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THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN CREATIVE CIVIC PRACTICES

by

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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This thesis entitled:

The Social Organization of Learning Opportunities in Creative Civic Practices

written by Adam York

has been approved for the School of Education

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we

Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards

Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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The Social Organization of Learning Opportunities in Creative Civic Practices

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Ben Kirshner

There is much room for improvement in the opportunities afforded to young people to learn through becoming active civic and political participants (Campbell, Levinson & Hess, 2012). In addition to calls for a “new civics” (www.spencer.org) or “action civics” (www.centerforactioncivics.org) approach to organizing for learning in this domain, scholars have identified promising trends in out-of -school spaces, such as “participatory politics” (Kahne, Middaugh & Allen 2014) “participatory culture civics” (Kligler & Shresthova 2012) and “connected civics” (Ito et al, 2015) that address the current need for more engaging civic learning opportunities. Within this field, there are lingering questions about how program directors and educators can best design work to organize opportunities for civic learning. This study follows 15 high-school-age creative interns as they collaborated with a professional artist to complete a public mural for the city. In planning meetings interns conducted background research on the neighborhood, deliberated findings of the research as a group with the lead artist guiding discussion and tried artistic work such as sketching and collaging to represent the concerns that were being pondered. An analysis of the social organization of endeavors (Rogoff, 2014) throughout this project showed how learning opportunities varied between times when the group worked in a flexible ensemble and times where adults directed the pace and ideas through storytelling. The narratives told to interns during this project played a socializing role (Ochs, 1997, 2004), encouraging a critical stance towards artistic work and active stance towards civic issues. Neighborhood residents and artists were powerful civic educators, and the analysis of this project contained examples with utility for the design of similar opportunities, such as organizing occasions for stories to emerge.

Dedication

For mom and dad, the best teachers I ever had.
To Cathlin and Arthur, your love kept me going.
To so many mentors and loved ones who supported me all along the way,
I think of you often and will always be grateful.

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Social Organization of Learning Opportunities in Creative Civic Practices

There is a growing body of research that explores the shifting terrain of civic and political participation that young people experience today. This research has identified some of the activities that young people are taking up to affect change on issues that they find important. Scholars discussing this new context have generated compelling terms such as “participatory politics” (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen 2014) “participatory culture civics” (Kligler & Shresthova 2012) and “connected civics” (Ito et al, 2015). These terms share the common view that young people learn to become civic participants through actual connection with issues and by taking action where they see the need for changes (Kirshner & Middaugh, 2014). This school of thought foregrounds the new digital tools that people use to accomplish political goals (Soep, 2014) along with the importance of becoming involved in political and social change from an early age in ways that support learning by doing (Youniss, 2011; Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Along with this new paradigm of conceptualizing how civic learning takes place has come new research about informal learning spaces where young people engage in the practice of social change. Youth organizing collectives, libraries, museums, and arts and media programs have emerged as places for people to develop the capacity to enact their commitments towards constructing a better world by addressing inequity and injustice (Akom, Ginwright & Cammarota, 2008; Ginwright, 2010; Kuttner, 2015; Herr-Stephenson et al, 2011). These out of school learning environments can organize robust and engaging pathways positioning young people as civic leaders and attempt to remove structural barriers to full participation in social systems (Ginwright, Cammarota & Noguera, 2005). Organizations that design programming for young people to participate in public life through media production offer one way to address a general lack of opportunities to learn effective ways of becoming active citizens (Soep, 2006; Goldman et al, 2008; Pinkard et al, 2008). Such empirical studies of youth media programs suggest that these spaces can offer a valuable platform for youth to express agency and have an impact on public discourse.

Youth agency and public impact are important to the well-being of young people and society as a whole (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Unfortunately, despite some evidence of a resurgence of electoral participation by youth in the 2008 and 2012 elections, the overall indicators of civic participation suggest that young people struggle to find ways to participate in public life. Across many factors there has been a decline in civic engagement among young people, and more importantly a divide in access to opportunities to participate in civic life for young people of color and in economically disadvantaged circumstances (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Zaff et al, 2009).

Another second feature of the contemporary context is a rapidly evolving media landscape young people experience as they make sense of the world and the ways they can engage with societal problems. This new media landscape has been characterized by emerging trends such as increased access to networks to circulate information and new kinds of opportunities to develop creative work and share it with others, and these shifts are “affecting every aspect of our contemporary experience (Jenkins, 2006, p.57).” Young people are growing up in a digital ecology where much of public life takes place online, but there are few spaces where they get to learn how to be critical consumers and producers of information (Jenkins, 2006; Buckingham, 2010).

The reason that it is important to document innovative sites of civic learning and participation is because the complex problems that fill our civic spaces require that people be prepared to create innovative solutions. To engage in civic life fully requires that people be inquisitive about the root causes of problems and willing to explore a diverse range of solutions. Recent evidence suggests that young people are using online social media and taking advantage of creative learning spaces, such as YouMedia Chicago –a drop-in technology-rich learning space with professional mentors-- to engage with civic issues (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Kahne & Middaugh, 2012), but questions remain about the what learning opportunities best support quality engagement in these contexts. How do we know if young people have access to opportunities to learn to be *effective* civic participants? For example, digital media participation – if unattached to specific developmental settings – may lack two qualities necessary to leverage these tools for civic engagement: critical literacies and skillful creative production (Buckingham, 2009; Kafai & Peppler, 2011). In order to understand what makes for critical and creative methods of social action, it is necessary to examine multiple spaces in young people's lives for evidence about social factors that can support expansive learning in the civic domain (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Packer & Goicoechea 2000; Engestrom & Sannino 2010). This need leads to the following question: what are qualities of spaces that offer meaningful civic participation?

Participatory Civic Spaces as a Response to Problems with Democracy

The qualities of meaningful civic participation are being discussed in recent research that reported promising findings of how youth claim power and voice in civic and political forums. Some candidates for positive organizing elements in these spaces include: direct engagement with community issues; making safe spaces for expression; and developing critical literacies through practice.

Direct engagement with community issues. Artistic work has long been one way that people critique complex societal issues, but there has been an increase in attention given to youth programs designed around art as a vehicle for engagement with community issues (Dewhurst, 2011; Kuttner, 2015). For example, research that foregrounded this connection has discussed opportunities for young people to explore civic issues through multiple lenses and gain experiences in the challenging work of interpreting the world in new creative ways (Vasudevan et al., 2010; Fleming, 2007). Learning about the role of art in the evolving social world is one form of literacy that holds potential for addressing the problems of declining civic participation (Soep, 2014; Dolan, 2001). Arts education that acknowledges political implications and foregrounds collective work can help young people envision their role within broader justice oriented efforts (Kuttner, 2015).

Making safe spaces for expression. One important finding from research on the social organization of learning in youth programs suggests that adults must adjust expectations and take risks to best support young people in taking leadership and expressing voice (Chávez & Soep, 2005; Goldman et al., 2008). For example, Charmaraman (2013) discussed how adult leaders were, “cognizant of the need to provide guidance yet allow youth to find their own niche, (p. 11)” when constructing safe spaces for creative expression. In these safe spaces, creative production has promise for developing young people’s awareness of public issues and interest in social and systemic change. Other studies have highlighted the possibilities for agency in creative production (Hull & Katz, 2006) and how such opportunities, if properly organized, have the potential to connect with audiences and become part of public discourse (Levine, 2008).

Developing critical literacies through practice. There is growing empirical support for the necessity of improved learning opportunities in the domain of critical literacies. One key finding at the intersection of youth civic engagement and digital media is that a majority of young people report that they would benefit from opportunities to learn how to judge the credibility of information (Cohen & Kahne, 2012). These findings resonate with calls for increased attention to the practices that support critical media literacies, positioning youth as active participants in analyzing the relationship between information and power (Rheingold, 2008). Learning to be critically literate with media requires opportunities to explore the ways that people construct meaning through communication, and how power gives shape to the context in which people interpret information (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Morrell, 2012). Designing intentional spaces for young people to critique societal issues and produce creative responses is one approach to this need, so that youth can discover connections between their personal interests and civic life (Aakom et al., 2008; Soep & Chávez, 2011). Additionally, Ito et al. (2015) suggest that civic learning opportunities that connect with young people's cultural affinities lessen barriers for young people and increase participation in civic action.

Implications for this study. Prior research has paved the way for serious consideration of creative spaces as sites for civic development, and more attention is needed to the specific features of learning environments to support critical literacies and through creative or artistic civic action. Throughout the formulation of this study, I remained curious about the role of adult guidance in organizing civic learning opportunities. This study will contribute to the ongoing discussion of the social organization of out-of-school learning spaces by investigating an arts program where high school-aged interns engaged with adult guides to building knowledge of civic issues and expand their understanding of tools for civic action.

Why Study Riverplace Arts?

Riverplace Arts has organized a space for master artists and young people to work together on projects that blend creative production and critique of social issues, creating space for developing expertise in both artistic and civic work. The program's stated goals are to allow young people access to mentoring in artistic practice and opportunities to engage with social issues through the arts. With this explicit goal, Riverplace aims to create space for creative civic practices by supporting artists and young people in using their creative effort to construct a better world.

This study focuses on one mural project, but creative civic activity at Riverplace has taken many forms over the years. Often youth there visit and discuss public historical sites of creative activity. For example, they visited murals in the city center where an art professor at a local university led them through a discussion of the content of the images and the historical context of their production. This kind of exploration is intentionally cultivated by Riverplace staff to bridge their creative process with the history of creative civic work around the world and locally. Also, youth often survey and interview others about essential questions in the creative work, such as surveying community members on their experiences with the availability of nutritious food to inform a project about malnutrition and hunger. Similar processes across multiple projects allow them to draw from multiple perspectives to inform their artistic expressions. Projects there typically culminate through a public opening with time for viewing or listening to artistic work as well as hearing from artists and youth directly about the process. These openings often draw a diverse crowd including families of young people in the program, local artists, and other curious individuals. The interns draw on their experiences in the creative process, and what they have learned from artists they work with to reflect and discuss social issues at these public events.

In these instances, on the street and in the studio, their creative activity is a way to both reflect on the world as it is and share ideas about the way the world could be. Riverplace often draws experts from a variety of fields to increase the information available to support creative work with social problems. This active organizing has been exemplified by many projects I have observed over the last five years. One example comes from the first artist I got to know while spending time with the interns in the program. She led a series of workshops that helped interns to consider how popular media capitalizes on the natural fears of losing time and aging, and the young people created videos that were a critique of the advertising industry. Another resident was an architect who positioned young children as urban planners who took everyday objects, which could be tossed away as trash or junk, and used them to make an image of a city that reflected the needs and interests of a younger population. In each of these projects, and many more that I have observed, the creative process is deeply interwoven with civic issues big and small. In the process, civic learning opportunities become available.

In order to research the activity at Riverplace and how it relates to the identified need for expanded civic learning opportunities, I directed my attention towards one of its 2013 summer projects. Riverplace staff had received a grant from the city to paint a mural on the side of a freeway support column located at a busy intersection. To support this work they had recruited a prominent graffiti artist who grew up in the neighborhood where the team painted the mural. Together Riverplace staff and the artist designed a summer program that would allow high-school-age interns the opportunity to learn about the history and current issues in that community and work alongside the artist to plan and paint the mural.

The Productive Messiness of Civic Learning

During the mural painting process, many of the interns stood on the streetcorner with clipboards and video recorders to interview passing people. This process offered an opportunity for open discussion on a number of topics; interns re-voiced issues they had learned about through the course of the project. In one of these clips, Anjelica, a high school junior intern spoke with a middle-aged man on the streetcorner. The conversation was being video recorded by another intern. These street side interviews took place directly across the road from where the group was working on the mural, and the man who spoke with Anjelica was a resident of the neighborhood who happened to walk by with his family.

Anjelica opened the interview with the following question: “About the history; do you find it…like, it’s ridiculous that no one’s willing to take the blame that’s what happened the last years to this city, to the community?” The man raised his eyebrows, paused for a moment and responded, “It’s a … Yeah.” I thought he appeared to be surprised by Anjelica’s question, which was more of a statement of how she was feeling about something she had learned about the history of that community. Interns had heard from other residents that industrial pollution had wrecked the soil and caused major public health concerns in this neighborhood for decades. She continued, “They didn’t… designate business or industry? They haven’t came here to apologize for any of it?” The resident replied, “no.”

This clip showed some of the messiness of public discussion of civic issues. Throughout the project, interns had the opportunity to learn about specific problems that were of critical importance to the area residents. Anjelica was drawing on these stories and expressing her alignment and solidarity with the people in that neighborhood. She was echoing the frustration voiced many times throughout the project about the history of the smelter that both sustained and polluted the community, and the lack of accountability on the part of corporations that did damage to this place where they and their families lived.

The subsequent exchange between Anjelica and the man indicated some mutual understanding of the issue and connection between two people who had never met before. Anjelica continued, “That’s messed up.” The man nodded, “Yes it is.” Anjelica quickly replied, “Because they would be … That would be nice. If they just came-“He nodded again, “Yeah it would be nice.” She kept pressing, “Or at least tried to help the city.” Again, a nod, “I know.”

They continued to talk for a few more minutes, and the interview closed with the following question. She asked him, “Which word would you represent [the neighborhood] with?” He responded, “It’s awesome, it’s nice, it’s beautiful.” His response to this question was striking given the agreement over the environmental concerns. Though at times messy, the social organization of learning opportunities for interns included the stories, some long and some very short, about people’s lives and experiences in the neighborhood.

The internship program at Riverplace Arts, and this project, in particular represent a category of learning opportunity, where people are active, engaged and creative. These sorts of opportunities are gaining attention in the research literature because of the important role it might play in improving civic life for young people. This project also provided an example with which to investigate how the guidance of experienced adults was included in the organizing of learning opportunities around a focal project. Opportunities were made possible by artists, community members and program staff, each of whom contributed to transforming art studios and public spaces into sites where people could share stories about their experiences of civic participation.

Review of Literature

This review includes research discussing concepts such as critical literacies and creative production, which provide a general outline of practices that are relevant to a study of Riverplace. I drew from published studies of youth media programs and critical literacies to inform this study of what might be necessary to support young people in becoming competent civic agents. I selected articles and reports published in the last two decades and sought articles that demonstrated the utility of qualitative research to investigate the connection between informal learning spaces, creative practices, and civic learning.

Youth Media Programs

Critical public work with media is often discussed by researchers working in designed learning spaces that bring together the mixture of tools and mentoring to support the practices of critical interpretation and design that reflect high-quality engagement with new media. Many of the best examples of the connection between creative production and public work can be found in organizations directed at those goals, particularly ones that are trying to overcome gaps in access for youth from geographically or economically marginalized communities. This growing set of organizations has expanded in part because schools struggle to integrate learning with media into the curriculum. Groups such as Downtown Aurora Visual Arts in Colorado and Youth Radio in Oakland design settings where youth engage in authentic public work both producing high-quality media and addressing issues of social concern. These organizations, often characterized as “youth media programs” or “creative youth development programs” can take place in afterschool clubs, museums, libraries, and community organizations. Typically these organizations offer structured activities with digital and artistic tools, along with mentoring in the creative use of these tools. They also often direct actions towards the explicit goal of connecting media production with political and civic life focusing on how people use media for social change (Herr-Stephenson et al., 2011).

Often these sites are rich with access to technological tools, and some have cutting edge technologies. One good example of this is Spy Hop, a nonprofit in Salt Lake City with the tagline, “youth media matters.” They offer workshops, paid apprenticeships, and year-long programs in film, audio engineering, music, and design where youth engage in media literacies, using professional equipment and with professional mentorship. Other sites have just enough technology to make the projects work, like Riverplace, who relied in large part on donated equipment and in many cases utilize staff workstations to allow for all of the interns to access video or music editing software. However, as Herr-Stephenson and colleagues (2011) note, what often drives the activity at these sites to become engaged public work is the social organization of space and the interactions between people.

Across the examples available in the current literature on youth media programs there are two themes that emerge that suggest how they might be supporting media literacies. I focused on qualitative studies that have investigated the social organization of learning in youth media programs and their findings regarding the practices that support creative civic action. First, I discuss youth-adult collaborations, as a number of researchers have found that youth media programs provide an occasion to re-negotiate the traditional roles of youth and adults, which supports youth stepping into roles as leaders in public work. Second, I discuss the importance of finding an audience and preparing work to share with others as a key piece of developing agency through creative civic practice.

Youth-adult collaborations. Youth media programming frames public work as an activity that is critically important for youth development, disrupting notions about the apathy of young people concerning social issues (Soep, 2006). For example it might not be common to think of young people writing news stories on political issues, but youth media programs often organize around these kinds of activities with an understanding that youth both care about and are capable of deep engagement with complex societal problems. Media programs must respond to the challenge of scaffolding young people to step into roles that are typically reserved for adults, such as producing radio stories or art installations that offer commentary on public life. A pervasive finding across studies is that this scaffolding takes the form of fluid collaborations between youth and adults.

Several studies conclude that adult mentoring plays an essential role in helping youth make connections between media engagement and public work. There is a thin line that adults navigate in deciding how much of a role they should play in the process of organizing activities for young people (Chávez & Soep, 2005). In the case studies of Youth Radio, a youth media program that distributes audio content to outlets like NPR, Chávez and Soep argue that these contexts reshape the relationships between adult and youth collaborators, making it possible for adults and youth to engage in joint work throughout the production of media. They identify four features of youth-adult collaboration: joint framing of projects, youth taking the lead in conceptualization and tasks, working towards strategic outcomes, and distributed accountability of participants. The process of collaboration between youth and adults and is a tension worth engaging because of the potential for both adults and youth to learn from each other. By both adults and youth investing in the projects and accountability to each other for their roles, media production can be an empowering practice for young people, not only in the act of media production, but also in learning to take leadership roles in projects and working with peers and adults who are collaborators.

Another empirical example of how youth-adult collaboration supports critical media literacies comes from a study of youth video production (Stack, 2009). In this project high school aged youth worked with graduate students, most of whom were teachers, administrators or counselors, to create video-taped Public Service Announcements that critique media and advertising. The findings from this study reflected three key themes. First, both young people and the graduate students brought important knowledge to the collaboration, disrupting binaries between young and old in teaching and mentoring. Second, even though youth reported feelings of equality in the working relationship, the graduate students reported that changing their roles to be more collaborative was challenging. Third, throughout the project, both the high school students and graduate students engaged because of opportunities to critique cultural stereotypes and expectations of people based on age and gender. What is important to note in this work is that the practice of critical interpretation was supported by the social organization of the learning space.

Collaboration shows up in research by Goldman, Booker, and McDermott (2008), who present two case studies of youth using media and technology to influence their communities. They argue that there are many important factors, beyond access or skills with technology, that shape how youth leverage creative production in order to be influential in their communities. The process of becoming a leader using these tools requires developing a relationship with adults, and learning to collaborate with peers, and developing an understanding of an audience. These authors make the case for increased attention to the social and cultural contexts of media production to accompany the research attention being given to the technological skills and tools.

Both adults and youth were learning throughout this process, and there was an interplay between identity development and how people understood where to find openings to express agency. These findings support the notion that engaging in public work with media involves coming to know one's self and one's social context, including the interpersonal relationships between youth and adults that are part of everyday life.

The aforementioned studies provide exemplars of the social organization of learning opportunities in creative spaces that encourage the development of young people into capable civic actors. First, the different kinds of roles that youth occupy in these spaces (ex. producer, leader) might be very different from the opportunities they experience in other spaces, like schools. Second, in these roles young people find new ways to relate to adults and work together in a joint activity, which is another feature of youth media programs that is absent elsewhere. Third, studies point to the importance of a focus on relationships in research and design related to youth media programming. Analyzing the social organization of adults and young people working together has proven to be a productive avenue for understanding how learning opportunities take shape in youth programs.

Public audience. Levine (2008) notes that youth media programs can face challenges when finding an audience for their civic work. Audiences are challenging to cultivate because the public sphere are saturated by both commercial media and amateur creations that often do not reflect any depth of critical engagement with social issues. In this context, youth media programs must experiment with new tactics for securing audiences in order for the youth productions to spark dialogue and begin to impact social change.

One example of a site where creative practices are used to encourage dialogue can be seen in the Alternative to Incarceration Program (ATIP), in which young men and women learned acting techniques, wrote a script, and performed a play in New York's theater district (Vasudevan et al., 2010). The performers also engaged in a talk-back session with the audience, where they responded to questions and feedback. The analysis of this space suggested that programs like these, where young people compose and perform stories for a public audience, have the possibility to become powerful sites for public work, particularly when they encourage dialogue and reflection. The audience dialogue was a design feature of this program that was integral to the youth connecting their writing and acting with social issues beyond the theatre because it supported the consideration of the perspective of outsiders in that and future creative projects. Through these opportunities to share work in public and engage in dialogue with an audience, youth can explore their identities and how the practices of authoring can connect with public work.

Connecting with audiences is an important way that programs designed for young people can expand beyond what young people do in their everyday lives with media. Charmaraman (2010) studied youth in an after school media program to document the ways in which group members were expressing agency and how future imagined audiences were affecting their work. The process by which these youth took into account possible audiences as they navigated the process of production was a feature of the organization of activity guiding the program. In this case, youth productions were guided by a shared desire to change the ways in media outlets portray youth, which often reflects negative stereotypes of the commitments and capacity of young people. These youth took into account multiple perspectives on what the best means to achieve this common goal were, both from within their group, and also from outside their group as they incorporated feedback from prior experiences with audiences. Because these programs can often support a consistent audience for youth work, they increase the opportunity for learning how media creations can be constructed to maximize public impact. The program emphasized the role of the audience, and provided the space to bring together multiple viewpoints on both what the problems are with perceptions of young people and how best to approach the goal of impacting public dialogue. Opportunities like this to learn from peers' perspectives and have a real audience are one benefit when youth media programming supports open access.

