ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP VIA PERSONAL EXPRESSION: BUILDING CIVIC YOUTH IDENTITY IN COMMUNITY AFTER SCHOOL ART PROGRAMS

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By

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study explores the question of how community-based after school arts programming can facilitate civic engagement for youth in Washington D.C. Two programs form the focus of this study in investigating how youth feel about becoming involved in their communities, how they define community, and what impact participation in positive youth development driven arts programming has on fostering both attitudes and capability for engagement. Findings from a triangulated multi-methodological approach demonstrate that after school arts programs which successfully engage youth through elements of hip hop culture can provide an alternative to traditional civic education models in fostering positive civic attitudes and active engagement of youth within their community.

Keywords: YOUTH; CIVIC ENGAGEMENT; ARTS PARTICIPATION; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Crafting New Connections

The power of art has been harnessed for numerous aims: personal expression, spiritual attainment, and for teaching everything from standard to non standard subjects alike, from history to math and science. Arts education is undergoing renewed attention and focus as many school districts are realizing that providing students with opportunities for visual and performance art has numerous benefits beyond the stage or the throwing wheel. The encouraging impact of arts exposure on the development of critical thinking skills has been vastly documented. In this thesis I propose another avenue where artistic endeavors can be utilized – that of fostering civic involvement. This pilot study examines transmission of civic values in two community after-school programs that provide arts programming to urban youth. These standalone nonprofit organizations may not traditionally be considered civic educators, but the purpose of this study is to explore this overlooked connection between arts programming and community involvement, the foundation of civic action.

Art: A Tool for Community Revitalization

Art has played a key role in the economic recovery of the so-called rust belt cities, spanning from St. Louis to Pittsburgh, where former industrial centers have been remade
by artists utilizing crumbling factories and abandoned warehouse spaces for cultural development and renewal in their communities (From Rust Belt to Artist Belt: Challenges and Opportunities in Rust Belt Cities 2008). Sprouting artist colonies in cities distressed by rising foreclosures, exemplified by Detroit where abandoned properties can be purchased on the cheap, signal creative community revitalization (Guerra 2009). Municipal governments are recognizing the enormous appeal and economic boon that such creative energy has to offer by way of an influx of a new taxpayer base and development dollars. Art has been instrumental to revitalizing urban centers on a macroeconomic scale. However, art can and has been used to spur community development on the individual level as well, by investing in the creative energy of young people.

This study examines whether the experience of artistic expression for underserved youth contributes to the development of a civic identity. My work begins from the assumption that that along-side numerous other benefits of exposure to collaborative art experiences, fostering both a sense of community as well as self expression, such participation ultimately provides an opportunity for positive community-minded civic attitudes to take hold. Art is a great tool and medium which can also be used as an implement for developing civic engagement.
Civic Identity and Community: Establishing Meaning

Civic identity, attitudes, and engagement are nebulous terms which are sometimes used interchangeably. Most scholars use them to represent the connection one experiences to his or her community, neighborhood, and finally the nation of which he or she is a citizen, even for youth who are well below voting age. Formation of a civic identity signals a sense of responsibility, a sense of belonging to something greater than one's immediate family or self, grounded in the every-day reality of life in one's city and community.

Community as well is an expansive term which has multiple meanings. John Urry (2001) in “The Sociology of Space and Place” denotes four main ways that community can be defined. It can signify: 1) the topographical boundaries of a neighborhood; 2) an ideology; 3) “a sense of community as a local social system” implying interconnections among people; and finally 4) the sense of community as “communion” or “communitas”, denoting a warm feeling of belonging. In this work community is equated most often with the third definition, examining how people in a given locale experience a sense of connection to each other and to neighborhood institutions, in this case exemplified by after-school art programs.
Pilot Study Description

The study at hand takes the form of an ethnography carried out on the sites of two after-school community art programs in Washington D.C. These programs are aimed at low-income youth populations and incorporate elements of hip-hop culture into their curriculum, which speaks to the contemporary cultural milieu of the predominantly African-American youth being served by these programs. Furthermore, the utilization of contemporary art forms, such as break dancing and graffiti art, alongside more traditional workshops in photography and poetry writing, present a way to fuse these forms in a positive approach to youth identity development. As this study will show, harnessing the energy of hip hop for the formulation of a community-minded approach is not new and is something central to hip hop culture. Personally, I was pleasantly surprised by the wealth of such opportunities for youth in the relatively small area of Washington D.C.

