognizes primary points of origin (Shohat and Stam 2002:56). As opportunities for travel become more frequent young filmmakers become mobile subjects and no longer live absolutely as exiles from their homes or as immigrants in a foreign country. This opens the possibilities of a translocal existence and calls into question a Eurocentric understanding of Cuban cinema. I argue that by understanding the current conditions under which young independent filmmakers produce their work we can begin to move away from a Eurocentric analysis of contemporary Cuban films. It is in this moment that we decode the significance of different points of entry in the filmmaking practice and can analyze different images from within specific contexts.
Positioning *Por Amor al Arte: A collaborative documentary practice*

The filmmakers interviewed for *Por Amor al Arte* come from different social-economic and educational backgrounds and have had various opportunities in their short careers. Their particular aesthetic styles, genre and choices of narratives, are in different stages of development. Some are more self-reflexive in the ways in which they tell their stories on camera and in how they speak about their roles as storytellers. Others are more direct in their approaches and focus on the specific images they wish to convey. They have constructed an understanding of the commercial cinema aesthetic through media and movie watching. Castillo and Ceballos specifically call for commercial production in Cuba, while the others rest somewhere on the spectrum between a commercial and auteur inspired aesthetic.

In the opening sequence each filmmaker’s voice introduces a theme before their faces or works are revealed. The audience has the opportunity to establish the main concerns addressed in the documentary and to establish a visual context for the film. The opening shot of the Malecón (sea wall) in Havana marks the setting for the story. It also acknowledges the Malecón as a historically important landmark used by Cuban filmmakers such as, *Madagascar* (Fernando Perez 1994), *Juan de los Muertos* (Alejandro Brugés 2011). The opening shots are intercut with young filmmakers on set in a crowded bus terminal at night, revealing the negotiation of space that often takes place when they are trying to construct their stories. They film in borrowed, prohibited, private and public spaces, altering them and questioning their positions on the island, a question I return to at the end of the film.

After the opening sequence, I narrate a short contextual introduction in the first person. I aim to inform the audience of my position within the story, as it was a collaborative project.
Borrowing from Nichols, I wrote the narration as an essay by drawing from my personal journal entries and experiences during my time in Cuba. Nichols notes that by doing this:

“The emphasis may shift from convincing the audience of a particular point of view or approach to a problem to the representation of a personal, clearly subjective view of things…What gets expressed is the filmmaker’s own personal perspective and unique way of viewing things. What makes it a documentary is that this expressiveness remains coupled to the representations about the social, historical world, including the worlds of the filmmakers as a social actor, going about his or her life among others. (Nichols 2010:60).

Using this documentary as a platform, I construct my position in relation to the filmmakers by allowing them to speak to those aspects of filmmaking that most affected their work in Cuba. Despite my intentions for a collaborative filmmaking process, it is critical to note that I edited the documentary in Canada. I sought to intertwine the opinions of my participants, their images, my reflections and my observations throughout the editing process. However, editing the film in Canada reveals an imbalance of power between the subjects of the film and the filmmaker, who is in total control of the end product. As a result, there are points within *Por Amor al Arte* where I myself, as the filmmaker, am removed from the narrative. To have better incorporated what Nichols indicates above as, “the filmmaker’s own personal perspective” (ibid.) I would have include personal information about my position as a Canadian filmmaker who had engaged with these young filmmakers over a period of five months.

**The potential to stay: Young filmmakers explore different forms of aesthetic, genre and narrative in a changing audiovisual landscape**

A recent graduate of the EICTV, Montero shot her first few documentaries as part of her course work for the school. During our interview she reflects on her position within the
educational institution. As indicated in the previous chapter, the school supports her in her documentary practice and does not seek to alter any creative element of any script presented by a student. Within this creative environment, she says what motivates her to make documentaries is the desire to learn about the people in her own country and to share their stories. In Por Amor al Arte, she indicates that other filmmakers share her feelings, “...we do things more for the love of film, and for our projects, and in the interest that people learn about Cuba and that stories are told, than for money” (January 7, 2015). Montero’s next project Nido continues the story she began to tell in one of her first short films entitled, Abecé (2013). The film follows the story of a twelve-year-old girl in the Sierra Maestra of Cuba who has just given birth to her first son. She states that producing outside the school was challenging as she does not feel that the Cuban film industry is structured enough to support emergent filmmakers. Montero is co-producing Nido with a production company based in Colombia by the name of Blond Indian Films.