Another term that is often used to signal the platform through which young people connect with audiences is "youth voice." Voice is often linked with agency, with the assumption being that expression of voice to a public audience will allow for transformative outcomes, both for young people and audiences. Soep (2008) argues that the concept of youth voice is complicated by the evolving nature of opinions and passions that serve as the platform for expression. Using voice and agency as synonymous is problematic, because voice is a constant work-in-progress and self-expression might only be one component of agency. Through developing a better understanding of the self in relation to other people and broader systems, a person can begin to experience agentic possibilities. Accounting for the relational nature of agency re-emphasizes the importance of having a real audience to target with media productions. Youth media programming supports public work when prioritizing critique of media productions with the intent of connecting with an actual public audience. Critique is one of the central practices that leads to sophisticated media products that address social issues requiring investigation and interpretation. Audiences can provide an additional set of perspectives that inform the creative process and strengthen the impact of public media products that youth produce.

Literacies of Critical Citizenship

The types of programs discussed above and their approaches to designing activity spaces for young people are important because of the role they play in addressing critical questions raised by researchers of youth civic participation in the changing media and education landscape. Youth media programs like the ones listed above offer evidence of how organizations can break down barriers between youth and adults, and use a public dialogue to encourage civic learning. This design work at an organizational level addresses a need identified by researchers, which is to investigate how critical literacies foster civic development that takes young people beyond procedural and fact-based modes of civic education.

In response to the changes in accessibility to media tools and public use of technology, scholars have investigated how young people leverage new media tools to get connected with civic and political issues. The push for research on this topic is exemplified by the Youth and Participatory Politics Network, an interdisciplinary research partnership at the intersection of youth, new media, and political life. In a report from this network, Cohen & Kahne (2012) identify trends in “participatory politics (p. vi),” a term that they use to describe how young people are using digital tools to get involved in civic and political issues. Findings from this study suggest that young people who engaged in media production are more likely to become involved in civic or political issues. Young people who participated in political activity online were more likely to participate in a traditional political activity, like voting. They report, for example, that 41 percent of young people are using digital media to get engaged with political issues. One striking finding, however, showed that a large majority, 84 percent, of young people reported that they would benefit from opportunities to learn how to “judge the credibility of what they find online (p. x)”. Such interpretive skills, which require people to draw on a variety of sources to investigate and understand social issues, are essential in this new media ecology.

According to Kahne and Middaugh (2012), “Unlike traditional political activity, participatory politics are interactive, peer-based, and not guided by traditional institutions like political parties or newspaper editors (p. 52).” Still, in order for young people to better learn how to differentiate between sources of information and take action on social issues may require a concerted effort to make available opportunities to practice the work of bridging media with public life.

A MacArthur Foundation working group called Service and Activism in the Digital Age synthesized many examples of organizations where young people engage in civic and political action to learn more role that new media might serve in these contexts. This group noted, “New media tools and technology are quickly becoming the primary mechanism for bringing attention to issues of public concern (Middaugh et al., 2012, p. i).” The report recommends four principles that should guide youth groups that promote civic engagement with new media: building community and connecting with social movements, encouraging and amplifying youth voice, learning through models and authentic practice, and grappling with issues of social justice and fairness. These principles offer guidance for youth programming designers who are interested in shaping opportunities for youth to develop civic practices that include the use of new media. These principles also suggest that much of what constitutes public work with digital media has to do with personal interaction and connections between networks of people. While digital tools and new media can be the means for engaging in civic action, much of what needs to happen to make these possibilities become a reality will be built upon people organizing the social conditions for this work to materialize and endure. This line of work begs the question of what constitutes high-quality participation and what kinds of learning environments promote pathways to becoming active and critical citizens?

Critical media literacies research began before the shifts in the media ecology noted above (Kellner & Share, 2005). Traditionally such research focused on addressing the dangers of manipulation through media (Livingstone, 2004), for example, teaching students how to understand that television news was not neutral. Such approaches, however, rarely considered how “young people can come to think of themselves as cultural producers and participants and not merely consumers, critical or otherwise (Jenkins, 2006, p.259).”

The following sections, informed by Jenkins’s argument, focus on how youth learn to live with media as both producers and consumers, tracing the evolution of the field of media literacies that has evolved in parallel with the changing forms of media in our daily lives. In the last two decades researchers have moved toward serious consideration of young people as producers; there are at least three concepts that are central to this shift. First, scholars have pursued important questions about what it takes to be a proficient creator of multimodal texts, and what this process of learning looks like (New London Group, 1996; Kafai & Peppler, 2011). Second, there has been work to understand the ways that people express agency through their creative work (Hull & Katz, 2006; Halverson et al., 2009). Third, literacies scholars have heeded the call to consider literacies as a social phenomenon, that is, a set of practices that have a particular meaning in cultural and historical context (Gutierrez et al., 2009; Hull & Moje, 2012, Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). These shifts in research on literacies have led to the emergence of “new media literacies” as a field of research that investigates the social practices of literacies, and which can deeply inform civic action.

In order to understand how media literacies intersect with creative civic activity, I cover some of the key concepts that have emerged in frameworks on media literacies. These concepts are all applicable to understanding what might constitute high-quality participation in critical and creative civic practices, and represent some of the focal learning constructs that can allow for public work with new media to be impactful. These concepts include multiliteracies, critical media literacies, and participatory competencies.

Multiliteracies. In a landmark article, the New London Group (1996) highlighted the shifting ecology literacies and learning. They argued that learning to be proficient in the design process and understanding various modes of meaning had direct implications for civic participation as our public lives become increasingly shaped by multimodal forms of information. Their account of what constitutes "multiliteracies," includes literacies spanning different modes (ex. visual, auditory) of communication, and highlights some of the ways that media is changing the ways we use language. This timing of this article marked the beginning of the emergence of the new media ecology, and the authors predicted many of the questions that would guide research on new media literacies. Central to this work is the role of design. Design is an iterative process where people draw upon available resources and reshape them to transform knowledge and social relations. A design could be a plan for a piece of media to be produced, or it could be a re-organized environment for people to work together, but in both cases people make meaning of the previous designs and re-designs through reading, seeing, and listening. In the context of new forms of media, there are many different modes of meaning that become important in the design process. These different modes can include the traditional linguistic forms of communication, but in multiliteracies are expanded to include visual meaning through images and layouts, audio meaning outside of language including music and sounds, gestural meaning spatial meanings, and the dynamic relationships between each of these different modes as they are presented together.

Critical media literacies. Another fundamental question about young people's learning opportunities is: what constitutes "critical" work with new media? Critical interpretation of media requires increased attention to the conditions under which people create media products and attempts to understand the connections between information and power. Soep (2008) argues that youth media production can be one means to "unsettle the ideologies and institutions that reproduce unequal distributions of power (p.39)." To accomplish this requires deliberate attention to and cultivation of critique. Levine (2008) suggests that the use of digital media offers a "promising way to enhance" (p. 119) civic engagement when media products include debates, parodies, and expressions of dissent. Additionally these creative productions begin to represent critical engagement when they draw on multiple perspectives and represent different sides of a political or social issue. These recommendations highlight the importance of attention towards what constitutes critical media literacies, and how critical practices can potentially infuse civic work with creative and artistic forms.

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2005) define critical media pedagogy as a method that aims to identify hegemony and ideology, and to help people learn that mass media is not neutral. The authors acknowledge that this call for critical media literacies is not new, it is a continuation of historical push for more attention to the ways in which messages shape our social world (Freire & Maecedo, 1987; Kellner, 1995; Giroux, 1996). In particular the authors note the major socializing effects of mass media, something that begins to rival and sometimes surpass schools and families in terms of time spent by youth. Critical media literacies are based on asking questions about where particular texts come from, who creates them and their motives, and both intended and unintended meanings. Through this lens, texts become understood as factors that shape identity and social conditions. Critical media literacies is an approach that can take place at multiple sites where people engage with the tools of representation, not simply in schools.

Buckingham (2011) expands upon the importance of the development of critical interpretation, and argues that without critical reflection, or critique, that these new media practices are unlikely to be transformative spaces or deliver on the promise of greater access to the means of production and distribution of multimedia information. Another central issue of concern is inequitable access to the technological tools as a hurdle to widespread participation in cultural citizenship with new media. Becoming critical consumers or producers requires that people have access to the means with which to easily interact with a variety of information, in order to find different viewpoints. For example, access to television alone would not support the ability to search for views that differ from the mainstream news outlets as well as broadband internet and the multiplicity of news outlets and sources of information that provide alternative perspectives.

Participatory competencies. In a more recent framework, Kafai and Peppler (2011) discuss participatory competencies in digital practices such as remixing, reworking, and repurposing media. These practices highlight the ways that young people can gather artifacts and use them to create new products that reflect their interests. The authors draw from empirical work to construct a framework for participatory competencies built around computer programming, which could be expanded to cover many forms of creative production. This framework articulates four dimensions: technical, creative, critical and ethical.

Technical competencies include understanding how to make use of digital tools to accomplish goals, persist through challenges as they arise and find solutions to problems that one may encounter when using tools. Creative practices involve making choices and decisions from an artistic perspective about how to best use different modes of communication in isolation or combination. Practices can include adhering to artistic values as well as experimentation with those conventions and combinations of multiple modes of information to communicate complex meanings. Critical competencies involve deconstructing media and reflecting on the different layers of media to understand how people construct meaning. Another critical competency can include reworking or remixing media to create new meanings. Ethical practices can involve the ways in which people create and share media, including how people credit each other's work and participate in the social world of sharing creative products. This framework is useful in investigations of youth work across the many forms of media production to understand how, and to what ends, young people are using new media tools. Frameworks such as this can shed light on how youth are learning in these different dimensions through their use of media adding to the range of ways we can study how participatory culture is shaping the lives of youth.

Summarizing Findings on Critical Media Literacies

The outcomes from empirical studies of these topics show that young people express agency when opportunities are present. Research on critical literacies helps to identify some of the goals and values that can guide educators and youth organizers, such as using written and visual forms to critique problems in the world. This study of the social organization of learning will add to the literature by discussing specific features of ecologies that might further develop the potential for learning to be proficient civic actors.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I draw on Vygotsky (1978) and subsequent theorists to conceptualize learning as a sociocultural process (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010; Cole & Engestrom, 2006). Within this perspective, researchers are encouraged to account for context by considering how a learner is immersed in culture and history. This theoretical work embraces a concept of learning that relocates knowledge from structures that reside in the mind to a situated view of knowledge embedded in social relations (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989).

I drew on these theoretical roots but focused on two particular elements of sociocultural theory. First, I aimed to focus on the role of culture and history as factors that shape activity and influence the meanings that actors attribute to the processes of learning (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Rogoff, 2003). In order to understand what a person is becoming, you must know more about the conditions under which their learning becomes meaningful, and how cultural and historical values inform that meaning. In other words, without the backdrop of history and culture, we would not have the adequate context to understand the practical activity of people. In order to get a clear picture of how programs at Riverplace might support the development of active and creative civic participants, we must understand the broader social context that exists and how this context might support or not support that kind of growth.

Second, I focused my attention beyond the skills and knowledge that people were developing in these spaces, but instead on what their learning opportunities suggested about what it was possible to become. Cultural psychology and research on constitution adopt the perspective that learning is a process of ontological change (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). This process is often framed in terms of apprenticeship, coming to full participation within a system of activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991), but has also been expanded to include trajectories that are not yet known. Framing learning in this way, draws attention to the process of organizing through which, “links between and trajectories from learning contexts to youths’ present and future lives are actively produced (O’Connor & Allen, 2010, p. 172).” Learning in this sense involves organizing systems of relation beyond the immediate activity or context, where learners are not merely acquiring knowledge and skills, but rather coming to understand themselves as actors within larger systems of activity (Nespor, 1994, 2004). The pathway to becoming someone who is engaged in civic work through the application of critical literacies is a process that stretches beyond the immediate context of artistic work at Riverplace. In order to maximize the potential for the civic learning of interns, there must be coordination with the context outside the program and increased connection with the public.

Three Planes of Sociocultural Activity

To help me design a study of the learning opportunities at Riverplace I adopted a framework that helped me to decide which types of social activity to the foreground. This framework, drawn from Rogoff (1993, 1995) utilizes the concepts of participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship to give shape to sociocultural activity at multiple levels. Participatory appropriation is concerned with the ways that an individual assumes activities, and through that adoption transforms their understanding of a particular set of undertakings. Guided participation refers to the ways in which activity is organized at the group level to allow for newcomers to become immersed in the activity. Apprenticeship connects the activities that people pursue in groups to the broader cultural and historical context in which those activities have meaning. I considered my prior research with Riverplace and what I noticed along each of the three planes in order to focus my study and develop appropriate research questions.

Participatory appropriation. Through participatory appropriation an individual transforms understanding of a set of social practices and their participation in those practices. Participatory appropriation is a metaphor for learning that differs from the metaphor of internalization, whereby a person would internalize external knowledge or skills, and then transfer those with them to the future and new experiences. Instead learning in this framework is viewed as a process of becoming, where a person participates across many sets of activities with varied goals. Appropriation is a process through which people borrow from others as they explore new practices. The past, present, and future are not separated as in many models of understanding learning. Instead, it is acknowledged that practices always borrow from the past and have implications for future goals not yet articulated. As people participate in a social activity, borrowing ideas and practices from others, they are taking part in the construction of individual, interpersonal, and cultural meaning in a process of mutual constitution. Mutual constitution implies that people are both creating the world around them, and informed by the many layers of meaning, spanning from one on one personal connections to the cultural and historical assumptions that are part of our daily lives.

Merchant (2009) draws on the idea of participation as learning to explore the affordance of Web 2.0 as a space for learning. She notes that in these online platforms, such as Flickr and Blogger, the co-construction of socially acceptable practices and the emphasis on user-generated content offers immense possibilities for participation. These platforms facilitate appropriation through the openness to participation and opportunities to contribute to ideas about what constitutes high-quality participation in these spaces. In these online environments, people are borrowing from one another while at the same time, “contributing to new ways of looking at the world and developing new digital practices (p.11).” She argues that the lessons learned from online spaces invite new ways of thinking about organizing for participatory learning.

At Riverplace, participatory appropriation may have been reflected in the multiple approaches to creative work with media that took place in projects. The interns participated in many sets of practices as artists in residence rotated through the program. As the interns participated in many different artistic practices, opportunities could emerge to appropriate varied approaches to the public work with new media. In the process of experimenting with multiple mediums, interns might see possibilities for impacting audiences through creative production. Another possibility would be increased exposure to different ways they might organize future projects around goals emerge during project work.

Guided participation. Rogoff uses guided participation to refer to the interpersonal processes that people participate in as they coordinate activity. Adopting this lens of focus pushes researchers to consider how people organize activity around particular goals guided by “cultural and social values (p.142).” This plane of focus highlights the arrangement of opportunities to participate in an activity, and encourages questions about the nature of those arrangements and the practices through which the arrangements emerge. These practices can emerge both from the guiding values and through practical activity of people as they work towards particular goals, and often foregrounds the relationships between experts and novices when experts organize activity to provide scaffolded opportunities for novices to become fully immersed in practices. These arrangements also allow for agency of novices as they play a role co-constructing the learning setting.

Kirshner (2008) used this concept to study youth activism organizations. He applied this framework to analyze the ways in which adults in these organizations sought to foster youth civic engagement and leadership. The findings from this study provided a picture of what guided participation can look like across multiple organizations. In one case organization guided participation most often took the form of facilitation, where adults were more neutral to youth's decisions and sought to provide resources to help young people pursue their activism campaign. Kirshner contrasts this finding with another organization where apprenticeship served as the primary mode of guided participation through which adults were more likely to coach young people on campaign strategies. A third case highlighted joint work in which adults worked alongside young people, blurring the distinction between adult and youth roles and rarely organized separate time for coaching or instruction. The arrangements of these spaces varied as a result of multiple factors including the complexity of projects, youth's prior experiences, and the institutional goals and contexts of each organization. These examples illustrate how multiple forms of guided participation can emerge from the guiding values and circumstances of social spaces and how the shape of learning opportunities is co-constructed through practical activity.

At Riverplace, these arrangements for participation in activity were ripe for investigation. The structure of the program opened possibilities for the structure to be informed by guiding principles contributed by a broad group of people. Projects in this space were fluid as roles were negotiated to accomplish the goals of each initiative. The organization was structured support interaction between artists and interns where they engage in shared activity informed by the artists' medium and the end goals for the project they were working on together. Opportunities to participate in specific artistic practices shift as artists rotate through the organization and were also often integrated with guidance from community organizations who partnered with Riverplace to address public problems. These rotating opportunities for participation in creative projects were situated within the broader set of organizational principles of the program, where the youth were positioned as “interns” who participated in a continuous set of practices throughout their involvement with Riverplace. This included community outreach, college access mentoring, and day-to-day interaction with staff and peers. Because of the complex arrangements in the program, further investigation allowed for a more concrete articulation of how these relationships structured learning opportunities.

Apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is a metaphor for activity that considers the things that people do together within a context which gives meaning to that activity. This means that learners are involved in coming to understand how the practices they are taking part in fit within a broader system of practices that constitute the community. The apprenticeship metaphor calls attention to the goals of any community of practice and how both newcomers and experienced participants fill the roles associated with community goals. In addition to attention to the goals associated with a particular community, this piece of the framework relates the activity to the societal context for the community’s presence and functioning. Just as it is necessary to understand a person’s social context in order to understand learning, it is important to take into account the historical and cultural contexts that give meaning to the communities of practice in which people participate.

Accounts of apprenticeship learning illustrate the ways in which newcomers are invited to participate in activities directed towards a concrete goal, as in the career path of becoming a tailor (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning in this form is a process of enculturation where learners engage in authentic practices designed to allow them to come to know the practices that will lead them towards the goal of full participation in a particular activity. This metaphor for learning presents a challenge to out of school creative learning spaces because of the often unclear nature of the goals of full participation in these settings and uncertainty about whether participating leads to membership in a particular community.

Riverplace in many ways resembled an apprenticeship through which young people participate in creative practices with artists who are experienced in engaging in the creative process as public work. The interns were newcomers to the world of public work with art, and the artists often had some expertise in this field. Riverplace was working to fill a gap in the current cultural context, where there were limited opportunities for young people to experience mentoring in both new media practices and public work (Herr-Stephenson, 2006). Still, the pathways for young people to continue these kinds of public work, as a career or as an integral component of their social lives, were unclear and not distinctly formed like they are in other fields such as engineering or computer science (O'Connor & Allen, 2010).

There is an inherent tension in discussing the trajectories that interns pursued and how adults at Riverplace were active in organizing the conditions for these pathways to materialize. This tension grew out of the distinct role of Riverplace in the context of arts and media opportunities for youth in the city. This organization connected with other spaces to expand the possibilities for young people to engage in public work through their work as creators, including cultivating partnerships with community activists and other nonprofit organizations. It is unclear how those connections manifested into opportunities for young people to develop trajectories as participants in public life, nor which pathways were of greatest interest to young people who participate in the program.

Using the Framework to Inform Study Design

In this study, I directed my analytical focus towards the guided participation plane of activity to investigate the forms of participation the youth and adults co-construct and how the social arrangements at Riverplace were organized to support learning. These emerging goals were informed by the cultural and historical context including the forms of art and social action that are made accessible to young people. Artistic activity in the project was variable and to help understand the promise of youth creative development spaces as sites for civic learning, I designed a study that would collect data on the social interactions between participants in the project.

Methods

My involvement with Riverplace began in the spring of 2010 when I collaborated with them on a qualitative study in the first year of my doctoral program. My original research questions were aimed at understanding how their site supported critical media literacies.

In that study, I learned that artists often did much of the work of organizing learning opportunities, and this resulted in a varied experience throughout an intern's time in the program as the artists rotated. After the spring semester, where I observed the program once a week, I continued to engage in participant observation throughout the summer months. Throughout the summer, I spent multiple days there each week and became more aware of the many features of Riverplace. After the summer, I was invited to be a member of the college mentoring program that served the interns.

When I approached Riverplace staff about conducting my dissertation on the program, they were enthusiastic about the possibility, especially with the prospect of including interns as researchers in the process. Throughout those discussions, Riverplace staff articulated that they were interested in having additional qualitative data to support their efforts to evaluate programs. They were especially concerned with how the work taking place at Riverplace impacts the broader community. My goal was to carry out a study that is relevant to some of our shared questions about critical media literacies and potential civic impacts of creative youth programs.

While completing data collection, a number of changes occurred that affected my original plan. The following description of my research methods is intended to convey both the strengths and weaknesses of the original plan and outcome. My interest in developing a stronger understanding of qualitative methods applied to my changing role during the write-up of this study, including my temporary role as Program Director at Riverplace. Undertaking a discussion of what I learned throughout this experience will allow me to reflect on the choices that I made in this process and think about how I might improve my work as both a researcher and practitioner.

Setting

Riverplace is an arts, youth-development, and artist-in-residence program in a major Western city in the United States that teams under-served youth with contemporary master artists in intensive, structured, and long-term creative learning environments. They host five professional artists annually (selected through a competitive international selection process); each resident dedicates 6-8 hours weekly to workshops with youth during the two-month residency period. There are two programs for youth at Riverplace, the internship program and brief intensives with younger students that both run concurrently year-round.