I engaged two particular nonprofit organizations at the core of my ethnographic research: Words Beats and Life and New Community for Children, with centers in Northwest and Southeast regions of the District. I attended workshops run by both organizations to collect ethnographic observations, witness the youth programming first hand, conduct one on one interviews with staff, and survey young participants.

Both programs proved to be inviting places staffed with committed, eager young adults creating a stress-free, loosely structured, enjoyable environment for the youth. The collaborative and supportive nature of the mini-communities which flourish here are ripe

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1 See section 3.2 on Positive Youth Development.
for fostering attentiveness to the importance of community in the greater sense, and responsibility towards sustaining that sense of community for the participants. Such experiences early on increase positive civic action down the line into adulthood, (Levine 2007) which is why this study examines youth experience in particular. The importance of this type of exposure, as well as the intricacies of civic engagement will be discussed at length throughout.

Both programs I worked with mentor youth within a collaborative arts experience. During the course of this process, identity and community issues come to the fore as youth are provided with the means and opportunity to contribute to something bigger than themselves, all while applying their talents and energies in ways they would be inclined to do in any case. The illumination of this development and its inherent challenges is one goal of this pilot study.

**Urban Challenges**

Urban centers, particularly those areas with depressed or lower socio-economic standards of living, have fewer constructive opportunities to occupy youth outside of school or to provide the kinds of experiences which instill positive civic attitudes when youth are in school. The District of Columbia provides an excellent example as most schools in the nation’s capital are struggling on many levels and fall short on essential resources. They lack facilities, instructors, and funds to provide extra-curricular or arts-
focused activities. These schools are more likely to narrow their curriculum, cutting back on non-test-focused subjects such as history, government, and civics, and therefore less likely to provide students within these schools with a rounded education. Schools in struggling urban areas are generally those most likely to be focused on getting kids to meet federal benchmarks for student performance on standardized tests, not to excel as future citizens.

Community centers, like those which form the basis for this study, have thus evolved as a way of both keeping kids safely off dangerous streets, as well as engaging them in productive, formative ways. The Urban Arts Academy at Words Beats and Life (WBL), and Adolescents Building Literacy through Expression at New Community for Children (A.B.L.E.) are two such programs. These programs are by no means definitive. Instead, they constitute a concise example of cultural enrichment in the often-overlooked areas of after-school community programs, as part of a multi-prong approach in the development of both healthy communities and engaged young citizens.

Civic Education Challenges

Civic education, the body of practical knowledge necessary for successful participation in society, takes numerous forms, not all of them officially delineated in curriculum manuals. It is education which prepares one for joining the ranks of full-fledged, participating citizenry in a functioning democratic society, and arguably one which
has a low priority in American public schools, the place one would most expect this sort of learning to occur. This is despite the fact that the rhetoric of national identity and American citizenship, along with the responsibilities which these embody, have been trumpeted loudly in the past several decades. The renewed sense of nationalistic pride which swept the United States following 9/11 arguably brought about an emphasis and overabundance of patriotism, but a lack of civic progress.

Inside the public school system, the agenda of President Bush’s No Child Left Behind program (NCLB) created a test-focused spotlight on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM subjects), as well as reading. Arts and civics, the humanities segments outside this core curriculum regretfully received the shorter end of both funds and attention. We may discuss citizenship, as President Obama did during his inaugural address in outlining its challenges and duties, but practically speaking there are few instances where opportunities for engaging in a fuller exploration of the meaning of citizenship exist within the school system. After-school learning experiences provide opportunities for these undernourished subjects to find an audience.

Setting the Stage for Meaningful Participation

Arts participation and creation provide means for self-expression, self esteem and identity development for young people during a tumultuous and crucial period of personal and social development. By extension, such participation also provides a way for the
formation of an identity which embodies civic-minded characteristics. The arts engage young people in ways that few other avenues are able to do, and do so successfully outside of the classroom. By providing a way for participants to take ownership of their experience of growing into functioning adulthood through engaging in the arts, community art programs activate democratic, civic principles in ways that arguably more constrained and regulated, i.e. school, environments are unable to do.