In Por Amor al Arte, I include clips from Montero’s film Abecé (2013). The film possesses a self-reflexive quality, as Montero includes her own voice in the film. The shot transition from the first clip of Montero’s interview to the first clip of Abecé (ibid.). Her voice transitions from the interview into the story introduced on the screen. The viewer is immediately drawn into her documentary and able to follow her voice as she begins to talk with young Leonadi about her traumatic pregnancy. Montero and Leonadi’s exchanges are calm and quiet.
Figure 1: Montero shows Leonadi completing her tasks while she begins to ask Leonadi about the challenges of her pregnancy (Abecé 2013).
Figure 2: Leonadi describes her pregnancy to Montero. The audience hears both women’s voices (Abécé 2013).

Their conversations are collaborative and both women play an equal role in the development of the story. Montero reveals Leonadi’s childlike behaviours throughout the film, but in conversation, shows her respect for the many responsibilities Leonadi now has in her life. Montero follows Leonadi as she tends to household duties, working mostly with simple, well-constructed shots. The director captures Leonadi deep in thought, never cutting away too quickly from any of her actions. The shots function as a set of portraits that illustrate the paradox of Leonadi’s life. Montero navigates the intimate space of the home, questioning notions of gender, age, and love within the rural communities of Cuba. The director shows the subject throughout
the film as a playful young girl who must abruptly shift into her role as a woman of the household and as a mother to her infant child.

Three out of the five filmmakers of Por Amor al Arte did not attend a formal film school. They are part of an autodidactic group of filmmakers who studied en la calle (on the street) usually participating in the workshops run by well-established filmmakers in the field. These filmmakers do not have access to the resources available to those attending the schools and often teach themselves to work with minimal resources. Arevalo explains how he understands his own circumstances in Por Amor al Arte:

_I guarantee you that a percentage of Cuban filmmakers, their art is conditioned by what they have at hand. This is a reality. I’m not saying that it’s bad, whatever the circumstances are; you should be able to adapt and grow. Realistically yes, we write, we work, we film as a result of what is at hand, which is really simple stuff..._ (April 26, 2014).

Arevalo is an avid participant of these workshops. He refers to the short films he has directed as a result of these workshops as ‘exercises’. He feels they will help develop his art in Cuba, as he is not interested in pursuing any commercial productions as a director. He has presented two of his short fiction films in festivals on the island, but when we spoke in 2014 he did not plan to share them internationally.
In the above frame he is working on another workshop led through the sponsorship of Jameson Irish Whisky. That night the crew, who were all volunteers, gathered on the set for a night of shooting at the crowded bus terminal in Old Havana. Arevalo indicates that the only piece of equipment he rented that night was the small monitor used to set up the main shot of the film: a slow, three-minute tracking shot. He and the crew spent many hours into the night waiting for the right moment to roll the camera. The crowded terminal continued to buzz with passengers departing, arriving and awaiting their buses. Arevalo determined that it was more secure to use the space at night and said they were less likely to be bothered by the authorities.

Mena encountered similar space constraints when filming his first film, *Nani y Tati* (2013). Although he had financial support from the Norwegian Embassy he decided to convert
the kitchen at the EICTV into the interior of Nani and Tati’s house. In the documentary he recalls how he constructed his original concept:

*It occurred to me to make a story, also keeping in mind that I didn’t have money, it needed to be as cheap as possible, and furthermore that I could have dominion and control over the characters. Above all it’s to make a story about no more than two characters in which these two characters try to show that, each one is sicker than the other* (May 22, 2014).

His short fiction film about two sickly sisters is a testimony to his own experiences growing up in Pinar del Rio. Later in the interview he shares the theme(s) behind his film:

*In my house, my grandmother would get together almost everyday…the neighbour and my grandmother, to have coffee and they were always talking about fatal accidents, who had a worse headache, who had died from cancer. So this gets my attention, this type of morbid-ness in each of these situations…where I’m not sure if they are enjoying it or if by talking about this it alleviates certain tensions, tensions of everyday struggles, of daily pressures, of married life I don’t know. But behind this, what there was, evidently, was a lot of fear, a lot of anguish and a lot of depression* (May 22, 2014).
Figure 4: The camera is above Nani as she groans in her bed (Nani y Tati 2013).