The internship program is a year-round out-of-school program for underserved high school youth incorporating the creative arts with academic, personal and professional skill development. The program is limited to 15 students who go through a competitive application and interview process. Youth do not need to have an arts background. This program is targeted to youth who do not have access to learning through the arts. Youth are involved in the creation and presentation of major works, mentored by professional artists, participate in workshops directed by visiting artists, mentor children during workshops held at Riverplace and participate in service-learning projects. As stated in the organization’s mission, all projects address social issues through opportunities for the youth to address investigate societal issues through varied artistic mediums. Each endeavor is intended to have clear connections to public issues and encourage youth to become active members and catalysts for change in their communities. Riverplace’s goal is that 100% of interns successfully graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education. They offered a college mentoring which provides an 18-month adult mentor trained in the college application and admission process to working individually with a mentee. Interns each spend an average of 350 hours annually at Riverplace in the program.

Research Participants

Riverplace Staff. Riverplace had four full-time staff members who filled different roles in daily organizational work. These included a founder and artistic director and responsible for coordinating the artists residencies and planning long term programming goals. There was an executive director who is responsible for the operations of Riverplace as a nonprofit. The education director and program coordinator facilitated the Internship program and worked directly with youth for artistic and academic support. During the study, the organization also employed a part-time intern who worked directly with interns, and coordinated some components of the project.

Interns. There were 15 interns that I worked with directly and observed throughout the summer. They ranged in age from 15-18 years old, some were newcomers to Riverplace while others will had been interns for up to two years. The general racial composition of the group of interns was participants is 60% Latino/a; 30% African American; 10% Caucasian. They lived in neighborhoods spread across the urban area.

Lead artist. The lead for the mural project was a Latino graffiti artist who grew up in the neighborhood where team would paint the mural. He was in his thirties and was a well-known artist in the city. He did not have prior experience teaching.

Secondary participants. There were people outside the organization who participated in a focus group and interviews related to the mural project work. We did not collect demographic information, but from viewing the original recordings the group had a few respondents who were teenagers, but the majority were middle-aged. There were representatives from government offices and nonprofits, longtime residents, and young people who grew up in the neighborhood. The majority of these respondents were Latina/o.

Data Collection Methods

The plan was for the majority data collection for this study to take place over three months in the summer of 2013, from mid-June to mid-August. During that time, the interns were participating in the summer portion of their internship, which met more frequently that the programming during the school year. During the summer, the interns met four days a week and participated in a number of activities between 10 am and 4 pm, Mondays through Thursdays. In the mornings, the interns were doing a variety of activities including community outreach, yoga, and there was be one day a week that they were scheduled to participate in research activities with me. In the afternoons, the interns worked with the lead artist and another artist in residence on collaborative projects. Throughout this summer programing I planned to employ a mix of critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996) and participatory research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

This design began as planned and progressed for approximately three weeks before significant changes began. After this initial timeframe, a number of factors impacted data collection and changed the work that I was doing with the interns. The first change that happened was limited youth interest in working as researchers to study my original research questions about career pathways. I facilitated two workshops to introduce the idea of doing research on the program as a way of critiquing learning opportunities through analyzing working examples. My hope was that this introduction would spark interest in a subset of the larger group, and they would be motivated to investigate these questions.

My workshops met a mixed response. People in the group were interested in discussing the concepts but voiced limited interest in researching themselves or their peers. No one volunteered to step up as leaders of this aspect of the summer activities (there were project leads on the two artistic projects with artists). Two students were assigned to be leads for the research work, but when I discussed the project plans with them the expressed skepticism that we would be able to collect the forms of data necessary to answer research questions about career pathways in the arts. I agreed with this assessment and hoped to adjust what I was doing with the group so that we could still use research methods to investigate important questions. My aim was to allow research to fit with the other projects they were doing in a way that made sense. Fortunately, the staff had already seeded the idea of hosting a community meeting and talking with people in the neighborhood of the mural project. This presented an opportunity to employ some of the research methods I drew on to design this study for the purposes of improving the discussion serving the artistic work on the mural.

Critical ethnography. My original plan was to employ qualitative methods aligned with my sociocultural conceptual framework using Carspecken's (1996) *Critical Ethnography in Education Research* as a guide to account for both the interpersonal and systemic considerations that are central to my research questions. The term "critical" implies a connection to critical theory, including a commitment to investigate and address sources of inequity and oppression, as well as employing a critical epistemology to the work of research where "facts" and "truth" are open to multiple interpretations. Because this study focused on the social organization of learning informed by the broader context of opportunities and pathways for young people the

Critical Ethnography framework **w**as an appropriate model for an inquiry into the research questions. Critical ethnography attempts to bridge the interpersonal activities that people engage in with broader social considerations, like who has the power to shape opportunities, and how do societal inequities affect the life opportunities of certain individuals.

The five stages of Critical Ethnography outlined by Carspecken served as a guide for the research process. The first stage was compiling a primary record through the collection of notes, audio recordings, and other data sources. The second stage was a preliminary reconstructive analysis where the researcher begins to articulate patterns and themes in the data. The third stage was dialogic data generation where the researcher involves other participants in compiling the primary record through conversation and collaborative analysis. The fourth stage was discovering systems relations and intended to bring to bear information from sources external to the primary site of inquiry. The fifth stage was using systems relations to explain findings and involves linking the analysis with systemic factors to suggest explanations for the findings in the reconstruction of the primary record.

For this study, my plan was to generate a primary record throughout the summer of 2013 using participant observations, interviews and collecting artifacts. Throughout the data collection, I created preliminary reconstructions as through both comments on the field notes and analytic memos about the primary data sources. My plan to facilitate a parallel process of dialogic data generation throughout the summer as a function of the participatory research component of this study did not proceed as planned due to a lack of time to fully employ the participatory research structure. The end result did include incorporating interviews conducted by the interns, artifacts generated by the interns, and group discussions that served as member checks. Stages four and five were attempted by drawing on my background knowledge of youth programming from my work as a researcher studying similar sites and constructs generated by other scholars in the field of youth programming and civic engagement to inform my practical interpretations of the findings. To speculate on systemic implications, I also drew on my work with the State Alliance for Creative Youth Development, which pursues systemic organizing efforts to support youth arts programs in the state.

Participatory research. The design of this study included a participatory component because this method creates an opportunity for young people to become involved in investigating and evaluating the spaces in which they participate (Rubin & Jones, 2007). The rationales for including participatory research in an ethnographic study of learning environments include the awareness that young people have a unique insider perspective on the activity in those spaces and can contribute in valuable ways to the construction of knowledge about what supports learning (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Sabo-Flores, 2008). Engaging in participatory research can also serve as positive developmental opportunity for young people in that it invites them to participate in practices of investigation and analysis of systems, and in the case of Riverplace this could have complimented their public work with media (Mitra, 2004). Research of this nature is compatible with critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996) because it disrupts the dichotomy between researcher and research participants, with an expanded belief about who should generate knowledge to inform policies and practices (Cook-Sather, 2002; Morrell, 2008).

The staff at Riverplace worked with me to construct a plan to facilitate research methods workshops similar to those I had done in classrooms, afterschool, and summer programs. This was Tuesdays for two hours when I met with all of the interns to facilitate activities that centered on researching Riverplace. We began by reviewing the literature and ideas from the original research proposal as a starting point for posing questions about opportunities that are available in trajectories that support their interests. In the initial meetings, I received valuable feedback on the research questions and interests of the group, and I also learned that facilitating a workshop here would not be anything like the prior work I had done. The set of activities that The group was involved in were much broader than other young people I had worked with, and their level of responsibility for getting things done that summer was much higher that other summer institutes that I had lead. The group as a whole was responsible for three large projects in addition to the participatory research plan I had developed. I found that they did have an interest in using research tools, and I revised the plan to be able to use our time as a research group to discuss things more closely tied to the mural project. Doing this served the project and the interns by allowing more time to investigate questions related to community and the role of art in public life.

Following the initial meeting where I made these decisions about the focus of the work, I continued to facilitate research discussions with the group and we honed an interview protocol that would be used during the mural painting process to gather information from neighborhood constituents and to encourage dialogue around the artwork. For this interview protocol, we began with a set of general questions and then discussed ways to make the protocol short, accessible and interesting for participants. We discussed research ethics and other data collection methods.

In the end, the time constraints focused our attention on semi-structured interview methods, and the group employed this approach while painting by utilizing a shared protocol to ask questions of visitors to the site. Additionally, interns decided to videotape the mural process, and this included the large group community meeting and many of the street side interviews where the interns utilized the protocol. This process created a wealth of digital artifacts that I have reviewed with some of the interns and staff to analyze for this study. The interns originally planned to take all of the footage and edit it into a documentary of a public project.

Independent Data Collection

Independent data collection produced 10 sets of observational fieldnotes, and 37 archival video clips produced by the program interns.

Observations. Throughout the summer programming at Riverplace I was present as a participant observer and took ethnographic fieldnotes of their work, primarily the mural development, planning, painting, and opening. I was present for most of the summer across the full set of activities, initially for everything they were doing, and then in the later weeks more often with the mural work and less often with other projects. Each day I was at site I was there for approximately 6 hours and on 10 of those days that I was present I took approximately one hour of fieldnotes of the process. This resulted in ten sets of fieldnotes from different days, and across settings including planning meetings at Riverplace, visits to historical sites, visits to the artist’s studio, and time working at the mural site.

Drawing from Rogoff’s (1993, 1995) descriptions of guided participation, fieldnotes were directed at the social organization of the activities and the participation of adults and youth in the projects and other interactions that took place during daily routines. I focused attention on the ways in which youth are introduced to and engage in practices. In my observations, included descriptions of the physical features of the spaces in which the artists and interns approached their work, both in the planning process and at the mural site. I also generated a descriptive account of the contexts for their work, and the ways that multiple people approached and interacted with the learning environment that emerged.

Artifacts. The artifacts that were produced by interns in the summer of 2013 became one of my most abundant data sources for analyzing forms of talk that occurred throughout the activities and attending to the multiple layers of information related to the research questions. In total, interns produced 37 clips for an approximate total of 12 hours of video during their summer work. The interns were filming these scenes with the intent of creating a documentary film about making a public mural. The video clips that interns filmed covered the planning and design process, the social activities they took part in throughout the process (community meeting, street side interviews, touring historic public art sites), and the painting process. These digital film clips were shot by a variety of interns using both camcorders and cameras and were archived by the Education Director.

Participatory Data Collection

Interviews. Following the interview training sessions that I facilitated, and the background research that interns completed in the mural design process, the interns conducted interviews on the sidewalk across from the mural as it was being painted. Of those interviews seven were recorded, and included a range of participants who were passing by or deliberately present to observe the painting process. The interviews include neighborhood residents, local politicians and public servants, family members of interns, and even local media reporters who were on site to cover the mural story. They ranged in length from two to ten minutes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this project took three forms that are consistent with the critical ethnographic approach presented by Carspecken (1996). My data analysis began with the initial reconstruction of the primary record, where I wrote analytic memos describing emerging themes in the data. Some of the participatory components of this project did not go as planned.

My evolving role within this organization supported the contributions of interns to the research process by allowing discussions of emerging findings with interns in the year following the public unveiling of the mural. Reviewing archival data, developing a coding scheme, and writing analytic memos took place in the same timeframe as these member checks. Third, systematic coding of the data began with preliminary codes that emerged from the transcribed archives.

Preliminary analytical methods. Data analysis began with the construction of the primary record (Carspecken, 1996). The first wave was the writing of fieldnotes in the afternoons following observations. During this process, I noted themes as observer comments added to the notes, and these preliminary findings significantly informed my ongoing data collection throughout those summer months. For example, when I noticed that there were many opportunities to take what I was learning from the group about their interests and modify my data collection plan to focus on adult roles. When their interest in contributing to a study of the learning opportunities in the program was noted, I made adjustments to attending to opportunities over engagement. My notes and memos began to focus less on intern's individual work, and instead on the broader organization of the social setting. This process helped me to prioritize some of the observations such as the community meeting and mural planning sessions. This also informed choices about what to exclude, such as the details of what each intern was drawing. Observations during this time frame allowed me to understand more completely the context of the archival video.

During early stages, I wrote analytical memos that let me better define my focus for the coding process. (See Appendix A for example memo.) I wrote them both during the summer of observations to help me better recount significant episodes, and in the months following data collection as I reviewed the archival footage and had ongoing conversations with staff and youth participants.

Reduction of archival data. After reviewing the full set of archival data, I selected 20 media excerpts to transcribe for this analysis. The clips that were transcribed cover three unique contexts: the planning meetings, the community meeting, and the mural site, which I knew from observations to contain the most social activity. I selected clips to transcribe based on attempting to include all people who agreed to be recorded. The reason for this was to allow the coding process to include both long and short clips, and people both central to and more distant from the core of the project. This process included a sampling of the three major activities that were documented by the interns. The final data set included nine media clips from the planning meetings that were from three to 30 minutes long, three media clips from the community meeting that totaled an hour and 20 minutes, and seven interviews that took place on the streetcorner across from the mural, ranging from two to 10 minutes.

After transcription, I imported the transcriptions into the Dedoose qualitative analysis software. I created descriptors to categorize these different video clips into sets based on characteristics, including the location, the number of people involved, and the stage in the process in which it took place. The planning meetings took place at Riverplace with 15 to 20 people involved, and all of the video clips from the meetings at Riverplace took place during the planning process. The interviews all took place at the mural site with two to five people in the interview itself, and they all took place during the painting process. The community meetings took place prior to the planning sessions, had more than 20 people present, and were hosted by the lead artist at his studio that was a converted warehouse in the neighborhood where the mural took place.

Selecting excerpts for coding. In total, these 20 different media clips had within them 91 coded excerpts. Each excerpt included at least one complete sentence spoken by an individual and typically lasted until the next person spoke. That means that the excerpts vary in length but are all one statement by an individual talking at one of these data collection sites. Some of the excerpts lead with a question by one intern posed during an interview or the community meeting, and the excerpt ends with the conclusion of the statement of the person responding to the question.

The highest number of excerpts for any individual media come from the community meetings. These media clips were substantially longer than any of the other settings. In total, the audio length for the community meetings was about an hour. One of the media clips from the community meeting has 16 excerpts, one had 11 excerpts, and one had four excerpts. The next highest number of excerpts come from the planning meetings, with one clip having 11 excerpts, one having ten excerpts, one having nine excerpts, and one having six excerpts. The interviews had fewer excerpts from each clip, the highest being five and the lowest being one. In total, there are 18 excerpts from the interviews. There was a total of 43 excerpts from the planning meetings, and there were a total of 30 excerpts from the community meetings.

The three types of transcribed data sources each includes a different subset of participants in this project. The interviews that took place in the painting of the 2013 murals included the voices of interns as interviewers and the voices of people who stopped by the site and consented to have their interview responses recorded.

Coding. I began the process of systematic analysis of the archival data with a systematic coding of the excerpts selected from the archival data. I took an inductive approach to understanding this data set by viewing each of the artifacts and reviewing the transcriptions before attempting to code the data. I constructed codes during repeat viewings as I began to notice themes that connected with the topics I had formulated in analytic memos. At the point of coding I was attempting to select an appropriate analytical framework, and this allowed for the inductive approach to supporting the final choice of theories to inform data analysis. The purpose of this coding was to employ a systematic approach to understanding the content of the data set.

I developed a set of 21 codes to analyze the data. In this code set, there was a total of seven parent codes, and each of these main categories was an inductive selection to cover a major topic that was being talked about during the project. These codes included talk about art, talk about diversity, talk about education, talk about the environment, talk about social ties, talk about the neighborhood, and talk about work or career.

For some of these main categories, I developed subcodes that were intended to show some of the variability within the main categories. These subcodes include for the talk about art category: a discussion about an action or doing something like drawing or painting. The second was changing the social, or when art was being talked about as a way to change what people do or think. Representation was another subcode, and this subcode was intended to capture conversation about using art to represent knowledge or ideas. Another subcode was respect, and respect was something that was often discussed in terms of the value of graffiti. The final subcode in the talk about art category was visibility, or when art was being discussed as a way to increase the visibility of the neighborhood or a particular artist's ideas.

Within the talk about education category I had two subcodes. One subcode was learning, or general discussion about education in informal settings. Another subcode within talk about education was theee topic of schools, or when people made specific mention of a particular school in the neighborhood.

Within the talk about environment category, I had three subcodes. The first was talk about pollution. This most frequently took the form of people talking about the industry and the negative impact that it had on the neighborhood's environment. Another subcode was stewardship. This one was applied when people were talking about maintaining the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood's environment or taking care of the land generally. The third and final subcode within the talk about the environment was sustainability. This code was applied specifically when people were making mention of sustainable energy or sustainable agriculture and its impact on the environment in the neighborhood.

Within talk about social ties, I had two subcodes. One subcode was when people were talking about problems with the social ties in the neighborhood or when people had something negative to say about the social qualities in the community. The second subcode within social ties was strength. This included people talking about pride in the social connections that they had in the neighborhood or any other positive attributes about the personal connections that they had with people in the neighborhood.

The main categories of talk about diversity and talk about work or career did not have enough code applications to warrant adding additional subcategories. Talk about the neighborhood had many applications but served more generally as a way to identify the places in the data where people were talking about some of the other subcategories, so the variability within the talk about the neighborhood coded excerpts is captured more directly by looking at the other main code categories.

In general, the count for code applications followed the same trends as the number of excerpts per different type of data source. In the interview data sources, there were 65 code applications across all of the excerpts. In the planning meetings, there was a total of 130 code applications across all of the data excerpts. In the community meetings, there were 129 code applications across all of the data excerpts. In total, this made for 324 code applications across the full data set.

The coding ultimately allowed me to identify key themes in the stories people told across the different settings in the project. (See Appendix B for distribution of code applications.) The major themes that emerged in the coding were: talk about art, talk about the environment and talk about the neighborhood.

Member checks. In addition to the data collected, my role at Riverplace allowed the benefit of many day to day conversations about the topics covered in this analysis. I had the opportunity to talk with interns often about what they experienced during the course of the mural project. Some of this was done in preparation for another mural project in 2014, as they attempted to complete similar work. Because interns had been involved in so many components of the mural (planning, painting, and documenting) they had much experience to draw upon when offering opinions on the project as a whole, or early things I was noticing about the data.

Including the interns in a brief but deep dive into the data, we viewed video clips from the transcribed excerpts. Interns discussed Riverplacethe content of the stories that people told in relation to both the mural project that was the focus of analysis and the prospect of art as civic action generally in preparation for another project. During the meetings in the year following the data collection for this study, I invited the interns to engage in an analysis of some of the early reconstructions. The plan was to present them with excerpts from the fieldnotes and analytic memos and facilitate discussions to prompt multiple interpretations of the practices being observed. This prompted an open conversation about their experiences with the 2013 mural project and guided me in how select features to discuss from the interviews and community and planning meetings. For example, interns told me about what they most remembered about the lead artist Jeff, or what stood out to them from the community focus group.

Prior to starting this project I was uncertain of how the team would take up the invitation to do research, and I was prepared for many possibilities with respect to their time commitment to this particular component of their busy summer schedule. One thing that is especially exciting about the video archive component of this data set is that it includes interns behind the camera focusing attention on particular conversations. They had the means to record conversations happing throughout the entire process, and the choices they made regarding collecting video data added possibilities to generate claims about the learning environment. In addition to member checks, video archives they produced give some indication of what interns both on and off camera were attending to in the project.

Final analytical frameworks. This data set ultimately supported two types of data analysis. Aligned with the conceptual framework supporting the design of this study (Rogoff 1995, 1995), was the selection to analyze further the social organization of learning. I did this by attending to one of the facets of learning ecologies, the social organization of endeavors, described by Rogoff in her 2014 article entitled “Learning by Observing and Pitching In to Family and Community Endeavors: An Orientation.” Analyzing the social organization of the project using this framework supported my initial focus on the stories that were captured in the data as an integral component of the learning ecology. To further explore the role that these narratives may have played in learning opportunities, I employed a framework for cataloguing the basic features of narratives, and discussing their socializing potential, drawn from Ochs 2004 book chapter entitled, “Narrative Lessons.” Each of these frameworks and their application toward this data set are described in further detail in subsequent chapters.

Validity

Carspecken (1996) stresses that there are three types of validity claims that must be attended to in research that embraces a critical epistemology. Objective validity claims are associated with assertions about what is physically going on in the world, in the case of this study, the validity of my observations of the activities at Riverplace and construction of the primary record. The validity of my observation of the social organization of the project was supported by the review of video archives to cross reference events.

Subjective validity claims are associated with assertions about the experiences of others. Descriptions of experience are of higher inference and can be mapped on to the preliminary reconstructions to determine if there is evidence to support claims. Subjective validity concerns were attended to through extensive member checks throughout the data collection and preliminary reconstruction. During the participatory research meetings and throughout my work with I asked interns many questions to help me discuss what happened in the space and the emerging ideas in the preliminary reconstructions about the social organization of the project. Where they confirmed my early assertions, I continued to analyze data. Our conversation often focused on what they remembered about what people said during the project. As a result, I continued to explore an analysis of the talk of people in the video archives.

The third and final category of validity claims mentioned by Carspecken are normative-evaluative claims. I believe that the data and approach discussed above, along with my experience working locally and with a national network allowed me to form some claims with assertions about the ways in which the broader social world is or should be constructed. For this analysis, I attempted to glean lesson about how to design projects, and my discussion of the utility of the findings includes specific connections between the data from this project and future design opportunities. Those conversations have informed design work and were put to the test with a mural project with many of the same interns in the summer of 2014.

Researcher Subjectivity and Limitations

For many years, I have been concerned with questions about how best to support learning and development to allow for people to both pursue their interests and engage in public work that might lead to social change. I have worked in many spaces that have allowed me to learn more about the possibilities for practices like participatory research and new media literacies to lead to valued social futures. However, I am continually disappointed that for many young people the systemic barriers to pursuing these pathways often result in diminished opportunities for long-term engagement in practices that reflect their interests and the ways in which they hope to impact the world for the better.

