Chapter 3 - Redefining Realities through Self-Representational Performance by Jama Shelton

In Chapter 3, Jama Shelton discusses the significance of a project called Turned Up Volume, which is a nonprofit performance project that inspires queer youth to create their own voice and language. She believes that when given the freedom, queer youth have the ability to create their own cultural practices and alter the ways in which they are conceptualized by people and institutions different from themselves. She states that it is important for these youth to have a way in which to voice their opinions and create their identities otherwise they will stay marginalized, invisible, and muted. Projects like Turned Up Volume, have provided them with a space to develop, create, and communicate with other queer youth through the means of self-representational performance and begin to strengthen their own voices. The goal of this project is to represent the self through personal experiences and desires in order to begin to acknowledge, accept, and understand who you really are. Because there are very few queer representations in the media or throughout culture, (and for the few that do exist they are often very stereotypical and cliched) these young people are empowered to form their own representations of self. This allows them to be whoever they want to be and not depict the media's portrayal of queer. Turned Up Volume and other projects like this, says Shelton, work to challenge the already existing heteronormative models of sexuality, gender, desire, politicism, and conformity; give queer youth the tools necessary in order to become a less marginalized group through their own agency and means of representation; and allows them to communicate in their own language in a safe space where they can explore and define themselves independent of heteronormative ideologies.