This particular frame used in the documentary is accompanied by a loud groan from Nani. From where the camera is positioned one immediately senses the intentional discomfort created by the director. The way in which Mena executed his narrative is experimental and resonated with critics at the Young Filmmakers’ Film Festival. He says he thought the film was maybe interpreted as more of a film for the critics and was only enjoyable for a select audience. It is also quite different from the following film he co-directed with Castillo titled, Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang (2014), which is almost entirely opposite in its aesthetic goals. Mena’s second film met a different set of criteria, and resonates with a wider audience, which allowed the film to travel widely throughout Cuba and abroad.
I spoke to director Ceballos for the first time in April 2014 at the Low Budget Film Festival in Gibara. Gibara was an important place for the first-time director, as it was where he shot his film, *Quieres que llore?* (2012), and was the place where he premiered his film. The film follows two directors who are in need of an idea for their short film. On a tight deadline, they approach an elderly man, who is sitting in the park square. An odd character, he is the perfect subject for their film. As the film ends we see the filmmakers escort the man into the theater where he is nearly brought to tears while watching himself on screen. Ceballos incorporates much of the town’s scenery in his film, indicating the importance of the location. Many young filmmakers do not have the opportunity to travel around the island and film in remote areas. He indicates how important he felt the experience was for him. Consequently his experience in Gibara weaves into the narrative of his short film. In the image below, Ceballos’ characters spend their day walking all around the town, as if waiting for their story to appear out of scenery itself.
Figure 5: The two characters meet the old man in the square in Gibara, Cuba (*Quieres que lløre?* 2012).

When asked what kind of films he wishes to make, Ceballos uses the terms ‘commercial’ films to tell ‘universal’ stories. Both terms tend to be used together to reference an aesthetic and the latter, as a form underlining meaning to the narrative. When speaking with Ceballos, the term ‘universal’ appears in relation to a feeling a need to feel more connected within a global community.

*To have an outside idea of others’ visions from other parts of the world helps you to realize, or in my case, the possibility to make film with more universal themes. Because I think that direct contact with that, with other people, filmmakers, for all different places brings you a lot and even allows you to learn about new technologies, new ways of telling stories, learning things about, topics of interest in their countries, what they like to do and the direction in which their cinema is headed in their country* (April 26, 2014).
Not coincidentally ‘universal’ themes are part of the criteria for many of the European film funding opportunities that are geared towards supporting Latin American countries and distributing them among international film festivals. As Falicov indicates in her analysis on the parameters of eligibility for the San Sebastian Award of Cine en Construcción that a transnational film includes the following characteristics of what she calls a ‘globalized art-house aesthetic’:

- The film must contain a narrative that is universally understood (aka Western) but yet, the universal/global must have some overlap with local elements.
- The film cannot have its narrative and mise-en-scène be too ‘global’ or else it is reduced to the formulaic homogenous.
- The narrative and aesthetic must also not veer the other way in being too ‘local’ or unrecognizable, thus rendering it ‘foreign’ to international audiences. (Falicov 2013:261).

This particular aesthetic and narrative is usually carried out between two unequal partners whereby the Global South filmmakers depend on the support from the Northern or more industrially advanced countries (Falicov 2010:15). These parameters construct a particular narrative and indicate that this ‘balance’ can be achieved equally by any of the applicant countries. It perpetuates the notion that all Latin American and Caribbean countries aim for a similar goal with their filmmaking – to represent their country.

This ‘global art-house aesthetic’ factored into the selection process for European funds for Latin American countries means the filmmaker carries what Gill Branston calls the ‘burden of representation’ (2000 qtd. Ross 2011:23). This is the notion that filmmakers need to stand up for and represent their nation or community in a certain way (Ross 2011:25-26). This could ultimately take away from the possibility of different types of film coexisting within a given cultural context. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) argue that Western dominant groups claim multiple positions by using diverse narrative forms and aesthetics while those of the minority come to possess only certain characteristics. This notion is reinforced through criteria like that in
Cine en Construcción and the HBF, which are some of the bigger funds beyond what the Norway embassy has to offer to help filmmakers gain more of an international viewership. Representing minority film culture also produces a sense of powerlessness. As Shohat and Stam argue, “powerlessness generates a constant struggle to create an elusive “authenticity” to be constructed anew with every generation” (ibid.:285). This “authenticity” is one based in opposition and not in a dynamic and evolving sense of national identity (ibid.:286). It is imperative not to look at filmmaking as strictly a practice based in the local, global or perfect combination of the two, but to understand how films represent the construction of cultural identity.