In this collaboration with Riverplace, I was already deeply involved in the process of organizing social futures for the interns through my involvement with the mentoring program. Rather than serving as a hindrance, my previous immersion in Riverplace’s practices served as a strength for this project. My involvement in the day to day practices of the group was consistent in 2010, but this study followed a new cohort of interns that I had not spent significant time with outside college mentoring activities (which consists of meetings with only some of the members of the group). My previous engagement provided a point of comparison for my upcoming observations. However, I was still positioned as a newcomer to understanding how this cohort of interns came to negotiate relationships and collaborative work.

For the summer of 2013 my role with Riverplace was foremost as a researcher. I was able to document the activities through field notes and also through collecting archival data, but, at this stage, I did not have any responsibilities for designing activities or planning anything for the project. Being in this role, I was able to move freely throughout the activities and document what was going on in a variety of different social settings throughout the project. Because I didn't have a role in planning these activities, I was able to take some time to observe and reflect on what I was seeing happening with the project and think about it in relationship to the academic literature and concepts that are coming out of the fields of civic engagement and learning sciences.

My primary task with respect to the mural project was to help the group prepare a list of questions that they could ask in the community meeting and interviews done at the mural site. We did this in a series of meetings that took place in parallel to their background research using computers and neighborhood tours. In those meetings, I talked with them about the importance of developing questions that would get people to open up and talk expansively about their experiences.

My role at this stage afforded a great deal of freedom and allowed me to document the activities without a great deal of concern over the success or failure of any particular activity. This role was easy to fill because people were used to me being a presence in the space of Riverplace, as a researcher primarily. They were used to me taking field notes of activities, moving around and observing different things that people were doing and also asking many questions about what people were doing.

One downside to my role during this phase of the project was that I did not have access to all of the information about what was required for organizing a project of this scale. I had access to what I was able to observe and document and ask people during the course of the project, but there were a lot of things that I wasn't able to document, such as the communications between Riverplace and the city, or discussions between the staff and the artist. This omission means that claims are centrally about the learning opportunities documented in observations and video archives and exclude many background features critical to organizing such a project. The data that I was able to collect offers a front-facing picture of the organization's efforts missing some of the behind the scenes challenges that accompany this work.

Following data collection, I furthered my commitment to the organization by accepting the position of program director in May of 2014. Because of that, my analytical work was intertwined with my perspective as a program designer, as a facilitator of activity, and as a researcher. I could not separate these things, and they biased my perspective towards a critical and practical approach. Because as a designer I wanted the programs to be engaging and guide people towards greater civic connection and responsibility, my analysis was directed at looking for places where my work could be improved and the organization could do better to reach the collective goals to benefit the members and audience. In this evolution of my role, I saw how the data presented in this analysis gives a compelling yet limited picture of the organizing required to support learning opportunities of this character.

The Roles of Adults in Organizing Learning Creative Civic Practices

In a 2014 article, titled “Learning by Observing and Pitching In to Family and Community Endeavors: An Orientation,” Rogoff articulates a framework for understanding multiple facets of a learning ecology. This framework places community organization of learning at the center and provides a list of seven different features of an ecology that are important to account for in an analysis of learning. Among these facets is the *social organization of endeavors*, which I focus on for this analysis. Rogoff (2014) stipulates that this approach requires that those attempting to analyze learning ecologies foreground some facets while others remain in the background. The other facets of the framework that I keep in the background include the various motives for learning, the goal of learning in a particular ecology, the means by which people learn, how people communicate and assessment. To characterize the social organization of the mural project at Riverplace Arts, I asked the following analytical questions: How did the social organization of learning differ from one part of the ecology to another? Who was working to organize activities? How were the parts connected, so they formed a coherent ecology?

In this chapter, I focus on the social organization of endeavors across multiple settings and phases of the mural project. To describe the social organization I concentrate on three parts of the overall project ecology and describe features in the data that are exemplars of the social organization I observed throughout my time there, including the people who played key roles in defining those opportunities. In each setting of this project, adults, including the lead artist, staff, and community participants, contributed to learning opportunities through sharing information, asking questions and making requests, and setting expectations for interns’ work on the mural.

This chapter offers a descriptive analysis of those contributions and analyzes the project as a whole to discuss the overall social organization in this ecology.

Rogoff's (2014) framework identifies key differences between two traditions of learning: learning by "observing and pitching in" and "assembly line" instruction. Although they note that all learning ecologies borrow somewhat from each of these categories, she argues that in any particular ecology there is typically a trend towards one or the other. For the facet that I focus on for this analysis, the social organization of endeavors, the Rogoff articulates two differing ways of organizing for learning that she and colleagues have observed in ethnographic work. One of the defining features of learning by observing and pitching in is that the social organization of endeavors are collaborative and flexible, with a fluid coordination of ideas, agenda, and pace in learning. In contrast, spaces that embody assembly line instruction tend to have experts controlling learner attention, motivation, and pace by transmitting information and creating a rigid division of labor.

At Riverplace Arts some opportunities for learning resembled assembly line instruction, such as adults with formalized roles positioned as experts transmitting knowledge. However, there were more factors that lead me away from characterizing this program as trending towards assembly line instruction. One was the general flexibility of the working environment for interns, where they were able to take on and move between various roles on the project with ease I observed this over multiple years of work with the program. Another feature that supported the general characterization of learning by observing and pitching in were how broader, more long-term goals contextualized much of the interns' work. For example, each intern sought professional careers as artists, and others pursued college going pathways. Staff acknowledged their interests as important for the activities in the program. In the time spent with the education director, I learned that this acknowledgment of intern interests took place through feedback gathered which sometimes shaped the artistic programming and the flexibility of intern role opportunities in the program. Examples of results of this process were college mentoring as a regular feature and the inclusion of specific types of professional artists, such as a musician in the year before the mural. The receptiveness of staff supported an open value of including ideas that went beyond but were complimentary to artistic practices. For example, in this mural project interns were exposed to many potential reasons for civic action and approaches including practices beyond artistic expression, such as legal action, to address important issues.

Another background facet that supports the alignment of this program as learning by observing and pitching in was the community context of this program. The organization was a nonprofit that secured funding from sources that aim to support academic and social growth. Coupled with the fact that all of the interns have been participants in Western schooling, I was not surprised that this ecology included some assembly line features. However, the features that resembled assembly line instruction were situated in a broader project, and program as a whole, that included the group working as a flexible ensemble. As a result, this ecology included more features that represented learning by observing and pitching in, in large part because of the project’s open-ended, long-term goals.

Multiple Parts of an Ecology for Creative Civic Practice

This chapter focuses on three distinct parts of the learning ecology of the mural project: planning meetings, a community focus group, and on-site production of the mural. Learning opportunities were in large part organized by the artist and staff of the organization to support the artistic work for the mural. The planning meetings lasted six weeks, and included background research on the neighborhood and sketching to represent the themes that were being discussed.

The community focus group took place during the planning phase as a one-day event at a special location. These events happened in the weeks leading up to the two-week span that the interns spent on site painting the piece.

Although this chapter analyzes the social organization of learning across multiple parts of a learning ecology, these different parts were linked and made coherent by the mural. This artistic endeavor was the organizing feature that allowed for all of the learning opportunities to emerge. The various settings included in this project provided an opportunity for intergenerational verbal exchange and public reflection on the themes contained in the mural. The overall frame of the internship program, and the mural as one project within the program provided the container for these activities to take place. Having the mural as an organizing object did at least two things, 1) allowed a particular artist to be positioned as the leader of activity who guided much of the discussion 2) provided a point of reference that allowed outsiders to interact with the interns around a particular topic. Within the overall project, there were multiple parts including planning meetings, a community focus group, and painting at the public site.

Role of the Lead Artist in Planning Meetings

The planning meetings for the mural constituted the majority of the time that the interns spent working on the project. Planning meetings lasted six weeks, and the interns spent four hours, twice a week in this setting of the project. These meetings were held at the Riverplace Arts building, and took place in space originally designed to be a store front on a public square. It had large glass windows that face out to the square, and the inside of this room was fairly stark with concrete floors, white walls except for one wall that was painted with chalkboard paint so that people could write on it. This room contained a variety of furniture including a set of square tables arranged lengthwise to create a conference table with plastic chairs all around, and the room had a set of lockers where interns could store their stuff. At the very front of the room near the windows were a bank of Apple desktops that were set up for interns to use.

The lead artist, Jeff was typically the person to set the agenda and facilitate the meetings. Staff members were also present but did not speak as often as Jeff. Staff members made comments that were typically related to the intern's work for the organization as a whole, rather than for this particular project. Jeff worked with the staff ahead of the project to plan the overall structure, but his speech drove the day to day activities and resulting learning. The content of Jeff's speech to interns included sharing stories and prompting their activity, such as asking them to draw and do background research to serve the mural project. The stories and prompts from Jeff created a particular social organization that persisted throughout approximately half of the working time with the interns during the planning meetings. While in the field I worried that so much time focused on listening to the artist speak could be problematic because it did not allow much room within the organized activity for interns to share their interests. After analysis, however, I found multiple themes that suggested potentially important implications for the interns' learning, and it was possible that spending such a large percentage of time on this was warranted.

Lead artist creating learning opportunities through storytelling. The group spent at least three hours in their first two weeks with Jeff discussing a commissioned piece he had done in collaboration with the builders of an affordable housing project in the city. He explained to them the process of securing commissions for public art pieces, and within this topic he focused on the task of assembling teams to collaborate on complicated projects. In describing how he approached work similar to what they would be working on together that summer, Jeff foregrounded the importance of collaboration:

> I can't just take on a project like this by myself, and there's certain things that I could do, but there's people that do them much better. That’s their thing. To be able to put people in position like that, once you have a team like that, you can do huge projects.

The projects he had worked on in the city included pieces covering the sides of multi-story buildings, works alongside major roads and also privately commissioned pieces on the sides of businesses. He told the interns about his own studio nearby where he had recruited friends and other working artists to convert an old storage warehouse into collective where they could keep their work and store tools serving a broad spectrum of creative pursuits including sculpture, aerial dance and making t-shirts. Jeff’s medium was graffiti. Most of his prior public pieces took this form, but he also collaborated with musicians and other friends to do both multimedia projects and was an active promoter of projects associated with his creative interests such as urban farming.

By outlining all of these projects, and highlighting the necessity for interpersonal work in each of his efforts, Jeff positioned himself as a guide with vast knowledge of the professional artistic practices that many of the interns were interested in learning more about. Often the discussions were one-sided, with Jeff talking and interns listening.

One of these professional practices that Jeff discussed was how to take a leadership role in artistic collaborations. Jeff felt that being assigned a lead role carried a particular executive responsibility when it came time to make final decisions about the artistic piece in question. He stated, “I maintain my position as the lead artist. I will gather everything, take the idea, take criticism into consideration. Through certain things, sometimes stuff just doesn't work.” The decision-making was a multi-phased process between the interns and the artist and was difficult for me to follow at times. It was not entirely clear to me whether the interns or Jeff would be ultimately responsible for the final piece, and who would decide that vision. Jeff made it clear that he was comfortable making difficult decisions about the content of the mural, “Sometimes it just wouldn't work because it just looks too heavy right there… There's different things that could be and will be eliminated.” On one hand, this had the potential to make interns feel like their contributions were undervalued. On the other hand, this was a form of guidance with Jeff demonstrating how he relied upon his artistic expertise to improve the composition of collaborative pieces. It also reflected authentic creative practice where there is sometimes a lead editor who makes final decisions about content.

Another feature in the social organization of learning was to prepare interns for the challenging work of gathering public opinions to inform a piece. The complicated nature of doing art that elicited public opinion was highlighted in this project was the community focus group and interviews. In this process interns had a face to face discussion about topics in some way related to the mural project. Jeff worked to organize a structure based on his experiences of inviting people to share their thoughts, “how do you get someone to open up and tell you their story? We can do some of that… the stories we want people to tell. What kind of histories or experiences you need and what question to ask to get that.” Jeff’s advice about eliciting stories dovetailed with work I was doing with interns to develop interview questions. Related to this, Jeff shared what he had witnessed in the process and the importance of encouraging people to share stories about things they care about, “You'll be surprised. Sometimes, you'll ask questions… for them to express themselves... when you see somebody speaking passionately that's perfect.” This form of organizing social activity showed how Jeff described the importance of community perspectives that became directly relevant in upcoming parts of the project, for example in the community focus group discussed later in the chapter. Without the inclusion of the face to face interaction, this project would have lost much of the content that made it civic or political.

Jeff encouraged the interns to think of their interactions with neighborhood residents in the broader context of meaning that artistic projects occupy. He explained:

> A mural is an expression of a neighborhood and the things that they believe about their neighborhood. It's also an expression of time, right? It could be a mural that ties together history and goes into the future or it captures the current time.

This quote became especially relevant as interns would later hear much about the history of the neighborhood where they would be painting. This recurring form of guidance helped create a frame of reference for me as an observer about the possibilities for connections between such a project and community interests. One of the recurring themes that informed the mural was that community members had historically viewed graffiti as vandalism, and that a project such as this was breaking that narrative by creating something in collaboration with the community that a public audience would appreciate. Jeff frequently discussed the positive impacts that such work could have in the public sphere, establishing a frame for the work that persisted in the different parts of this project.

One way that Jeff framed the artistic work was to compare the mural project to other prominent artists' work. He organized sessions that afforded interns a chance to see many pieces of historical artistic work that they had not previously been exposed to, evidenced by the multiple occasions when he asked if they had heard of an artist and the collective reply was, "no." These public works ranged a wide variety of different topics and social issues that were of concern certainly to the artists who created and the viewers and residents of the various places in which the works reside. One day Jeff carried in a crate full of books containing prints of the work of his favorite artists. He set this crate down on the table and began tossing books across the table, one to each person in the group. Sometimes he would call out individual interns by name to toss them a book that he thought they would like. He shared that these examples demonstrated what he considered to be some of the best of murals and public artwork that had taken place both in the city and around the world. The books from his library included biographies of artists and other general art books organized thematically. These works included many different Chicano artists who took up issues of immigration, farming, labor rights, and public and media perceptions of particular communities. The paintings spanned a wide variety of different historical art forms, but most were in the medium of paint. In addition practical wisdom about completing artistic work, Jeff's knowledge of art history was an important piece of the social organization of this project.

Summary. Throughout each of these episodes that took place during the planning meetings, the social organization of learning was primarily structured around Jeff as an expert who shared knowledge with the interns. Although the interns were encouraged to ask questions, both by Jeff and the staff, they did not often ask for more details. Jeff often told lengthy stories, shared images and videos using the computers and share artifacts of his work. (I analyze the content of these stories, and their potential socializing function, in the next chapter). At first I worried that the interns were not very interested, or that Jeff was providing so much information that they did not know what questions to ask. After having brief but recurring conversations about the mural with interns over the following year, I found that not every intern was interested in every story, but many were interested in parts of the stories and pieces of practical knowledge that Jeff had to share. The stories that the interns liked varied, and no one made a clear statement about why he or she chose not to ask more questions of Jeff in the meetings.

The sections of time when Jeff was speaking closely resembled some aspects of assembly line instruction. He was directing attention and pace with his speaking, which often resembled academic lectures. On the other hand, many of the other features of assembly line learning were not present, such as grades or individual evaluations over the mastery of particular content. The time the interns spent listening was potentially a prolonged and focused period of observing, located between other periods of pitching into mural work.

Jeff's monologues positioned interns as listeners for this portion of the planning meetings, and in the context of a complicated mural project there was an abundance of information that could be drawn from Jeff's experience. In considering the possibility that some of the interns would be interested in going on to do public artistic work themselves this information may have held additional practical interest. For others, they may have seen that it was useful for their work on this project, but any additional future relevance was uncertain. Being positioned as listeners in the work with this particular expert artist presented varying learning opportunities for different interns.

Lead artist organizing opportunities for sketching and researching. The major challenge in this project was to generate an idea for a mural that drew upon perspectives of the artist, interns, and community residents. To support the group in this process, Jeff spent much of the planning meeting time infusing ideas about the process of representation, and asking interns to try out multiple ways of creating visual representations. Jeff asked the interns to sketch ideas linked to or inspired by background research they completed and their conversations with community residents.

For the first two weeks of planning, interns used the bank of computers in the room to conduct web searches about the neighborhood. After they used computers to conduct research on the neighborhood where the interns would paint the mural, they would share their findings with the group in the meeting space in conversations facilitated by Jeff. He would ask them what they discovered while on the computers and then would ask additional questions to elicit details about what they were learning. In one example, Jeff recapped the process the group was utilizing:

> So we begin to speak about those things amongst ourselves and do a little bit of research on [the neighborhood]. Then we started talking about the present and then the future, where is it going? We have a lot of ideas; it's just a matter of formulating those ideas to create an image.

In this phase of the planning, Jeff would ask many questions of the group to move from broad concepts towards a final plan. He continued:

> What we want to hear from you guys is how do you envision this mural; how do you see this mural? When you think about this mural in [the neighborhood], what would you like to see?

Making this transition, from abstract discussion of themes to an actual mural, was not particularly straightforward, and Jeff led this process by directing a series of decisions that ultimately shaped the content of the mural.

One way that Jeff moved the group in this direction was to focus some conversation on each of the visual components that were up for consideration. After hosting the community focus group, Jeff talked with the interns about what people said and how the stories that were shared could inform their mural design. He used the following prompt to guide the group, “Being there and we spoke about even what happened with soil and some of the things that happened through that smelter, and do we include that in there?” Questions such as these were when he described his process of critical decision making in composition. Jeff offered ideas about what he thought would make for a compelling image, and he encouraged individual interns to contribute their thoughts. One intern suggested attending to the soil impacts that residents raised at the community meeting, Jeff replied, “So we can show the soil here and we can go all the way up so we can show what's going on underground. That's a great conversation right there.” I was not able to trace a direct connection between Jeff’s decision-making process and what ended up in the final mural. I did witness many ideas for inclusion in the final piece included in discussions, such as plant life and the smokestack. By analyzing the archival footage of those meetings, I better saw how Jeff’s example showed how a professional might approach the challenge of making decisions when composing an elaborate image.

Throughout all of the sessions, Jeff encouraged interns to draw. The consistent drawing began in one of the early meetings when Jeff asked the group, “How many of you can draw? How many of you like to draw?” Nearly all of the interns raised their hands, and Jeff continued, “All right. Then all these ideas? You guys should be drawing.” Many interns drew while listening to people talk, and many also drew while sitting for periods of up to a half an hour where the group was silent. They used the time in these meetings to sketch ideas for the mural, and drawings unrelated to the mural that were typical of their personal practice. Jeff supported this and encouraged the group to draw whatever came to mind by relating examples from his experience:

> As an artist, as conceptual as I make it with my art or abstract as I make it, it does always come back to drawing and doodling. Even if your drawings aren't the most elaborate, I think the idea of laying, laying that idea onto paper and seeing it individually represented and not with words but images.

Sketches included multiple examples of flowers and leaves, something that a handful of interns told me they preferred to draw on a regular basis. Another common theme to sketches was representations of buildings and other landmarks that surfaced as defining features of the neighborhood. Jeff would ask the group to relate their drawing back to some of the background research:

> I think that we can all agree that the [industrial] plant is like a huge part of the neighborhood and obviously it's what the neighborhood was built around, so I think those smokestacks are probably the best representation of the plant. Did anybody ... Who has drawings where [of] smokestacks?

By asking such questions and pulling ideas from the group, he was showing his approach to refining ideas and build towards an image that would be relevant to a broad range of information available through image searches, background research and conversations about the neighborhood. This process continued with consistent moments of encouragement from Jeff, “If there's an idea that stands out to you, just draw it up,” and, “just start drawing and see how it looks. Throw these ideas out there.” Jeff also described for them how the images could be used on the basis of work he had done in the past:

> We're eventually going to take the best of the best of the drawings. I'm going to scan those and start to lay them out, and Photoshop one here. Then we'll start to see how they actually look. The process really ... It starts with sketching.

Through statements such as this throughout the process, he voiced his encouragement to be always imagining and creating representations of the different ideas that people were talking about in order to build up a body of images that could be pieced together into a bigger plan for the mural. Most of the interns were interested in drawing and did this sort of artistic work on their own time outside of Riverplace. Jeff was showing them how to move through the process of composing conceptual sketches in a way that would create something larger.

Another form of guidance that Jeff provided was to caution interns not to rely heavily on images they found by searching the internet because he wanted the visual contents of the mural to be original. He said:

> We won't re-draw these. They are references that were pulled off the Internet to show us all these old buildings. The reason that we'll try not to draw these is because anybody can pull the same references. We don't want things that have been used before for art or something. We'll go and take our own photos and make our references as original as possible, but this is cool to show.

While it might seem obvious that artists might strive toward creating original work, with the ease of locating useful visual ideas from internet image searches. This piece of guidance from Jeff was potentially relevant to those interns aspiring to continue in artistic careers. It was one example of Jeff articulating important principles in his artistic work.

Towards the end of the meetings Jeff would lead discussion where he would ask all of the interns to share some of the drawings that they had started during that meeting, explain what they were drawing, why they chose that particular subject or theme, and how it might fit into the larger mural design. After many meetings spent sketching ideas, Jeff had printed out many of the individual images and the group spent some time shuffling around photocopies of the sketches on a scale representation of the panel they would be painting. The group moved around each of the cutouts and discussed how to assemble them. Jeff asked questions and offered guidance based on what he thought worked best visually. One example is related to the smelter smokestack, a visual component that the group chose to include. He asked:

> What do you guys think about representing the smokestack here as opposed to on the border? I guess I mean does it get lost when it's too small like this? Is there not enough focus on it? Or, does it need more focus? Should we put that bigger, so everybody sees it?

In this case, the interns did not respond directly at the moment to those questions. Most often, when Jeff asked a question that garnered no response, he would continue his story or ask new questions in prolonged attempts to spark discussion. Even in moments when they did not elicit responses, however, Jeff’s questions provided an example of the decision-making process that one might undertake when approaching a project such as this mural.

Summary of the social organization of planning meetings. The social organization shifted each time the interns moved from primarily listening to primarily doing hands-on mural work while listening. The expectations during these times were extremely flexible. Staff expected that the interns be working on something. However, there were many possibilities for how they chose to work during this time. Some interns chose drawing images by hand, and some chose searching for images from internet sources. Others investigated the neighborhood using the computers to provide new ideas that other interns might sketch. In the planning phase of the project, opportunities to work on the mural varied widely. The overall organizing factor was that the whole group was working towards the common goal of completing the project. The mural connected their work and provided relevance to the individual tasks.

This organization of their work was most closely aligned with learning by observing and pitching in. Jeff was offering expert guidance and options, taking the initiative in his role as lead artist, but not controlling the pace or attention of interns. The interns worked in a flexible setting where they could choose between roles drawing, researching the neighborhood, and even shooting video footage of the work. Intern roles were not limited; each person could choose what they wanted to contribute to the overall endeavor.

In this part of the project, there were multiple ways the group worked together. First, the interns had the possibility of learning the process of improving their representational skills through practice. Jeff organized this pursuit through sharing lessons about how to approach the challenge of selecting what to draw. Another social organization in this setting was the flexible ensemble working together to achieve a complex goal. There were not clearly defined roles, except for Jeff, and throughout the planning process Jeff and the interns displayed a variety of practices that contributed to the mural, including sketching original images and gathering knowledge about the neighborhood.

Community Member Contributions to the Learning Ecology

One of the significant parts of the planning process was the community focus group meeting. The artist and Riverplace Arts staff worked with people with the neighborhood and city council office to organize the meeting by directly inviting a handful of respondents. There were seven people from the area who came to the warehouse studio and sat in a large circle of chairs with interns, along with Jeff, staff and myself. The discussion was directed both by Jeff, who provided some framing to the conversation, and the interns who had prepared questions to ask the group. The meeting lasted about an hour and during that time each one of the community participants had a chance to talk and share stories about the history and current events in the neighborhood.

Within this discussion, one way that area residents shared stories with the interns was to relate history and provide nuance to the narrative about their neighborhood. The district dated back to before the founding of the larger city it was part of and was one of the earliest industrial centers of the American West. Over the last one and a half centuries, there have been multiple industrial plants in this community, most notably a smelter that was one of the main economic drivers in the city (and some argued the world). In addition to sharing stories about their view on how the community evolved over time, these focus group participants described their own actions in response to historical problems and the importance of community involvement in social and environmental issues.

Community members creating learning opportunities through storytelling. Similar to the social organization when Jeff was speaking during planning meetings, the community forum involved learning through listening, consistent with the paradigm that Rogoff (2014) described as "learning by observing and pitching in." The interns asked some questions, then residents told stories while the interns sat and listened. For example, as the fifteen interns sat in a circle alongside about a dozen neighborhood residents at the art studio of the mural project's lead artist, one of the residents, a woman in her 40's, spoke in response to a question about the current state of the land in the neighborhood:

> Instead of removal, it's buried; and then what does that mean? …the soil is critical… why is it okay to bring in mitigation that's less than what nature provided in the beginning. The soil that was there before was lush, and beautiful, and rich; and the soil that they brought was very ... Did you say trash?

Other residents echoed this story about the soil about the history of the neighborhood and the environmental impact of the industries that formed the foundation for this part of the city. People first built houses in this area because of the presence of the smelter and the jobs that went along with the booming industry. Over the years, this neighborhood had played host to multiple industries in addition to the smelter, including beef processing plants and chemical plants. The focus group, which Jeff, Riverplace staff and staff members of the city council organized, was intended to allow Jeff and the interns to gather additional information that might inform the mural. The discussion lasted over an hour and allowed time for each of the resident participants respond to questions posed by interns and Jeff.

Another community member continued the conversation and expanded the historical context of the damage to the soil:

> It was trash, exactly. It was sterile. This is an issue about the dignity of the land. The thing about it, the entire economy of our country in some sense was built by what went through [this neighborhood]. The beef industry, the ... It's phenomenal what this brutalized little neighborhood has contributed over the last 115 years to building the economy in this country. That's something for people to be aware.

The story of this neighborhood was complex because the industrial influence was both an economic driver and public hazard. There were many dimensions to the environmental issues that people shared, such as the health impacts, the effects on the homes and soil, and the long-term vision for mitigation. There were many lasting impacts of the pollution from the smelter affecting the public health and the quality of the land where people lived and worked.

These examples illustrate how people from various positions contributed to the conversation about critical civic issues and in doing so offered an entry point for interns into learning about the complicated history of one neighborhood. Certain themes, related to the environmental destruction and how community embers responded, continued to show up in interns’ subsequent talk, interactions, and mural designs. This meeting constituted a powerful opportunity for civic learning through the breadth and depth of the historical knowledge that interns encountered. These guides provided stories about their experiences, perspectives, and actions that both built on some of the discussions from early meetings and resurfaced later in the project.

For the people who attended the community meeting, the history that they shared had to do with their knowledge about the industrial impacts on the neighborhood's environment and public health. The main civic themes that persisted across the project were the historical factors that contributed to the current state of the environment in that neighborhood.

Talk at the focus group was guided at moments by the questions posed by interns about the history of the neighborhood. At one point, an intern asked, “What's going to happen to the property …what's going to happen to all that land?” A community member with some knowledge of this spoke up:

> It's being cleaned up now and then it's going to be zoned into zoning for industrial; a business, something that they haven't looked that far. It can never be residential; never have any homes on it. It can never be cleaned up enough to be able to do that, but they're looking to business and stuff in there.

This exchange happened early in the discussion and set the stage for expanded deliberation on the topic. By having questions prepared that drew on their existing knowledge, interns positioned themselves as informed, but made it clear that they were seeking more information. The neighborhood residents responded by guiding them through many stories of what had happened as a result of materials being melted in the neighborhood, the effects on the people living there, and what was being done to address these problems in recent years.

As the dialogue continued people shared stories about friends and family that they knew who had adverse health impacts from some of the industrial pollution. Detrimental effects of the industry were one of the key sets of issues that the residents wanted to share and connected a seemingly distant issue, of pollution that happened decades prior, to the everyday lived experience of community members. One person described the extent of this problem:

> I also want you guys to understand… the health impact that smelter had on the neighborhood. You have so many incidences of different types of cancers. I'm going to say this, honestly, I think it probably affected every single family in that neighborhood. Maybe not one, maybe 2, 3, I mean we have so much various types of cancers.

By articulating this linkage, this respondent opened the door for discussing civic issues in a personal way. Someone else picked up this topic and continued:

> We all know people that live in that neighborhood that have lost folks to so many different types of cancers. We still continue to hear of people that we lose to this day from cancer, from things that were in the ground. The kids were playing in that stuff and you know kids put hands in their mouth and eating that stuff... nobody seems to really, really want to put the two together.

This person’s statement added to the discussion that it is important to be inquisitive and look for connections between issues even if they are not widely discussed or accepted. Recognizing linkages across systems, such as industry and public health, was one important discussion included in this part of the project.

Interns also wanted to know what had happened in the time since the smelter had closed, and if there was anything done to reduce some of these negative effects. The conversation transitioned into the talk about how the corporation responsible made inadequate attempts to mitigate the damage caused by the smelter. One intern asked, “was it that they just kind of threw a little bit of fresh dirt on top of everything or…” One of the important pieces of this story was a class action lawsuit successfully pursued by the community that required the company that owned the smelter to do work to fix some of the problems the plant had caused. One respondent talked about their view of the corporation's actions in response to the settlement:

> Actually, they came in and they did 12 inches of soil under there, but the problem that they're reaching now to these days is they did not put enough soil and the soil leaching, is going so far down that these houses are getting moisture inside their foundations and there's no recourse, there's nothing that they can do.

Again, this connected the historical narrative with the personal lives of the respondents. By sharing stories such as these the residents added that it was acceptable to question the actual benefits of the settlement, and continue to investigate the problems, even though on the surface the settlement was a win for the neighborhood. Remaining critical, even in the presence of seemingly successful action, was one example of civic practice contained in these stories.

The discussion of history also included residents speaking about their neighbors and the community spirit. As one person put it, “You have to understand what a negative impact those things came on the neighborhood… and the strength that these people have to overcome everything that's been thrown at them from all different places.” Most of the talk about the strength of community ties had to do with the healthy relationships that people felt with their neighbors and the other people in the community including folks in the local government and those who were working there in the various nonprofits. There was a general, positive tone most of the comments about shared responsibility and ownership over the neighborhood's resources, including parks and schools, with the recurrent use of the word “pride”. The resident participants in this focus group told stories of the importance of solidarity in community life along with the descriptions of how people took action in response to problems.

After this focus group, Jeff debriefed with interns at the next planning meeting by reiterating some of the central themes that were covered and relating them back to discussions they had already started in prior planning meetings when interns used the internet to research the neighborhood’s history. One historical point that emerged in the focus group and resurfaced in later meetings was that the community had won a lawsuit, which stipulated that the company must mitigate the damage by replacing the contaminated soil. Later in one of these meetings Jeff circled back to this point, making the case that the corporation did not properly mitigate the damage and the issue had not been settled:

> Simply putting 12 inches of soil does not solve the problem, and I think that's a given. A strong thing that our mural can do is, again, show maybe something that was a mistake, and show something in history being changed, so we don't make that same mistake again; bringing awareness to it.

The theme of the soil made its way into the mural in the form of a boy holding soil in his hand with an emerging plant. This image juxtaposed the negative information they heard about the soil with a more positive vision of the future that the group also discussed. The focus group became a recurring point of discussion throughout the remainder of the mural process. In this way, stories that interns heard through this process were an integral component of the social organization of learning for this project.

Summary of social organization in community focus group. Similar to much of what the interns did during the planning meetings, they spent most of their time during this community focus group sitting in silence while neighborhood residents told stories. In this setting, the interns had the opportunity to hear new voices comment on many of the issues Jeff had introduced them to in planning meetings or that they had discovered while doing background research.

One key difference in the social organization of this setting was that sometimes the questions asked by Jeff and the interns drove discussion, and other times it was residents piggybacking on each other's stories. The questions from Jeff and the interns opened the door for the stories, although the stories did not always directly answer the questions. When interns asked these questions, they positioned themselves as interested participants. In combination with the mural as an organizing factor, questions allowed the residents to tell stories with some knowledge of their audience and potential connection of whatever they shared with what the group had already been discussing in prior meetings.

This part of the learning ecology did contain both elements from learning by observing and pitching in and assembly line instruction. The focus group participants, all adults, and Jeff did much to set the pace and direct attention through their storytelling and framing of information. To some extent, interns contributed to the ideas by asking particular questions, but the residents were free to reply any way that they chose, and often stories wandered, opening up to new information beyond what the question was asking. Even though the speakers were controlling the pace and ideas, as was mentioned with Jeff's speech, many of the other elements of assembly line instruction were not present in this setting either. There were not tests of the knowledge that interns retained from the meeting, nor were there explicit learning objectives defined at the outset beyond the sharing of stories.

Again in this part of the project, the background features and mural also served as a factor that framed my interpretation of the social organization and characterization of this part of the project as a slice of an example of observing by the interns. The mural provided an occasion for interns to encounter these stories. The people who chose to participate in this focus group attended at least in part because they knew what the group was attempting. However, they may have had other motivations as well to share the particular stories they selected to contribute. The openness of this forum and storytelling across generations added to the substance of learning opportunities in this project by inviting new information.

Social Organization of Learning on the Streetcorner

The two weeks of painting altered the intersection adjacent to the mural, typically filled with constant vehicle traffic, into something quite different. It became a space where people stopped, talked, and worked. It included chances for interns to both observe and pitch in on the work of the mural. People who were walking by often stopped and stayed for a while, and even people driving by would occasionally park their cars to investigate what was happening. It was not much of a mystery because the mural was massive. It was the tallest structure in the surrounding blocks, and from the day that painting commenced it was slowly covered with layers of paint from handheld spray cans.

This phase of the project also expanded on the strengths of the earlier process, such as the inclusion of outside participants, by creating a space for interns to experience public art in action and witness the complexities of doing work in this field. This phase of the summer project added a new form of social organization to the project. The interns, residents, Jeff, and Riverplace staff transformed the streetcorner into a space where people would come together and talk with one another. There were multiple layers to this organization work, and I observed the daily transformation of that streetcorner into a learning environment where interns could engage with the public and do artistic work. Visitors had a chance to engage in conversation with the interns, artists and staff involved in doing this creative work. The streetside discussions shaped the tone of the project and made it into more than a mural that appeared overnight with the staff, interns and Jeff actively engaged in discussions throughout most of the time at the site.

There were three key factors that distinguished the social organization of learning in this setting from prior ones. The first was that staff, the artist, and one supportive resident made physical changes to space around the intersection. These included redirecting traffic and providing amenities such as seating, food and shade for anyone interested in sticking around to watch the work in progress. The second organizing factor was the mural itself. The 30-foot tall visual artifact provided an opportunity for artistic practice, but it also was an artifact for people to discuss. The third and the arguably most important factor was the public conversations among interns and residents.

There was only enough room for four to five interns to be painting at a time. Often four to six of the other interns roamed the site with clipboards, a video camera, and a list of questions about art and neighborhood history. These interviews, along with less formal chatting, sustained similar types of learning opportunities to what the interns experienced in the community meeting.

Description of the site and mural. After six weeks of discussion, design, and drawing, it was time to create the image in public. The mural site was located at 64th and Franklin Street, in the heart of a major metropolitan area, and below the intersection of two major interstates. The group was painting the mural on a pillar that supports the interstate passing through the neighborhood. It was a concrete surface, about 30' tall and 15' wide total. The actual part of the wall that was going to be used as a canvas was slightly inset and a little bit smaller in dimensions by a few feet. The wall was a light brown color, and it had been painted over by the Department of Transportation to cover graffiti. This wall had often been “tagged” or painted by unlicensed graffiti artists throughout the years. The city had engaged in efforts to cover up these paintings with flat single color paint. The complete wall, beyond the panels this mural, spanned at least five or six city blocks along the freeway through the neighborhood.

The group intersection of 64th and Franklin was selected by the city to be a site for public improvement, and the grant that funded this project was awarded to the organization and lead artist as part of an initiative add artistic pieces throughout the city. The group had produced a design to fill space and started a two-week process of painting that would conclude with a ribbon cutting ceremony officiated by a city councilwoman. For those two weeks, the group collectively transformed the space into a bustling area with many new visitors each day.

In two weeks, the concrete panel turned from light beige into a brightly colored image with a striking blue border. Each of the visitors who came to witness this process were greeted and engaged in conversation with someone associated with the project. The exchanges that took place during this phase echoed many of the topics that the group heard from residents in the community forum. The visitors talked about the role of art in public spaces, the strength and pride they had in their community and shared some stories through semi-structured interviews with the interns. There were also many informal conversations, some tense, where people discussed the content of the mural and the relevance of this painting to historical and current issues.

The streetcorner mural site was transformed as Jeff and the interns created an artistic piece in public view. To paint this mural efficiently, Jeff took the first step of using an electronic projector to cast the image onto the wall at night and paint the outline of all of the forms in black paint. Painting the outline at the outset meant that on the first day the wall contained the basic form of the final mural sketched out in a recognizable way. At different stages throughout the painting phase of the project, a visitor would be able to see various parts of this image being colorized. Quickly putting up a picture in the form of black outline allowed the mural to be an object of discussion from the first time a visitor approached, through the ribbon cutting, and beyond. As the days progressed, the interns, Jeff, and some of his friends filled the black outline with vibrant colors. While the final form of the mural with color and detail was not immediately visible and or clear during every time people were present, it offered something for people to observe and discuss as the image evolved.

The mural was on a panel that stands about 30 feet tall and 15 feet wide. There were borders around the edges that are about one foot in width along the top and sides and about 4 feet tall on the bottom. The border was painted light blue. At the top of the mural, there was an image of stars and galaxy and space dust. Immediately below, this space scene was a set of flags, including those representing the United States, Mexico, Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Croatia, and Pan-African symbolism. Immediately below the flags was a banner with the name of the neighborhood. Jeff painted the banner light brown. Below the banner was the phrase “Change from Within,” the title for the mural, and a blue sky with clouds. Immediately below the blue sky was a set of buildings.

The buildings had a light orange tint as they do when the sun is setting. Some of the tops of the buildings were recognizable features from the neighborhood, including some churches. At the center of the buildings was the image of a crumbling smelter smokestack and the smoke from this falling tower rose up into the clouds. The buildings featured in the mural end at about the midpoint down the front of the mural. Below this there were many bright colors including geometric forms and plant forms in colors ranging from green, to teal, to blue, to purple, and orange.

Interspersed with the geometric forms and colors there were silhouettes of people that were completely visible. The center of the mural prominently featured a family. The family included a man with dark brown skin, wearing blue overalls and a wide-brimmed brown hat. He had his hand on the top of a shovel handle. To the left there stood a woman with dark hair holding a baby wrapped in an orange cloth. In front of these three people there was a young boy in a teal hooded sweatshirt, holding his hands outstretched in front of him. In his hands, which were cupped, there was soil and a small plant growing out from the dirt. Along the base of the mural, there were flowers and two mustard colored toads.

Neighborhood residents creating learning opportunities through conversation. Public conversations at the mural site were a key factor in the social organization of the painting phase of the project. These interviews were an effective approach to encouraging ongoing dialogue on the issues raised in background research and the community focus group. I worked with interns to develop a protocol that would elicit stories from people who attended the painting process. The questions that the group decided upon for final inclusion in the protocol included: What do you like most about [the neighborhood]? Which word would you represent [the neighborhood] with? How do you think the mural can benefit the community? In planning to include this element in the public process, we agreed that the questions had to be brief to support the interns in maintaining the attention of the visitors. Interns asked people to participate in a formal, taped interview to share their thoughts. When people agreed and signed the release, they were taped responding to the questions. In the role of program director the following year, I edited the streetcorner conversations and excerpts from the community focus group into a video that interns (many of them the same group) watched before painting another mural in the same neighborhood.

In the end, there were seven recorded interviews available for transcription and analysis. Many people talked with the interns but said no to being recorded. Others might have consented to be recorded, but the video cameras were unavailable because they were being used in other places. I coded these alongside the data from planning meetings and the community focus group. One important finding was that even in this limited sample of the talk that occurred at the mural site, there was a representation of nearly all the same themes that emerged in the earlier phases, such as neighborhood pride, environmental damage, and the role of art in the community. The two notable absences of discussion content in the interviews were mentions of sustainability or artistic action (i.e. drawing, painting). The majority of the themes that emerged from other data sources carried over into the painting phase of the project, extending the social organization in similar ways to the community focus group by supporting the sharing of personal stories.

In the interviews that interns recorded, one key difference from the planning meetings and community focus group was the presence of talk about art as a way to increase the visibility of the neighborhood as a whole. As one teenage visitor remarked when asked how the mural can benefit the community, “I think it like, make it more noticeable.” Discussions of visibility most frequently took place at the mural site in interviews. As another teenager from the neighborhood stated in an interview with an intern, "This type of project creates more [neighborhood] attractions." This allowed interns a chance to hear one additional purpose of public art in addition to what Jeff and focus group participants shared. A mural can attract people to a place and possibly spark their interest in learning more about the neighborhood, the creative individuals who are there doing this sort of work, or the history of arts within that community.

Even though the number of recorded interviews available for close analysis was limited, I know from observing the process that this organizing feature--of talk on the streetcorner--represented more of the time that youth spent at the mural site than the number would convey. Another factor that does not come through in the transcriptions is that after the tape stopped rolling the conversations often continued. The semi-structured interview was a precursor to longer conversations that were not recorded. Through these conversations, initiated by a handful of questions, the interns kept discussion focused on topics central to the mural and after the questions had concluded there was time for discussion of other topics as long as the intern and respondent wanted to keep the conversation going.

Three mural elements gained most of the attention from visitors and sparked discussion between visitors and the project team. The feature most discussed was the family at the front of the mural, with people questioning what particular characteristics of the image represented in the context of neighborhood history. Another commonly mentioned theme of the mural was the diversity represented by different elements such as the flags and silhouettes. The third was the possible meanings conveyed by the overall composition and the relevance to similar environmental issues such as agriculture in damaged soil.

The family at the front of the mural drew a variety of responses from people visiting the painting. Some people viewed the family as a proud representation of the working heritage of the community, and the stewardship of the land that was so important to community residents. For example, the city councilwoman, a Latina expressed publically, “We all come from different backgrounds, but looking at (the mural) makes me proud." Another take on the family was that they represented poor migrant workers and did not accurately portray the Hispanic heritage of many in the community. As one person stated in an interview with the local paper, “Being Hispanics and moving up economically in a neighborhood that is moving up, I would have wished that Hispanic people would have been depicted in a more positive way." Such differing visions of the symbolism of this family became a topic of heated debate at times, including one brief episode of the quoted resident arguing with Jeff on the street in front of the mural about the choice to include the family as the focal element. These discussions highlighted the way that the mural encouraged people to voice varied opinions and perspectives, sometimes in disagreement and prompting debate. The mural itself impacted the social organization of learning on this project by inviting conversation.