Hall’s position of cultural identity recognizes that, “we cannot speak for very long about ‘one experience, one identity’ without acknowledging its other side – the differences and discontinuities which constitute, precisely the Caribbean’s uniqueness” (1996:212). This anti-essentialist understanding of identity, one that is constantly evolving and ‘becoming’ allows cultural identities to exist as multiple histories with real material and symbolic effects. As Hall states “The past continues to speak to us. But this is no longer a simple, factual ‘past’, since our relation to it is…always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (ibid.:213). To these filmmakers cultural identity is constructed through their relationships to contemporary narratives of Latin American film from a Western context. But these narratives can adapt and shift within the Cuban context, changing the understanding of certain terms like ‘commercial or ‘universal’.

Here the term ‘commercial’ is understood as an aesthetic that attracts a larger audience. As Ceballos states, “We want to produce ourselves, I mean; we want ... to make a more commercial film. That is the word. I think you should make film that everybody likes. I think that you should make film for the people and not for the critics...” (April 26, 2014). Trying to strike a
balance between global and local discourse, young filmmakers ultimately aspire to have their work accessible to wider audiences. Some of the filmmakers felt that in order reach a wider audience Cuban films (their films included) have to address more contemporary stories. If audiences are looking to see different types of film, with a range of genres and aesthetics, Castillo sees herself as one of the filmmakers pushing for this change. As she mentions,

*I mean, the stories that I want to tell distance themselves a lot from the type of cinema we are used to seeing. My interest in cinema is headed much more in the direction away from what has already been made. I think young people struggle with this a bit, renewing or renovating what is going on right now cinematically in Cuba, we are a bit tired of this and the industry is giving possibilities to projects that aren’t worth it and don’t say anything, stories that have been told other times in our cinema. So I think that now is the time to make other things you know? …Because if they made better film people would go to the cinema more and although with the films they make now people do go… if they made more interesting films, newer or different, why can’t we say different? Yes, we need a commercial cinema we need it.* (May 22, 2014).

It is important to note here that upon visiting both the Young Filmmakers’ Film Festival and the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema, I noticed an exceptional number of people lined up for the premieres of each feature-length Cuban film participating in either festival. Cuban filmmakers did have a strong year and a half with the releases of Kiki Álvarez’s *Venecia* (2014), Ernesto Daranas’ *Conducta* (2014), *Vestido de Novia* (Solaya 2014) and *La Obra del Siglo* (2015) by Machado, to name only a few. From these experiences it is clear Cuban audiences are dedicated to attending screenings and are passionate about the films. Humphreys had a similar experience at the premiere of *Juan de los Muertos* (Brugés 2011). She spoke with patrons who waited in line for nearly ten hours to see the film (2012:186). Aside from *Conducta* (Daranas 2014) each of these films were made as independent projects and took different approaches both in aesthetic and narrative. When I spoke with filmmakers about *Juan de los*
Muertos (Brugés 2011), most indicated that they thought the film was important to Cuban film because it portrayed a ‘commercial’ aesthetic and was ‘new’ to Cuban film. As a live-action zombie comedy the film does combine a set of entertaining traits. Castillo therefore hopes to join those who have already successfully experimented with new forms of genre, narrative and aesthetic.

Castillo and Mena’s Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang (2014), draws on some of the characteristics of a ‘commercial’ aesthetic. The main character Chan’s apartment is clean with white furniture and matching glassware. He dresses well and serves his guest an expensive meal. They also chose to make the film silent. The vivid colours and original music score also compliment the fact that it is a silent film. Castillo states that the choices she made were to make the film understandable to any audience. At first glance, Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang (2014) has a ‘universal’ quality. This made it a successful entry in North American and European Festivals. The Cuban Cinema Press Association (ACPC) also selected it as the best short fiction film exhibited in Cuba in 2014.⁶

---

⁶ Adolfo Mena, email to the author January 2015
Figure 6: Gloria dines with Chan (Mienteme Bien, Jackie Chang 2014).

There are also stylistic moments reminiscent of Humberto Solás’ Lucía (1968). The camera freely follows Gloria the prostitute as she moves through the bar. Her movements are sweeping and fluid as she sways around in the bar and takes a seat. Solás similarly follows Lucía’s movements around her room after an encounter with her lover. The film adopts several stylistic choices and draws from different historical moments in filmmaking. The film reveals a hybrid quality allowing new and old approaches and techniques to coexist in her cinematic representation of her own identity as a filmmaker.
Each filmmaker reveals that they feel their art is conditioned to their geographical location in one way or another. They want to stay in Cuba because it is a place they feel they can develop their work. Arevalo is intent on the fact that his possibilities are greater in Cuba and he can work with talented filmmakers from his position in Cuba. Castillo, however, was interested in travel as a way to learn more about the world as she felt this was a better way to reach her goals. After our interview in December 2014, Castillo traveled to Mexico on a six-month visa through the Guadalajara Film Festival and plans to return to Cuba. Montero’s answer is the most ambiguous. Montero left in January 2015 to pursue a scholarship opportunity at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Having met with her here in Canada, she explained that she was still working on the post-production of *Nido* and would return to Cuba in June 2015 to finish
editing. In August she returned to Canada and has since moved to Miami, Florida. It is not clear whether Montero will continue making documentary film outside Cuba or if she will later return to Cuba to produce. Young filmmakers are now increasingly exposed, through the continuing thaw in Cuba’s international relationships, to the possibilities of a mobile and transnational existence. Travel restrictions are no longer an insurmountable obstacle for filmmakers. Yet, invitations to festivals and scholarship opportunities are still the most popular avenues for travel. As mobile subjects, they are no longer expelled from their home if they choose to come and go from the island. Filmmaker’s will establish more global connections and bring these connections into their storytelling upsetting the perfect balance of the ‘global art-house’ aesthetic.

7 Carlos Machado (Obra del Siglo 2015), Marcel Beltran (Alicia 2014) and Jessica Rodriguez (Espejuelos Oscuros 2015) are all examples of filmmakers who have spent time abroad, or who live abroad and choose to make their films in Cuba. Zaira Zarza (2015) further researches Cuban cinema in the diaspora.
Chapter 5

Conclusions

In this thesis I have investigated the practices of young independent filmmakers in contemporary Cuba. Filmmakers who practice away from the ICAIC do not decisively oppose the dominant structure. Rather, independent filmmakers are positioned in relation to the changing relationships within and away from power. Foucault treats power as networks of interaction (Taylor 2011:3). They are constantly shifting and changing the relations among individuals, groups, and institutions (ibid.). I have demonstrated through my analysis of contemporary Cuban filmmaking that ongoing relationships consisting of social, political and economic power structures effect methods of filmmaking and inform the desires of the filmmakers to stay in Cuba to produce their work.

In Chapter One I have first introduced the concept of independent filmmaking as one rooted in the changing cultural landscape of Cuban cinema. As independents, filmmakers are positioned by and within relationships of history, culture and power (Hall 1996). Secondly, I have sketched a historical overview of Cuban film production from 1959 to the early 2000s. Scholars such as Michael Chanan (2003) point to the ideological, economics and political role of the state post-revolution. Building off of Chanan’s historical analyses, key academics have helped me to construct an understanding of how themes of gender, race, education, migration, technology and neoliberal globalization intersect with a long-standing centralized Cuban film industry. Adding to the scholarship in the field, I have analyzed relationships of power from new perspectives. I have created a discussion on the topic of young independent filmmaking by asking probing questions
in both a thesis paper and in short, twenty-minute documentary entitled *Por Amor al Arte*. This project captures an ephemeral point in time and place through the mode of documentary media.

In Chapter Two I have proceeded to outline my theoretical and methodological approaches to this investigation. I have adopted a combined poststructuralist and postcolonial framework to examine theories of power and cultural identity. Where there were gaps in a poststructuralist approach, I have called for a postcolonial analysis of cultural identity as it intersects with theories of globalization.

I have addressed my methodology as a collaborative critical ethnographic approach through the methods of participant observation, in-depth semi-structured and structured interviews and through the making of a short documentary film. Due to particular limitations of this project, I was only able to conduct interviews and film in Havana and Gibara, Cuba. I have understood that my position as a young, white, middle-class, female university student is one of privilege. Certain traits also allowed me to build rapport with participants, such as sharing a common interest in filmmaking and my status as a student. Those I interviewed both for the documentary and for this thesis come from certain socio-economic, geographic status. Furthermore this research illustrates the lack of gender and racial minorities in young Cuban filmmaking, which is worthy of further investigation. Therefore I do not understand this investigation to be a complete one. Rather this project works to illustrate how certain selection work to construct a particular moment in cultural history.