Similarly, there were discussions about the multiple elements signaling the cultural and ethnic diversity of origins of people in the area. An intern asked one visitor to the site, “How do you think that the mural will benefit the community?” The resident replied, “I'm not sure how it's going to finish out, but I see a lot of diversity… There's a good diversity of people here.” The diversity was represented in the multiple national flags, chosen for inclusion on the basis of the historical research of interns and their findings of the multiple immigrant groups that called this neighborhood home over the past century. Another feature was the faces and silhouettes of the people standing behind the focal family. These people appeared to be of various ethnicities and wore regional clothing styles indicative of multiple heritages. The inclusion of such features invited public commentary on the theme of diversity, which surfaced occasionally in the community focus group and was a prominent finding discussed through the intern’s earlier background research on the area that took place and was discussed in planning meetings.

A final recurrent theme of discussion at the site, which tied closely with the findings of the community focus group, was the environmental past and future of the neighborhood. One interpretation treated the smokestack at the back of the painting as a metaphor for the neighborhood's industrial history; the fact that it was crumbling and falling. This element was drawn directly from an actual event, the demolition of the smelter, another central topic of many discussions in the planning phase. The group placed the smelter at the back and this contrasted with the foreground image of a boy holding soil in his hand, with a small plant emerging from the soil. Jeff and neighborhood residents who had discussed the topic at the focus group noted that the soil condition was poor, and the possibility for plant growth in the community depended upon effort to construct raised beds or otherwise avoid the contaminated soil. The linkage between this thematic element and current events in the area included the recent development of urban agriculture initiatives and the potential of those strategies to reshape the possibility of sustainable food production in the community.

Multiple features of this setting contributed to the social organization of learning at the mural site. It became a space rich with the discussion. The mural itself drew people's attention and provoked reactions and questions. The planning and support work completed by staff and one key local partner made the street and area to either side welcoming for activities that expanded what typically took place there. Interviews by the interns invited outsiders to share their perspectives and participate in a collective process of interpretation about the mural. When these elements combined together, this streetcorner became attractive to outsiders and stimulated conversation between strangers.

The social organization of learning opportunities for interns included both observing the process of doing a public art piece and observing the public response. Interns pitched in throughout this process, both by spending time painting and by asking questions of residents. By directly inviting this public commentary, interns, staff and the lead artist made the space more than simply a place where people were hanging out viewing art, but rather a place for people to ponder questions about neighborhood history, and actively engage in the process of imagining the future. The mural may continue to spark public discussion because of these efforts at eliciting multiple interpretations through interaction and dialogue. By showcasing artistic work of this scale at that particular location, the streetcorner gained a new attraction, and many residents were made familiar with the content through discussion with interns. Before the murals were there, as noted by residents including the lead artist, the space was primarily used by graffiti artists to do their unlicensed work, and this was not greatly appreciated by the neighborhood generally, evidenced from statements both at the community focus group and street side interviews. With the presence of commissioned artwork, there became a new reason for people to visit this space.

The social organization of endeavors at the streetcorner most closely aligned with Rogoff's (2014) description of learning by observing and pitching in for at least three reasons. First, there was a great deal of flexibility in the interactions between people, including between interns and adults including community members, Jeff, and staff. Interns rotated between different roles, occasionally managed by staff who marked divisions in time, but more often appeared to be free flowing. Second, ideas and agendas blended across multiple activities taking place including painting, interviews, and hanging out. Discussions were not constrained by a fixed period, nor were they strictly limited to be about the mural. Third, the social organization was centered on the mural, but there were always more people at the site not working on the mural than were painting at any one time. The other things that people were doing often linked in some way with the mural itself, such as the interviews about the mural.

Many people played roles in the social organization, making the area into an inviting and comfortable area that was easy for people to visit and spend time. This was accomplished by the effort of the neighborhood resident who transformed his yard, by the group as a collective who transformed the street, and by the artist and young people who were in the process of transforming the wall. Jeff and the interns created a public work of art that people were willing to discuss, and this again was a collective effort. Without the extensive time dedicated to planning, and engagement with area residents throughout the process, this mural may not have resonated with visitors and sparked discussion. The planning process also prepared them with tools to initiate discussion with strangers and support public dialogue through the continual practice of greeting visitors and asking questions as they arrived at that location.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to describe the social organization of the learning across multiple parts of a creative project. The analysis of video archives and observational data showed how the social organization shifted depending on the setting and participants. In some cases this included elements similar to assembly line instruction, but more frequently learning was organized in ways that reflected observing and pitching-in (Rogoff, 2014). In earlier planning phases of this project, the interns were frequently in a listening role as well as working as a flexible ensemble. In the community focus group, interns were also primarily in a listening role, with resident participants as experts. During the painting phase, interns were again active in a flexible ensemble through a number of different roles, both artistic and social. Interns also impacted the social organization of learning opportunities at the mural site through their actions in concert with the lead artist, staff and community residents.

Across all of the settings that I analyzed, storytelling was an important feature of the social organization of endeavors. The next chapter focuses on the potential role these narratives played in shaping the learning opportunities in this project.

The Role of Narratives in the Learning Ecology

Because the telling of stories figured largely in the social organization of learning across all parts of this project, I elected to take a closer look at the content and role of stories using examples from three speakers. Throughout the mural project, interns had the opportunity to interact with three distinct sets of adult storytellers who shared narratives about artistic work and civic issues. The first was the lead artist, Jeff, who played a significant role directing conversation across all of the settings and narrated many examples of doing artistic work engaged with public issues. The second was made up of neighborhood residents, invited by Jeff and organization staff, who shared their experiences living in the area where the mural was being painted. Their stories included the history of industry, the resulting pollution, and their work to address the impact of that pollution. The third group of people was made up of guest artists invited by Jeff, who shared examples of their work and told stories about their lives as working artists and environmental activists. The interns spent multiple days listening to these stories over the course of the summer program.

This chapter focuses on the content of the narratives and looks at the socializing function played by the stories. Although in some cases stories drew connections to the mural, there was not always a visible parallel between the topics covered in the meetings and the content of the mural. I argue that the stories played other roles in the learning experiences of youth. In particular they positioned interns as developing civic actors and communicated historical information and messages about how to be an active member of the community.

Adults with varied roles in relation to the project shared narratives with varied content and moral stances. The lead artist, Jeff, most often offered a reflection on the process of artistic representation; this happened typically at planning meetings. Jeff’s stories encouraged a critical stance towards creative work, such as examples of making difficult decisions about what to include or exclude in a project where multiple perspectives were included. Community residents most frequently shared stories that had to do with the neighborhood, pollution, and environmental action, and these stories were primarily shared at the focus group meeting. The stories of community focus group participants contained a moral imperative to act on environmental concerns. Invited guest artists often seeded new ideas about creative life pathways. Guest artists' stories included calls to action on environmental issues, as well as an appreciative stance towards the power of art to transform social relations. The observational and archival data that I collected does not provide direct evidence for how interns interpreted these stories. This analysis supported by an analytical framework that directs attention towards the ways that people tell stories to interpret the learning potential embedded in narratives. The stories played a central role in the overall learning ecology because of the civic and artistic examples they provided as well as the active stance they encouraged towards civic engagement and creative work.

Framework for Narrative Analysis

Ochs (1993, 1997), a narrative theorist, maintains that narratives play an important role in constructing social identity, both through allowing for sense making of one's lived experience as well as applying stories to helping decide how one should act in possible future scenarios. Ochs argues that narratives contain "moral evaluation of an occurrence, an action, or a psychological stance related to a set of events (1997 p. 191)." Narratives can socialize young people in multiple ways, and one way is to set the boundaries for "understandings of what the culture deems ordinary" (Ochs, 1997, p. 191), by bringing past events into the present and helping people to place their own experiences in context alongside incidents that other people find important. In the case of this project, the artist stories offered normative conceptions of creative work. Additionally, in sharing stories from personal experience, speakers exposed interns to ways of thinking about civic action and creative action including additional contextual information about particular historical moments.

In a 2004 book chapter entitled “Narrative Lessons”, Ochs offers ten lessons about the human practice of narrating personal experiences. Lesson number nine stipulates five basic dimensions that can be used to analyze personal narratives, which I drew upon for this analysis. The first dimension is *tellership,* considering the role of the primary narrator. Tellership can be understood in terms of the extent of participation of multiple parties in telling a story, noting that in most cases there are co-tellers who take on variable roles. The second is *tellability*, or the significance of the experience and the relatability of the story. Tellability refers to how a story is expressed, and the extent to which a story is interesting. A highly tellable story is easily recounted and is shared in a compelling manner. To determine if a story is compelling, analytical attempts must consider “community evaluative frameworks (Ochs, 2004, p.282),” which emerge from the social context in which a story is told. The third is *embeddedness*, discussing the relation of a narrative to the surrounding activity. The embeddedness of a narrative can be judged based on the extent to which the story is connected with the context in which it is told. A detached narrative is not connected with speech that came before or after and is thematically removed from the surrounding activities. The fourth is *linearity*, which is an analysis of the organizing logic of events in a story. Stories can follow either an open temporal and causal order, or be more closed based on the decisions of the narrator to order events in a particular way. The fifth and final dimension is a *moral stance,* which attends to the ways in which a narrator assesses the implications of their personal experience and of witnessing of the experience of others. Narratives can vary on the dimension of moral stance, either leaning toward a more certain and constant stance or towards a more fluid and uncertain stance. For this chapter, I analyzed examples of narratives that emerged throughout the mural process by attending to each of the lessons of five basic dimensions of narratives.

Another narrative principle described by Ochs is that narratives of past events influence social relations. In particular, by analyzing narratives along different dimensions, we can better understand how they work to "allow us to reconcile how we (and others) behaved in the past and how we project ourselves (and others) into an as-yet-unrealized future with current self-understandings" (Ochs, 2004, p. 285). In addition to considering the multiple dimensions of these narratives, I interpreted the potential socializing role each story played in the context of the project.

Each narrative introduced a set of events and presented a particular stance towards evaluating the events. The embedded socializing function for the interns could be interpreted in terms of this mural project or in relation to hypothetical future creative projects. The interns were positioned in some parts of the project as listeners, which positioned them more generally as developing civic actors and artists. In the previous chapter, I argued that the diverse social organizations of learning across settings in this learning ecology expanded learning opportunities in a way that made this project more compelling than any one setting could accomplish. Similarly, in this chapter I argue that the diversity of narratives shared by multiple participants served to expand the types of civic identities available to the Interns in this ecology. Learning ecologies that draw in multiple perspectives and support storytelling may broaden definitions of what it means to be knowledgeable and express agency with respect to civic issues. This project demonstrated one example of this work in action and the narratives presented here are exemplars of this process. They both exposed the interns to multiple ways of narrating a civically engaged identity and, when combined, these stories provided a framing for their current work on the project.

The following narratives are all drawn from video archives collected by staff and interns. The cameras were set up at the side of the room by staff or held in hand by an intern with the ultimate aim of using the footage for a documentary about the project. The intern's and staff's goal of documenting the project supported the gathering of stories told in meetings. I selected stories that involved the recounting of past events and that represented the three most commonly applied codes for this data set of transcribed audio: talk about art (n=58), talk about the neighborhood (n=55), and talk about the environment (n=38). For each of the narratives discussed in this chapter, I include the following analytical elements. First, I used notes from my own participant observation and reflection on the video archives to describe the context of the storytelling including the setting of the storytelling, and the general content of stories told by these sets of people. I include the full transcription of a story that was told, and reflection on the content of the narrative. I then analyze the five basic dimensions (Ochs, 2004) of each narrative to consider the socializing functions of the stories.

Narratives Shared by Lead Artist

Jeff shared multiple narratives about his creative processes. He brought years of experience completing large-scale public art pieces. Many of the lessons that he shared with the interns in the early stages of the project were related to his prior work and described what it took to complete artistic work that was highly visible and that involved many contributors. In order to help interns feel prepared to undertake something similar, he spent some of the time in each of the planning meetings I observed talking about how, on previous projects, he took complex ideas and put them into visual representations.

Jeff spent much of his time with them discussing the multiple forms of activism that he took part in and characterized how those related to his artistic practice. Jeff used himself as an example of how an individual might forge a life pathway as a civically engaged artist in these narratives. This effort on his part to showcase his personal history and current work, both in graffiti and urban agriculture, served to frame the mural project within those terms and to stress linkages among personal history, art, and activism. As the project continued to unfold, Jeff continued to share his experiences in the neighborhood, and this use of personal stories as a tool for organizing conversation and framing the overall activity was prominent in the summer work. Jeff's narratives covered many categories of artistic practices, but here I highlight one narrative regarding strategies for completing artistic work.

Example: Making creative decisions. This narrative was part of a planning meeting that took place at the Riverplace Art's home space. Jeff was sitting at the table with the interns. The conversation took place during the part of the meeting that typically preceded independent work by interns. Jeff had invited a guest speaker that day, an art teacher with whom he had worked on multiple projects. The guest told of his experiences working as a teacher, and Jeff then recounted a project he had completed on a building in the city. Jeff showed drawings of the mural design to the interns and told the following story. It was followed immediately by the interns moving from listening to speakers into a period of sketching and doing background research.

> These were different attempts at how I was going to make the mural work on the building, I had to ask of the [building owner], [about using different windows], and he didn't bend, because it's different things, so I had to try a lot of different approaches. See

> how I had these characters in here? I had the young kids climbing, I had the chlorine and all that stuff … I had to eliminate some of that stuff, even though I really liked it being in there, it just didn't work for the flow of it.

Jeff recounted a challenging experience on a project, and how he addressed the challenge by making a difficult decision that went against his personal preference but increased the overall aesthetic quality of the piece. He continued by explaining one way that he made decisions, by taking the perspective of a potential viewer.

> If you notice the picture of the mural, there's no longer the same characters, on the mural, but on the mural there were both on this side. After going and standing on the bridge, seeing the way the mural was going to be viewed, that I just had to make that sacrifice and put them to all on one side, because it just made the piece stronger.

Jeff explained an approach to composing a public piece that would be a lasting representation of his artistic capabilities. He continued to tell them about the decision process for this particular mural and gives some explanation for his selection of this example from his experience.

> I'm telling you guys this because there's this thing going, I was thinking this is important as to knowing to what's fresh, is knowing what's whack. That just don't work, even though it seems cool, we got to take it out.

Jeff broke his story to interject additional explanation as to why he was sharing this story with the group. Jeff directed this statement at the interns as artists who may have to make similar decisions at some point in the future.

> So this was the design of the mural, we got it to that point, we could have drawn, like usually I just, fold cotton to some extent and then draw on right on top of it, which is what we're going to be doing today.

He added more to the context of his story this story by relating it to the events of that day for work on the mural project. Then he returned to his story about painting on the building.

> The one I went with, so I took it in there and said it looks greater than I designed it … Piece by piece, I had a number for every piece of the building, a number for every one of those panels, but if you guys look at this design, and you look at the artwork, it's perfect. It looks exactly like it.

Jeff moved back to addressing the interns as artists by telling them what they should take from this story and what they should do when faced with similar challenges.

> If you follow the process, the end result it shows through, it gives you an idea, you guys want to be as hands-on; you've got to have the qualities to put it together, but you have a greater part in all of these to some degree, including today in which you guys want to do stuff to illustrate it. That's it, I've shown you how to call that stuff, then let's get to work.

Jeff concluded his story with a final framing of the point of the story, how to make a "call" when in a decision-making position. He finished with a directive to work, and after the story had concluded, the interns spent time in the planning meeting sketching ideas for the mural and continuing background research on the community.

Jeff's telling of this narrative presented a particularly challenging event from his professional experience. He included key details about how he approached the problem and paused at points in the narrative to make his decision-making visible to the interns.

Tellership. Jeff was the most active teller in these stories, and the role of co-tellers in this instance were limited to the guest teacher who spoke before him and set the stage for this story to emerge by also sharing personal examples. The interns also played a role as listeners, but in this example they did not actively participate in the story telling. This was a common feature of narratives shared by Jeff, he was the active teller of stories, with others being contributors to conversations before or after narratives that he shared.

Tellability. Jeff's narrative was tellable because it recounted a challenging event that the interns could reasonably expect to face in future artistic projects. In this case, the event was the decision regarding specific features of the painting that he was personally attached to, but which he removed for the sake of improving the overall mural. The challenge of the event was unique to the specific features in the project he described. Jeff's framing made the story more tellable by describing why this example, in particular, should be relevant to the interns.

The community framework that could be inferred from their shared artistic endeavor supports the characterization of this as a tellable story. One was related to Jeff's positioning as a professional artist and lead on this project. As an expert, Jeff's stories were potentially in the highly compelling category for a group of novices in an artistic internship program. Thinking of Jeff as an expert guide, all of Jeff's stories had the potential to be compelling because they contained chunks of practical knowledge related to the group's work, such as how to know "what is fresh." Jeff also boosted tellability of this story through the use of visual aids, in the form of the original drawings shared at the beginning of the narration. This mode of increasing tellability was in alignment with the community that comprised his audience, with many interns that self-identified as visual artists.

Embeddedness. Jeff's narrative represented an "embedded narrative" in three ways. First, it built on what the guest who spoke before him told about personal experiences in artistic work. Second, Jeff's narrative is embedded within his own extended set of narratives, referring to a project that he had previously displayed for the interns. Third, the narrative was directly related to the ongoing social endeavor of painting the mural, and he articulated this linkage with phrases such as, "I'm telling you guys this because," and, "which is what we're going to be doing today." His story was framed in relation to the upcoming decisions about what to include in the mural. Together these factors support the embeddedness of Jeff's narrative as one component of the project.

Linearity. This narrative explored the decision process for composing a public piece and the importance of balancing personal taste and artistic integrity with contextual constraints such as a building on which some surfaces could not be used. Jeff related this story in a relatively closed sequence of causation. He told of a sequence of events that followed a causal process, for example, "standing on the bridge" resulted in the choice to, "put [the images] all on one side." Jeff's closed the narrative with his assertion that he had made the correct choice in the scenario, leading to a "stronger" final piece.

Moral Stance. Jeff's narrative is constant and certain in the moral stance towards what constitutes good artistic work, and how to approach challenges in the process, through the sharing of one example story where he had to make a difficult decision. His story conveys that the artistic work improved when there was a clear "process" and that artists should know when to "sacrifice" certain ideas to improve the quality of their work. He establishes this stance through telling about how he thought his approach resulted in a "perfect" product. He relates this moral stance through statements that position the interns as artists who might employ this approach in the future.

Interpretation of the socializing elements of the narrative. This story, directed at "you"--the interns--was doing work to socialize them to the professional process of artists and some of the challenges to composing large-scale projects. Jeff was narrating his own experience of making difficult decisions on a project. This related both to the current decisions that had to be made for the mural and the intern's overall development of a creative skillset. In the case of this story, Jeff wanted to convey a few qualities of artists that he hoped the interns would emulate. These lessons including being, "hands-on" and knowing when to take things out to make one's artwork better. Talking from personal experience to guide interns through artistic work was one primary way he used narratives throughout the process of this project. It was relevant to their current work, as well as holding the potential for practical relevance for interns interested in pursuing this work beyond this project.

Narratives Shared by Neighborhood Resident

One of the significant episodes in the planning process was the community focus group meeting. The artist and Riverplace staff worked with people in the neighborhood and city council office to organize the meeting by inviting respondents. The community members were invited under the premise of soliciting opinions that would inform the intern's thinking about the neighborhood and the mural. As Jeff put it at the beginning of the meeting, speaking to the visitors, "What we want to hear from you guys is how do you envision this mural; how do you see this mural? When you think about this mural in [the neighborhood], what would you like to see?"

There were seven people from the area, who came to the warehouse studio and sat in a large circle of chairs with interns, Jeff, Riverplace staff, and me. The discussion was directed both by Jeff, who provided some framing to the conversation, and the interns who had prepared questions to ask the group. The meeting lasted about an hour, and during that time each one of the community participants had a chance to talk and share stories about the history and current state of the neighborhood.

One way that area residents shared stories was to provide nuance and complexity to the narrative about their neighborhood. In addition to sharing stories about their view on how the community evolved over time, these focus group participants described their own actions in response to historical problems and the importance of community involvement in social and environmental issues.

For the people who attended the community meeting, the history that they were most interested in sharing, in response to Jeff’s opening framing, had to do with industrial impacts on the neighborhood's environment and public health. The main civic theme documented in the recording was talk about the historical factors that contributed to the current state of the environment in that neighborhood. As the dialogue continued, people shared stories about friends and family who experienced adverse health impacts from the industrial pollution. These examples connected a seemingly distant issue--pollution that happened decades prior--to the everyday lived experience of community members.

Within the talk about the environment and industrial impacts, one sub-genre of story involved social action. Several of the resident participants shared examples of how they had aimed to hold people accountable for the pollution and improve the neighborhood. The narratives they offered showed that bringing about change requires a sustained effort and was often filled with frustrating moments. This type of story was present throughout the discussion and covered multiple forms of civic action pursued over time by neighborhood residents. These stories exposed the interns to the variety of options people can pursue to addressing environmental problems or other civic issues directly from other people in personal stories.

Example: Building a positive future. The following narrative came from a middle-aged female participant, Maria, who had lived in the neighborhood her whole life. She was responding to the speaker before her. The prior speaker Fred had discussed the negatives of the neighborhood, such as people dying from cancer as a result of contamination, but Maria remained optimistic about the potential for positive transformations. This woman gave examples of positive transformations and noted how good things came from negative situations.

> There's a convergence too, right now, of what you're saying, in a very positive future in, this continues with the environmental. You may have heard, but there was settlement where they sell energy, of the lawsuit against, that part of [the housing development] sued [the energy company] for exceeding the emissions standards out of their coal plant, [plant name].