In Chapter Three my focus shifts to the theoretical analysis of filmmaking production as I positioned young filmmakers within a transitional moment in Cuban cinema. I did so by examining filmmakers’ multiple relationships to power on the island. Using a Foucauldian approach I have reasoned how the multiplicity of power produces gaps in its relationships to
subjects. It is within these gaps that I have examined how people mobilize and produce initiatives with their own social, gender and racial dynamics (Li 2007:26). I have drawn from specific examples in my research to illustrate these points: The proposition of a new film Law by the G-20 group, the role of the Muestra Joven, educational opportunities, and financial support of the Norwegian Embassy film grant. I have concluded that without legislation that gives independent filmmakers legal standing, young filmmakers form new relationships to power within these initiatives. By critically examining these initiatives I have positioned young filmmakers within the different sets of social, political and material power relations that exist.

Building on my analysis in Chapter three, I have critically engaged with the images of five filmmakers to analyze how interests in particular narratives, genres and aesthetics intersect with current relationships to power. Consequently, this intersection reveals a desire for a filmmaking future in Cuba. Supporting my arguments with specific quotations and images from *Por Amor al Arte* I have argued that understanding the changing experiences of young independent filmmakers in the contemporary audiovisual landscape we can begin to deconstruct the Eurocentric modes of analysis that frame minority filmmaking within a strict set of parameters. These criteria ‘other’ and do not allow for an analysis based in specific historical and cultural moments (Shohat and Stam 2002, 1994). I have borrowed from Falicov (2007, 2010, 2013) and Ross (2011) to deconstruct the ‘global-art house’ aesthetic. The criteria of festival are challenged, as Cuban filmmakers become mobile subjects. The parameters of local and universal, which these programs prescribe to the projects of their participants, dehistoricize the filmmaking process. Each of above examples is worthy of further investigation. As they grow and change, new relationships to power will form.
In my concluding narration for *Por Amor al Arte* I have called for a necessary adjustment in the structure of the Cuban industry to legally include independent filmmakers. The possibility of a new structure will increase the possibilities for young filmmakers to share their work, build stronger networks in the field and expand career possibilities. Despite the anxieties felt by these young artists, they see opportunities available and the potential to stay and develop their projects on the island. As Arevalo explained, “*I feel that in Cuba with organization and planning, and a little but of money, you can make art*” (December 18, 2014). Arevalo speaks here to the experienced and established Cuban industry professional, institutes and scholars whose valuable insights into both local and international film markets should be used to the advantage of younger filmmakers, on the island. Young filmmakers are now building upon a history that instilled in them the importance of culture, as they enter into a more neoliberal moment in cultural production.
References


Amaya, Hector. 2010. Screening Cuba: Film Criticism as Political Performance during the Cold War. United States: University of Illinois.


Brugés, A. (Director). (2011) Juan de los Muertos. [Film]. Producciones de la 5ta Avenida; La Zanfoña Producciones.


Ceballos, J.C. (Director). (2012) Quires que llore? [Film].


Daranas, E. (Director). (2014) Conducta. [Film]. ICAIC.

del Castillo, A. (Director). (2014) @256 [Film]. Jorge Molina.


Machado, C. (Director). (2015) La Obra del Siglo. [Film]. Hubert Bals Fund; Uranio Films; Rizoma Films; ICAIC; Ventura Film; Raspberry & Cream; M-Appeal.


Mena, A. (Director). (2013) Nani y Tati. [Film].


Pérez, F. (Director). (1994) Madagascar. [Film]. ICAIC.


Solás, H. (Director). (1968) *Lucía*. [Film]. ICAIC.

Solaya, Marilyn (Director). (2014) *Vestido de Novia* [Film]. ICAIC


Appendix A

List of Semi-Structured Interviews


------, personal interview, December 17, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Angelo del Castillo, personal interview, April 29, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Luis Ernesto Doñas, personal interview, June 4, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Juan Carlos Ceballos, personal interview, April 26, 2014, Gibara, Cuba.

------, personal interview, December 12, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Claudia Calviño, personal interview, April 13, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Daniel Arevalo, personal interview, April 26, 2014, Gibara, Cuba.

------, personal interview, December 18, 2014, Havana, Cuba.


Helena Rodriguez, personal interview, December 18, 2014, Havana, Cuba.

Diana Montero, personal interview, January 7, 2015, Havana, Cuba.

Appendix B

GREB Approval

April 16, 2014

Ms. Jessica Burgess
Master’s Student
Department of Cultural Studies
Queen's University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-032-14; Romeo # 6012579
Title: "GCUL-032-14 Young Cuban Filmmaking: New Proponents of Cuban Culture in a Global Society"

Dear Ms. Burgess:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GCUL-032-14 Young Cuban Filmmaking: New Proponents of Cuban Culture in a Global Society" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Susan Lord, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Richard Day, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.