Maria opened by suggesting that attending to environmental concerns was now at the center of positive changes for the future of this neighborhood. She began to introduce a situation where that had happened.

> That settlement was reached here, recently; $450,000, 470,000 that's going back into [the neighborhood] while the coal plant is being torn down, it's not being used anymore, and it's transitioning out of that and this money's going into solar energy, energy efficiency and that kind of thing. That is now. That is now, that is a positive part of the future being built out of these same issues, and $200,000 of that is going to become leveraging money

> to get the full funding for a place called [name of open space] which is right adjacent to your land, there, right Fred?
>
> Fred: Yeah.

She continued her story by telling of how issues are transforming over time, and how the outcomes from people’s civic actions turn into tangible benefits for the community. She noted additional considerations for how this transition was taking shape, and included an opening for action that would position the interns as observers of the transformation.

> That's a beautiful story, but [councilwoman] has been a champion on city council with that. You can check out some of the progress on that, but here's a situation where the transition to the greening of the land is a present story and some of it is coming out of this transition from putting away the old industry, the coal industry.

She acknowledged the role of a key individual in a position of power, and the role of a changing industrial backdrop, in the transitions related to the land in this neighborhood. She then spoke to the interns more directly as an audience to tell what they might be able to observe related to this issue.

> We still can sit and watch the coal. You can go down and video tape the coal trucks bringing the coal in; the coal cars on the train tracks. The bridge over [a particular intersection in the neighborhood], go get some film of that coal coming in to be burned while the solar's coming in down the street, there's some potential there. The empathy for the land, and the art to me is a huge, important part of the time line of the story that the history then occupies.

She shifted towards mentioning the role of art in creating history and suggested one contrasting visual: coal being shipped to the neighborhood versus growing a solar installation. She again phrased this as an invitation for something the interns might take action on themselves.

> I think we got a continuum toward the future that's really important when you have someone like Fred talking about when there was a lot of stuff that made it what it can become again and it really depends on what we do now.

She closed by highlighting group responsibility in a historical continuum, given both the historical information people had shared, and some of the current transformations she and others had witnessed and taken part in pursuing.

Maria told a story that recounted an extended sequence of changes that she and others had witnessed and could still see taking place in the neighborhood. Her narrative included invitations to action by the interns as well as the collective "we," which positioned the audience as witnesses as well.

Tellership. In the community focus group, there were many co-narrators. Each of the stories that participants told built on the prior tellers story in some way. Even though this particular sub-narrative within the extended narrative of the whole group had one primary active teller, Maria made reference to things that other people said in the focus group. She sought active participation of another co-teller by asking a question of a prior speaker. Connecting her telling to what others had spoken of allowed for her role as a teller to be that of a co-narrator of the larger focus group's story.

Tellability. Maria related a story about community transformation that contained critical problems, but also held, as she put it, a "positive part of the future being built out of these same issues." The tellability was supported by a sequence of events that ran counter to the some of the longstanding problems one might have seen happening in the neighborhood. All together these unusual occurrences amounted to what she considered a transformation that was still open to influence by the people in the neighborhood. The narrative moved quickly through multiple examples, but also included enough detail about each of the changes she had witnessed to make the story relatable. She also supported the tellability by positioning the other people in the room as actors in the process she described.

Embeddedness. Maria's narrative was firmly embedded in the context of the community meeting. She shared a narrative that built on topics that others in the focus group had already discussed. Her story also ended with a link to the present, "what we do now." This opened the door for others to engage with what she said, but it also demonstrated some of the embeddedness of her particular story with the larger mural project ecology. Her narrative of transformation was shared as the mural was still being formulated. Mentioning the importance of "art" and its role in making history added to what others had shared, the stories together locating this mural in the history of the community. .

Linearity. Her narrative included neighborhood events over a multi-year timeframe, and she discussed how multiple actors can bring about change. Maria started by describing the lawsuit being leveraged to improve public spaces, to suggest that positive change is possible. She included characters to show how that process required multiple people taking action, such as a champion in the city council, or the collective of people in a housing development, in order to bring about changes from multiple angles. She also suggested that observing broad trends, such as the evolution of the industry, could inform artistic work and help create a better future by influencing the historical story of a place. Her narrative demonstrated an openness toward the causality of events and temporality of the transformations she discussed.

Moral Stance. Maria shared a limited slice of her experiences that fit into the conversation that preceded covering the environment and toxic effects of industry. From this starting point, she included examples articulating her stance towards critical issues that others had raised and beliefs about how transformation occurs. Her moral stance was certain and constant in that the narrative maintained that positive changes were underway and encouraged responsibility for social issues. By asking for others to witness these changes for themselves, she included a call to the audience for engagement with these issues. Maria conveyed a stance towards a positive future, but one that required people to take action.

Interpretation of the socializing elements of the narrative. The story socialized the interns towards responsibility for critical issues, all leading towards the statement that the future "depends on what we do now" rather than depending on what someone else does. Her stance supported a story that might socialize interns towards being observers of the world who would take action on important issues. The narrative was specific in addressing the general call to the focus group for stories that could be incorporated into the mural project, and was also generally working to provide interns with examples of the different forms of engagement with one particular civic topic. Linking other people's stories to her own, and inviting interns to go out and see the changes for themselves, were two examples of how a storyteller can position an audience as collective witnesses to the evolving story of a place.

Another socializing function of this narrative was tied to its timing in the sequence of project activities. Jeff and staff had worked to frame this event as an opportunity for the interns to hear community perspectives that might inform their mural. I infer, based on later images and text in the mural; the group took up this message in content of the mural. For example, the title that resided below the banner, “Change from Within,” connected with Maria’s closing argument that the future depended on what “we”—the people in the room—did in response to the stories about the environment.

Narratives Shared by Invited Speakers

The three guest artists invited by Jeff offered narratives that planted seeds about the possibilities for artistic careers. Similarly to Jeff, the guest artists used their limited time with interns to share experiences, in particular highlighting their work as artists trying to have an impact on public issues. They spoke to the life path of an artist and how it changed their social interactions and had an impact on their relationship with the world around them. Each of these meetings took on different conversational tones depending on each presenter and their style. During some of the time in these meetings, the guest speaker asked questions and shared stories to provoke discussion. Part of each session, which was typically an hour, was used by the guest to present examples of their work through video and images that they shared using one of the computers. Interns and Jeff would gather around these computers where the guest artist controlled the mouse, sometimes watching music videos that artists had completed or viewing photo images of projects around the city. After each of these guest speakers had concluded, their presentations the interns spent time with Jeff on different planning activities and also using some of that time to debrief what they had heard from the special guest speaker.

The special guests added new stories of creative work to the set of narratives interns encountered on this project. One reason the guest artists did this was to contribute examples of how life as a professional artist can take shape over time. Interns experienced one example of a professional artist’s life in Jeff’s descriptions of his work, but the guests added additional layers by including examples of artistic careers that were different from Jeff's. As with Jeff's reflection on professional experiences, this storytelling added meaning to the project that went beyond artistic skills and spoke to the role of art in personal growth and the role of artists in society.

All three of the guest artists discussed their life paths and how their pursuit of an artistic lifestyle had impacted their social relationships and worldview; they spoke more about what art meant in their lives than about how to do art. Their comments reflected on the benefits that art could play in social interaction and how working with others on creative projects could improve relationships. Interns had different backgrounds and different aspirations beyond the program for post-secondary pathways. Guest artists added various stories about their lives outside of art, giving examples of the multiple layers of meaning that creativity can hold for a person.

Example: Life as an artist and innovator. Manny was a guest artist who told some of what art meant in his life, but also through the encouragement of Jeff, told stories of environmental innovation. The narrative opened with the Manny's introduction of where he placed himself as an artist within a specific genre and talked about the process of discovering an artistic identity.

> Yeah, you know.
>
> I'm a Hip Hop artist, and it's just important … I didn't always know I was a artist until I became a part of what we call a Hip Hop movement, and now I could be hip to all kind of different artists and like Jeff was saying, you don't have to be classically trained to be a artist, you just got to tell yourself you're a artist and then start doing it, so that's what happens.

Similar to the other narrators in this analysis, Manny spoke to the collective of interns as “you,” and he offered guidance in becoming an artist that was grounded in personal experience. He supported a stance towards the title of “artist” that is inclusive of people from many backgrounds and is more dependent upon practice than training.

> Your life could take new roads, you could meet new people and you pave the way for yourself to be a artist. That’s mad important. When me and Jeff met, when we met we weren’t even good buddies at first, but through art we squashed the silly beef and we like tight as hell, yeah … So it does good things for your life yo, that’s my shot, and I know you already know that or you’ll wouldn’t be here.
>
> It’s the type of shit that [you all face].

Manny discussed the social component of artistic work, and mentioned how art can transform relationships between people. Jeff then interjected and remarked on how humble this guest artist was by leading with the statements above rather than talking about all of his accomplishments in other pursuits. Jeff asks Manny to expand into talking about another project he works on outside of hip-hop when he says, “Manny doesn’t even touch on the fact that like, outside of what they do just with the music, the lifestyle that they live is incredible, like they built something that’s called, ‘Earthships.” The guest artist then began speaking again introducing the Earthships concept as another thing that was important in his life.

> Yeah. Earthships is this thing they call BioTechure, so you basically mix biology and architecture together, and it’s basically like off the grid, self-sustainable at homes, they can be other than homes, but they’ll be self-sustaining in the buildings, you catch your own water on the side and you re-treat your water and you can grow food with it, you use

> earth, like rammed earth for your walls, and you dictate… Walls that are earth, just smash into these tires, and use recycled materials.

Manny then described specific features of the Earthships and their purpose.

> You use solar panels to get your electricity, we getting on our new knowledge for how to harness electricity, that's kind of like the old food now, it's solar panels. You treat your sewage and all that. Like I'm saying, you grow food out your house and it's like, pretty much you can take care of yourself and not need a lot of outside stuff to do it. That's why I'm getting to the Earthships.

Manny told the interns that Earthships were a path towards self-reliance and sustainability, his reasons for pursuing this living practice and that this approach required new knowledge.

> We working on doing some stuff in the city so that we can have an example upon for people to visit, and see what they're like.

Manny also described how he was hoping to spread knowledge about Earthships by providing working examples that others could witness. Jeff then asked another question to continue expanding the examples that were being shared, "Where are you doing right now, the outside of the city?" The guest remarked on the challenges of bringing this idea, which he is doing away from the city, into the urban environment.

> Like right now it's a lot of outside of the city because these things are, they're innovative and cutting edge, and like the way buildings are put up in the city it's kind of old school, they have a certain way that they want you to put up buildings, so it's going to take a lot of filing building codes, and permitting, and getting a lot of people excited about it and having the city government become supportive over these kind of ideas.

Manny told how the challenges related to both procedural issues and public knowledge and interest in new sustainable forms of living.

> Are you going to help us save the water or not? Because we’re going to be in some water crises real soon here, and we already, all the town are from me, I know, I got a house in [specific neighborhood], and they sending us to the barber places, there’s note saying; ‘You can’t, don’t use water during this time.’ I was like, it’s crazy, but if we could just catch the water off the roof, and in every house had their own water source, that would do a lot for our water problems, just to deal with one issue. This stuff is inherently, eventually be what we all be dealing with anyways, we just happen to be, on-hand to, to the cutting edge of it right now.

Manny made the point that even though he was pursuing an innovative path, the problems that his initiatives were addressing are important to everyone in the population. He argues through his story that people’s actions can have a positive impact on large and complex problems. An intern supports his claim immediately following the statement above, “that’s right.” Jeff seconds this support, “That’s what’s up, yeah.” The guest continues his narrative by expanding beyond the story of the Earthships into the broader issue of improving the world.

> It’s the same way dealing with something that can, can constantly coming up with these projects that were talking about, we need like absolutely… can we sustain,or how in the future… living light so we can sustain the world for the better of it. And creating the art that can sustain the history and the knowledge of these few past months to the next generation there and below the … So if we can extend that, it’s going to keep coming up, this is an important factor of being a public artist.

He linked the knowledge of his work on sustainable living projects and the role of art in sustaining knowledge of important problems and solutions for future generations.

Tellership. Manny was the active lead teller in this narrative, but Jeff strongly supported him as a co-teller. Jeff asked questions that allowed Manny to open up into other aspects of his life's work and give additional details in his narrative. The presence of Jeff as a co-teller was significant given Manny's admission that they did not used to get along. Jeff's encouragement to tell particular stories and personal compliments supported Manny's tale of a friendship that grew out of shared interests. The exchanges between the two throughout the narrative set the tone and reinforced the narratives positive social message about collaboration and relationships.

Tellability. Manny's narrative was compelling for at least two reasons. First, similar to Jeff, Manny's position as an expert meant that the details of his personal experience may have held personal relevance to some of the interns. The details regarding how art had impacted his social life, and the complex details of the Earthship project lent to the narrative being highly tellable. As an expert artist, Manny's focus on the ways art can connect "you" with people was particularly relatable to this community of interns because of their experiences in the program. Social connection through art was something that Manny guessed that they had experienced, or else they "wouldn't be here." The example of the Earthship lent to greater tellability because Earthships are radically different from normative building practices in the urban environment. As Manny stated, part of the Earthships project is making people aware of the striking differences between sustainable living and current urban practices. Manny helped to frame the importance of his stories by identifying the ideas as "cutting edge" and his claim bolsters the relevance of his story that the issues he identified are critical for everyone— "what we all be dealing with."

Embeddedness. Manny's narrative was strongly linked with multiple strands of topics that emerged in other parts of the mural project. He spoke to life as a professional artist, and this portion of his story tied to other conversations relating to the interns future options. Additionally, Manny's story was embedded in the thread of conversation that spanned the entire project relating to the environment and what people were doing to fix problems related to resource consumption. Because Manny was one of many guests, his narrative was also embedded in the project in a recognizable way. Manny followed a similar format to other guest speakers, with Jeff assisting to elicit stories and situate the information that was shared. The delivery of this narrative both contained, and served as an example of, a relationship between people strengthened through collaborative artistic work.

Linearity. Manny told a story that outlined some of the components of developing a life as a public artist. His examples make the case that being a public artist includes multiple facets of interests. He provided an example of how someone can blend life as an artist and life as an innovator in sustainable living. He reflected on his emergent identity as an artist and presented what, for him, is one key meaning of art: sustaining knowledge linked to other things about which he is passionate. Manny's narrative had some closed causality in that he directly related art with changes to his life. However, Manny's story finished open-ended, with what he asserted were implications for the "next generation." The story remained open to possibilities for future action for the young artist interns, similar to Maria's and Jeff's narratives.

Moral stance. Manny shared stories about sustainable initiatives with the stance that these solutions were critical to society as a whole and not limited to his personal interests in self-reliance. He took the stance that there were multiple factors important to being a public artist, to produce art that builds on history and extends knowledge of sustainability into the future.

Manny's assertions were certain and constant in their stance that people should take an active role in solving environmental problems. He directed some of his closing statements to a loosely defined "we," which he stated should be working to "sustain the world for the better."

Interpretation of the socializing elements of the narrative. Manny's story socialized the interns to a way of thinking about their creative work that crossed borders between artistic practice, social connection, and innovation to improve human relationships to the environment. Manny's narrative functioned to socialize interns to the possibilities of a life path that blended multiple interests in ways that would support personal growth, such as gaining new knowledge. He also foregrounded societal transformation by extending knowledge to future generations through art. His narrative was relevant to the socialization of interns into professional pathways that built upon the experiences they were gaining in the program. He was also working to socialize them towards a particular vision of the future, where people would live in a sustainable way by minimizing their use of resources through innovations such as Earthships.

Conclusion

Collectively these exemplar narratives played a key role in forming a learning ecology rich with examples from lived experience and inclusive of multiple stances towards solving complex problems. The three narratives each contained moral stances towards history, agency, and artistic work. The first story from Jeff encouraged interns to exercise a critical approach to artistic projects even if it meant sacrificing good ideas. The second story from Maria supported collective responsibility for civic issues by marking important points of transformation in the neighborhood. The third story from Manny narrated an identity as a public artist and demonstrated the personal relationships that can grow out of that work. He also told about how being a public artist can fuel innovation to address environmental concerns. Considering these narratives together, although linked to the task of creating a mural, they addressed issues and choices that the interns would likely face beyond the experience of creating the mural.

These three narratives represent a small sample of the stories that interns encountered while working on the mural. However, they are indicative of the ways that adults spoke to the interns across all parts of this project. The narrative examples in this chapter reflected high tellability and embeddedness; each related a moral stance towards a particular challenge. Statements socialized interns towards possible future actions such as bearing witness to societal changes, being "hands-on" in civic and artistic matters, and creating knowledge to make the world better. Similar positioning throughout the project invited interns to consider connections between art, the environment, and interpersonal relationships as part of future actions that the narrators framed as positive.

Chapter 6 showed that the telling of stories was a recurring feature across multiple settings in the Riverplace learning ecology. In this chapter, a closer look at the contents of a sample of those stories provides greater insight about their socializing functions. They contained lessons illustrated through historical examples and positioned the interns as actors who would face challenging decisions in an uncertain future. Each storyteller gave examples of what constituted a good or moral action, either related to art or to public life more generally. This attention to the role of narratives in this context has practical utility for the design of future creative learning spaces that aim to bridge creative work and civic issues, which I address in the final chapter.

Applying Lessons from the Analysis

The summer mural project organized the conditions for civic exchange among a diverse range of participants and the close analysis of this project allowed for the emergence of practical implications for program design work. My role with Riverplace has included researcher, volunteer, resident scholar, and program director. This has allowed me to consider the multiple possibilities for the application of these findings and the strengths and limitations of this research process as a tool for systemic support for youth programs. In this chapter, I describe two efforts to apply lessons from this project in practice at Riverplace and in the broader ecology of creative youth programming organizations.

The core findings emerged from applying the lens “Narrative Lessons” from Ochs (2004), to consider the important roles that narratives played in contributing to the learning ecology of the project. Using this analytical framework, I was able to highlight how three different sets of storytellers infused the project with information that both situated the project in a civic context and exposed interns to concrete ideas for civic action. The lessons that can be drawn from this analysis included a greater appreciation for the stories that can emerge when artists and community members from many backgrounds are positioned as civic educators.

In order to take the findings one step further, I relate the lessons from the analysis to two ongoing projects that have the potential to continue the growth of civic opportunities in the field of youth program design. This required me to reflect on the weaknesses of the project as well as the strengths shared in the analysis chapters. One weakness was the limited opportunities for interaction with the different sets of guides. There were numerous benefits, made more apparent through close analysis, to inviting a wide range of outside participants. Still, there were missed opportunities for growing the depth of the connection between community residents, artists, and interns. For example, the data showing the contributions of the outside adult participants was collected from the single point of contact that the interns had with each person or set of people. Future projects might benefit from repeat occasions for the types of exchanges that I discussed, and one such project is currently underway at Riverplace. For the intern's summer program design for 2015, called *Pathways*, I had a role in planning it as another iteration of a similar process to the mural project.

The analysis of the mural project also surfaced possibilities for new ways of analyzing and discussing programmatic features to outside audiences. This lesson holds particular relevance to a systemic project being carried out by multiple arts organizations in the city which is aimed at expanding access to artistic learning spaces for young people. This collective meets to share program data and design to build collective capacity and influence local policy by demonstrating the strengths of creative youth development approaches. One weakness of the approach to this study as a model for program use was the quantity of time required to collect and analyze data. This prompted me to think more closely about the benefits of a qualitative approach to the collective organizational project and how to make qualitative research practices more accessible in that context.

Iterating Creative Civic Practices

My analysis work for this study has maintained a consistent focus on the relevance of findings to problems of practice. Hoadley (2004) discusses the multiple forms of validity to which researchers are held accountable, and how design-based researchers recognize a different set of validity concerns than experimental researchers. Directly relevant to this effort are his emphasis on consequential and systemic validity. This study and my assertions in the previous chapters about civic learning are held to the test of consequential validity when I assess their utility in ongoing programs at Riverplace. Hoadley describes a requirement for systemic validity "our studies must inform our theories, which must inform practice" and suggests one strategy, that is to "document any plausibly relevant interventional strategies used… by the researcher herself or himself." (p.205) My next steps were to consider how the findings from this study could become part of the evolution of programs at Riverplace and the broader system of support for programs in the area (Barab et al., 2004, Penuel et al., 2011). My role at Riverplace shifted after studying the 2013 programs, and this allowed me to step into the role of designing future programs, setting parameters, and ensuring that projects would be feasible. My results from the two previous chapters were used to inform my practice as a program director and the following section discusses some of my intervention strategies to explain how my working theories generated by the mural project were put into practice.

***Pathways* to civic action.** Pathways was the internship program I worked to design for 2015 and was intended to utilize lessons from the mural projects and observations of other residencies in order to design a project that would bring together young people from multiple organizations on a multidisciplinary collaborative project designed to increase urban resident's connection and responsibility to urban waterways. As discussed the grant proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Arts: this project will utilize sculpture, sound, and temporal interaction to move people to the places where the urban landscape and natural world intersect, and provoke thought and action on local environmental issues.

This project has been titled "Pathways" as a result of brainstorming between Riverplace and one City environmental advocacy organization that works with residents to improve the environmental conditions of neighborhoods throughout the city. The organization wanted to pursue a joint project that would bring artistic thinking into the conversation about problems these environmental advocates are facing in their interventions. One problem was a lack of public awareness of the concerns facing the river and associated greenbelts. Another was the desire to move people to interact with the river in new ways. When I was in the program director role I immediately made the decision to partner with them assured by the successes of engaging the public in the mural project, and excited by their civic commitments and openness to multiple artistic forms. Even more exciting was the fact that this project would take place in the same neighborhood as the murals. I began to think of the 2013 mural (and subsequently a similar mural at the same site in 2014) as early iterations of what could be a long-term effort to implement public projects that followed the model discussed in the prior two chapters, but exploring new topics and employing a wider variety of mediums.

The plan has been to invite multiple nonprofit organizations to participate in both the planning and implementation of the *Pathways* project, whereas the mural projects relied upon open invitation meetings and interviews. This would be an improvement on the mural activities if it would allow for engagement with the project for community affiliates that is sustained beyond an initial verbal encounter. The need for which we would solicit input would be a lack of access to the city's urban waterways and trail system. In the plan for this project, we highlighted the critical necessity for shared wisdom from collective experiences to inform creative action. There are neighborhoods across the city that are forgotten and ignored when it comes to access to public resources, such as the river, yet adjacent to these communities are ongoing efforts to improve urban waterways and trail systems. This project was designed to understand better people's experience with access points to the river and their ideas for a creative installation that would capture the strengths and problems they see.

Riverplace staff, myself included, began developing a concrete plan for implementing this project, and this included working to develop language to frame what the project was about for use with outside audiences. The following excerpt comes from the grant proposal written to support this project. *"This project will begin with workshop/charrettes in both the city neighborhoods, facilitated by master artists and Riverplace staff. These are designed to bring together youth, artists and environmental advocates from these neighborhoods to discuss the history of place, strengths of their public waterways and identify factors that move people to access natural spaces."* The plan that we developed included integration of lessons from the mural project by trying to build on the strengths observed in that prior plan and implementation.

One of the challenges and shortcomings of the mural project was the brief periods of engagement with the multiple guides who contributed to the strength of the learning opportunities. The decision to continue the design charrette format is directly inspired by what I witnessed when artists had the opportunity to invite guests and community members into the creative process. Beyond recreating the meeting structure from the mural, I planned to sustain long-term engagement from the participants in community meetings. The strategy for the *Pathways* project was to account for those challenges leveraging the partnership with another organization, and their set of initiatives, to increase the times and places where the public could participate in the creative work and discussions.

The proposal generated for the *Pathways* project aimed to develop interns and the lead (master) artists as a conceptual team that could construct a multidisciplinary piece that works with the landscape and in some ways demonstrates the connection with the neighborhood and the waterway. The partner organization would invite us to accompany them on outreach efforts that would expand the depth of conversation related to the content of the project beyond meetings that Riverplace would host. These features of the project would help to focus the team on emergent ideas from people who were engaged in environmental work orchestrated by the partner organization. Preliminary design ideas that grew out of these interactions would be compiled and shared in a second round of community meeting where invited community guests could comment before work begins to create the pieces.

In the continued narrative of the grant proposal, I added specific details regarding the types of structured participation to which partners would be invited. *"During the creation of these pieces we will continue to engage with community members with on-site interviews to document public reactions to the work, and participatory activities intended to guide the neighborhood residents through the ways art is being employed to augment the human experience of the fused urban and natural landscape."* This was intended to collect additional layers of information to increase public engagement and to make visible community views in a way that went beyond what was accomplished in the mural project.

This strategy also grew out of my experience on the mural project, and the lessons from the analysis of the mural painting and transformation of the streetcorner both made clear the necessity of attending to the physical space, and provided ideas for how to organize the *Pathways* location such that people passing are compelled to stop and participate. This might not have been entirely intentional on the first mural, for example, the neighbor volunteering his yard was something that occurred after painting had already begun. In organizing *Pathways*, one promising approach would be to publicize more widely the invitation to attend the creative phase of the project through direct invitations to other community organizations. Many of the people who stopped by the mural site did not intentionally visit the work, but rather spotted something happening and chose to investigate. Direct outreach, especially to people younger than interns, could expand the chances for such an intervention to encourage intergenerational civic conversation.

Another key change for the *Pathways* project relative to the mural would be that following their creation and initial unveiling in the summer, the pieces would remain in place throughout the fall, and potentially longer contingent on funding and permits. One artistic goal discussed between Riverplace and the partner organization is that the project could be designed in such a way to transform as the seasons change and through ongoing public contribution, so that they become a dynamic presence at the site. Another limitation of the mural as an artifact to provoke discussion is that it is static and easy to ignore after one viewing. An interactive installation could sustain participation at this site for longer than was achieved with the murals and grow the potential for dialogue, and potentially multimodal exchange, between residents and visitors. This goal could be achieved if the team creates pieces that would draw return visitors over time, continually moving people to these spaces and creating a sense of ownership and transformation. One civic aim of the partner organization is bringing to focus the importance of environmental stewardship to the community. The aim of the *Pathways* project is to organize the conditions for artists, interns, and others to learn how to do this effectively through a process drawing on prior iterations.

To summarize, there were three design principles that I drew from the mural project informed the planning and communication of the upcoming *Pathways* project. The first was to draw partner organizations into the artistic, civic process, expanding the practical implications of the creative work of Interns. The second was to enhance the spaces for community contributions by increasing outreach and structured forms of participation. The third was to attend closely to how the installation and the space around it could serve the goals of provoking thought through sustained engagement. Together, these modifications would make for a stronger iteration of the artistic approach to organizing learning opportunities that was observed in the mural work.

Support Systems for Creative Youth Programming

Carspecken (1996) provides a useful approach to relating findings back to organizational and systemic questions. He calls for a process of “looking beyond the primary group of interest, to look across groups (p. 172).” Because my questions about creative civic work that extend beyond Riverplace, I find that the approach he suggests is especially helpful in allowing me to develop theories about how systems might be improved in ways that allow additional opportunities in this domain. One important consideration is sustainability of research and analysis for program development. In order to think about this and generate ideas based on my findings, I draw on my experiences during my time as the Program Director at Riverplace and my exposure to collective efforts to support similar programs in the city. My involvement in these inter-agency approaches provided a point of reference to draw additional lessons from my findings.

From the beginning of this project, I was interested in conducting the study that would help me better understand the system-level implications, such as Riverplace and interns position within the ecology of youth programs in the city. At the center of my empirical questions were uncertainties about the opportunities that exist for young people to become involved in both creative work and civic work. After completing the 2013 study and becoming the program director at Riverplace I learned more about the varied systemic work that sustains and attempts to expand the out of school learning opportunities in The city. One of the most important connections that I was exposed to during that time was the State Alliance for Creative Youth Development.

The State Alliance is made up of nine organizations that offer creative programs for people of ages spanning from elementary school through college. These organizations, collectively, allow young people time to work alongside professional artists, supporting young people’s work on commissioned art projects, and use art to respond to personal experiences in the world. They labor as an alliance to advocate for this general open and inclusive category of activity (creative) for young people in the city. This includes both demonstrating the possibilities in their programs through empirical data as well as engaging in conversations with educators at all levels about the importance of providing such opportunities. I believe that inter-agency alliances have the potential to make progress towards a future where young people are more fully engaged in public life and contribute in multiple ways. There are similar initiatives in other parts of the country (example: https://hivelearningnetworks.org) and these collectives are experimenting with ways to promote innovative out of school learning spaces and elevate their status with the public and with funders.

The Alliance was originally formed as a way for these arts organizations to come together and share programmatic data and evaluation techniques. They've done this over that last six years by all participating in a shared survey that's facilitated an outside research company who administers and analyzes the survey results. At the initial meetings of the Alliance, the group was collectively identifying individual measures from the youth outcomes inventory that they found relevant to the sorts of programs taking place within their organizations. Once they had identified the different survey items that they were interested in using, a hired research firm packaged this into one survey that the group could share and compare results across organizations as well as comparing the Alliance, as a whole, to the national averages for each of those survey items that they selected from the larger tool kit to include in the Alliance specific survey.

Because of my depth of interest and involvement with the Alliance, I wanted to apply this study to think about one of the core problems discussed recently by the group. At meetings that took place in fall of 2014 the group generally agreed that they needed concrete ways of capturing what they saw in their programs and ways to share that information that would be compelling to the general public. One of the points of that discussion that we have discussed in subsequent meetings is that there are many things that program directors are witnessing in their daily work for which there are not frameworks to discuss, or at least not frameworks that are generally accepted by funders with equal merit to some metrics used by schools and larger youth-serving organizations that focus on academic outcomes and prevention of delinquent behaviors.

Considering the needs of the Alliance, I found some strengths of my approach to this study that might be imported into data collection and analysis in the collective. Employing a systematic qualitative approach allowed me to focus on people's actions such as organizing the streetcorner as a place for public dialogue as well as the choices made in organizing programming. This included being able to discuss clearly the features of the design sessions and how those particular approaches created an occasion for dialogue that added depth to the civic focus of the project. Within each of those elements, I was better able to articulate places for improvement through better decision-making regarding project sequences and activities that would maximize the input from all members of the group. Practicing the effective use of qualitative data is one opportunity for improvement within the Alliance because, currently, the group relies almost exclusively on the survey to inform discussions. Part of this is because the surveys are time-efficient and offer the group a chance to compare standardized results across the set of measures that are being utilized nationwide to understand youth programs.

My time studying the summer work at Riverplace is one example of how to generate novel descriptions of program features utilizing a qualitative approach to investigating what these out of school spaces have to offer. Alliance members discussed the need for qualitative data to support projects, but currently the Alliance does not have a way to support collective qualitative program evaluation across organizations. I am currently working with Alliance leadership to articulate the necessity of including qualitative and participatory approaches in the evaluation of different project work. Appreciating archival information as important data sources, and analyzing video and audio recordings in addition to my field notes allowed me to do at least two things that might be of interest to Alliance members. One was to draw on my analytical work and the raw data itself to formulate better programmatic plans (i.e., *Pathways*). The second was that I was able to frame the organization’s work, completing public projects that speak to critical social issues, in a way that might be compelling to funders who are not interested in funding purely artistic nonprofits, but do have an interest in applying their funds to strengthen civic commitments and connections.

An approach to making this process accessible to other program directors would be to work in collaboration to identify potential qualitative sources of information that they already collect in the documentation of their programs. From my experience learning about the data archives at Riverplace, and talking with Alliance members, I know that there are sources of information that are collected, but never utilized fully in design or for analysis that would generate new ways of talking about program benefits or growth opportunities. Working with the Alliance to identify these data sources would afford new opportunities for greater coordination of data analysis activities. Currently, the group shares stories from programs at meetings and have included examples from these stories in published materials. This way of sharing stories might make it seem to an outsider that some of the positive outcomes embedded in these stories were isolated incidents. Organizing opportunities for the group to practice new methods of interpreting data archives and connecting their data with how scholars are framing some of the learning benefits would be one way to improve the Alliance's tactics for shifting public awareness onto the necessity of creative opportunities in informal learning spaces.

Because the Alliance is an established entity with some experience with sharing quantitative measures, they are in a prime position to attempt to share some qualitative program evaluation strategies, and possibly introduce new models of effective practice of this type for other creative and artistic nonprofit alliances that may form. The Alliance collectively aspires to be a national leader in demonstrating the need for empirical work that both assesses program outcomes and contributes to the many forms of discourse that shape our educational culture. With additional financial and personnel support, qualitative methods could become a robust component of the Alliance's approach to achieving this goal while also providing tools to evaluate individual programs. I am currently partnering with the group to forage for potential sources of funding that would allow for this additional work.

Conclusion

Bang and Medin (2011) have argued for the benefit of supporting multiple epistemologies in the design of learning environments for science learning. The organizational work described here could be reflective of a similar approach to civic learning. Pulling together artists, community organizers, politicians, journalists and youth holds expands the potential for multiple epistemological stances to construct a vision of civic participation. On this project, the moral stances towards civic life present in the stories included many ways of knowing civic issues, from the production of artwork to public protest to procedural strategies. We saw this organized by the work of adults working with Riverplace by bringing together people from many backgrounds to share stories. The members of the group that assembled on the corner of 64th and Franklin or in Jeff's warehouse have unique potential to influence public life, and the mural brought them together around a shared artifact and organized experience designed to support conversation.

Recent developments threaten the murals and the neighborhood because the city's proposal to change the freeway layout once again. This topic has been discussed heavily in public forums, but the artistic work that now resides on the structure adds another layer to the discussion and a new occasion to talk about the cultural impact of urban planning. One direct way is that the murals have been reported on in print and television media, encouraging additional traffic and possibly continued the on-site discussion. The most recent debate has brought the neighborhood full circle from when the community was sliced in half by the freeway. New proposals have this freeway being dropped to ground level or underground, once again threatening the well-being of the people who live there. A local newspaper was running a story about the proposed changes to the interstate and chose to ask one of the interns about his feelings about the plan and the threat to the murals. His response demonstrated the spirit of this creative work, “It's not just about you as an artist; it's about the community's thoughts.” By painting on the freeway dividers, the group has claimed the space as an important cultural artifact, hopefully forcing some additional discussion, and maybe in a small way encouraging further thought for urban policymakers on the local impacts of their decisions. One final takeaway from the study of this mural is that the value of these projects may take time to emerge, and the sites where artists, young people, and area stakeholders intervene will evolve over time expanding possibilities for their creations to influence the world for the better.

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Appendix A

Analytical Memo

1.14.15

Another important systemic implication that I’ve learned from this project is that developing a thorough understanding of the many civic learning opportunities and formulating an effective way of sharing those examples using some of the current terms and literature on civic engagement is beneficial to the process of sharing information and details about programming with external audiences. This is especially true when giving presentations, writing grants or having collaborative meetings with partners across a variety of education, non-profit and community-based organizations. Having the additional vocabulary to talk about the creative work as a form of civic action and as a way of supporting positive changes within the city is of benefit when discussing potential collaborations and funding opportunities with people who might not have prior experience with creative work that is public and engages in this level of depth with current social issues.

One great example of this comes from a community meeting that I was invited to as a representative of Riverplace at a local university where university staff and faculty were interested in discovering ways that the university could support a wider variety of community efforts in education, well-being and health. This meeting brought together individuals from a wide variety of organizations and in this meeting, we each had a chance to share some examples of the different types of projects and programs that we completed within our own individual organizations. During this meeting, I heard from different groups such as the [foundation] and the [nonprofit] about their efforts in creating learning opportunities and positive spaces for civic engagement.

These organizations shared examples of the different projects that they worked on with people across all generations. Some of the common features that I heard to their work resonated with some of examples generated from the analysis of this project. Most concretely, I heard from both the Mayor's Office and the [nonprofit] that they were excited and interested in hearing more about the spaces where people were using art and the creative process to improve the different neighborhoods within the city, and bring about social and environmental changes to those neighborhoods.

Because of my analysis worked on this project, I was able to share with them some concrete examples of how a project like a public mural or any other creative work could organize a set of activities to maximize the potential for that creative project to become a site for civic learning and engagement using examples from the project and the connections that I've observed between this project and others, and discussions in the research literature on civic engagement. I was able to make a compelling case that both of their organizations should be interested in supporting creative efforts to use in an artistic process in bringing about community transformations and how they might play a role in such a project as a funder, supporter, or other type of partner.

Bridging my work with the alliance with other opportunities such as this university community. Meaning, I think that there are any ways that which the alliance could be more effective at utilizing programmatic data of all types to share what they believed to be effective strategy for making the arts a central presence within discussions at the city level of how we want to preserve the arts and creative action within, in school and out of school opportunities for young people. I am both cautious and optimistic about the long-term potential for increased creative civic action with a support of organizations such as the alliance and all of their members.

I'm cautious because I constantly hear about the struggle to develop sustainable models of programming that are not in constant threat of being downsized or eliminated. I think that one strategy to help make these programs more sustainable in the long-term is to become more effective at presenting, ensuring information about the work that we do. Using research as a tool to do this is one approach that I plan to be incorporating into my work, because I have found that it supports not only what we share with external parties, but also benefits our internal programmatic work and design process.

I'm optimistic about the opportunities because I do think that man of these organizations are becoming increasingly effective at demonstrating that their work leads to an extensive set of positive outcomes for program participants. Some of these outcomes are being documented through surveys and data sharing partnerships with local school districts. Both of these are effective methods of conveying how programs can support many of the outcomes that are of interest to funders and government agencies.

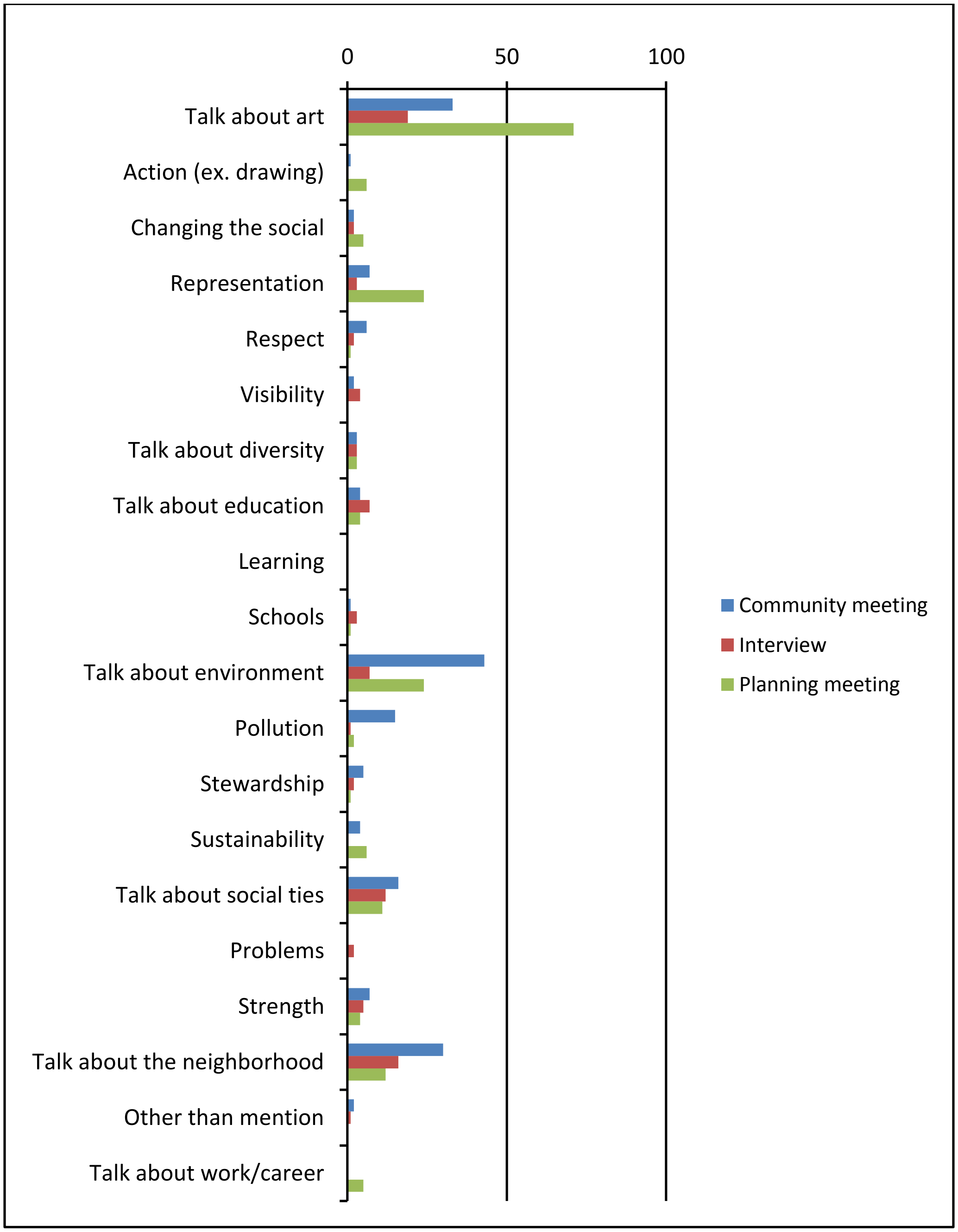
Beyond this, however, I do think that becoming more effective at documenting and sharing examples from research beyond the numbers will help to present a story of creative civic action that is compelling to a broad audience, and positions this work as one of the central factors in healthy and engaged youth subset of democratic participants. What became clear, in both through my work collecting data, and analyzing this project, and in my conversations with other alliance members, is that none of this work happens at the individual level, whether that means an individual person or an individual organization.

As we work together within the alliance to talk about what each of us are doing, we do start to identify some of these common factors and notice similarities between our work that supports the assertion that most of our work would benefit from being more organized at a collective level. The work on the mural project in 2013 demonstrated the large network of people that were required to make a project like a mural into an opportunity for civic engagement. Had the parties within this project not each done what they had done themselves, the project would've been missing the key ingredients that helped it to become successful example of creative civic action.

Appendix B

Code applications.

	Community meeting	Interview	Planning meeting
Talk about art	33	19	71
Action (ex. drawing)	1	0	6
Changing the social	2	2	5
Representation	7	3	24
Respect	6	2	1
Visibility	2	4	0
Talk about diversity	3	3	3
Talk about education	4	7	4
Learning	0	0	0
Schools	1	3	1
Talk about environment	43	7	24
Pollution	15	1	2
Stewardship	5	2	1
Sustainability	4	0	6
Talk about social ties	16	12	11
Problems	0	2	0
Strength	7	5	4
Talk about the neighborhood	30	16	12
Other than mention	2	1	0
Talk about work/career	0	0	5


0
50
100
Talk about art
Action (ex. drawing)
Changing the social
Representation
Respect
Visibility
Talk about diversity
Talk about education
Learning
Schools
Talk about environment
Pollution
Stewardship
Sustainability
Talk about social ties
Problems
Strength
Talk about the neighborhood
Other than mention
Talk about work/career
Community meeting
Interview
Planning meeting