Civic engagement measures have been developed by social scientists focusing on civil society\(^2\) to ascertain the level of involvement on both a local and national level. These measures focus on a wide variety of activities and attitudes, both social and political, to judge the strength or weakness of civic engagement. Comparative studies have been done within social science and cultural studies which show that despite the strength of civil society as a whole in the United States, civic engagement has been rather low, famously noted by Robert Putnam. In this study qualitative as well as quantitative measures of civic engagement are employed for youth involved in after-school arts workshops at WBL and A.B.L.E.

**Contents Overview**

Chapters 2 and 3 present a joint introduction into the expanse of literature pertinent for this study. Chapter 2 covers civic education and engagement, as well as the

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\(^2\)Civil society forms the third sector of organization in democratic society, after government and the market. Non profit organizations, like the community centers in this study, are often synonymous with and form the backbone of civil society.
importance of schools and youth social development more closely. The challenges and shortcomings of traditional civic education are discussed as well. Chapter 3 deals with civic development from the standpoint of cultural development, positive youth development, and hip hop leadership, presenting the alternative model to traditional school-based education towards youth engagement on the community level. Additionally, Chapter 3 presents some examples of successful after-school art programs, both nationally and D.C.-based, which serve as valuable comparisons for WBL and A.B.L.E.

Chapter 4 details the multi-methodological approach of this study, covering ethnography, interview and survey research data, and provides an in-depth overview of the WBL and A.B.L.E. programs. Chapter 4 also outlines the main hypotheses of this study, which are subsequently addressed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the research data outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 tackles the quantitative analysis of the survey data (2009 Youth Survey) collected at both programs from willing youth participants, and sets out the sample demographics. Meanwhile Chapter 6 provides a detailed overview of the qualitative data analysis, contextualizing the after-school art program experience through examples of other successful programs and brings this experience to life through examples of community contribution and youth leadership. Chapter 7 builds upon the discussion of findings in Chapter 6 to provide recommendations and further context for how arts participation can be used as tool for youth civic engagement.
A complex subject such as this demands a diverse set of tools to engage it successfully, and I have been fortunate to receive the guidance of numerous practitioners in the field. This guidance took the shape of extensive interviews with directors and instructors, both paid and volunteers, committed to helping youth thrive in less than ideal circumstances at programs such as the Latin American Youth Center, Sitar Arts Center, and Life Pieces to Masterpieces in D.C., in addition to the programs I engaged with directly. It came from artists whose work has an inherently civic focus, as well as youth development experts. I consulted a great deal of literature on civic education, roots of civic action, cultural engagement, and youth identity formation to provide a context as well as an understanding of the diverse set of actors whose influences cannot be overlooked. This wealth of resources in combination with original field research allowed me to weave together a coherent and more importantly compelling argument that in the case of the community programs in focus, arts and civics work hand in hand to provide youth with much needed opportunities for civic as well as artistic engagement.

\footnote{3 In particular, I am indebted to Michael Rohd, the director of Sojourn Theater for his invaluable suggestions in helping me shape my research.}
Chapter 2: Civic Education and Social Development

Literature Review Introduction

In the next two chapters I set out to address several questions pertaining to youth civic engagement through the eyes of notable theorists in the field, with a particular focus on positive youth development theory as it relates to youth engagement on the local, community level. This chapter deals with education and social development, while the next chapter addresses cultural development and sets out the framework for the rest of the study. My task is to also explore several pertinent questions in turn:

- What is civic engagement?
- How has it been measured?
- What is a civic identity and how does one develop one?
- What is the role and impact of community groups in facilitating this process?
- What does arts participation have to do with civic engagement?
- Why does it matter?

The most important query which comes up time and again lies at the heart of the motivation for this study: What leads young people to participate, and most importantly, value their participation in their community? Following on the heels of this central question come several others, which are also discussed in this work. Notably, how is it that youth who have been given very little stake in their world can come through and become inspired to involve themselves anyway? What constitutes constructive and engaging experience that
leads youth to believe they do share a stake in their communities? These questions have been on the minds of public policy analysts and officials, community activists, psychologists and sociologists for many years. (Baldi 2001, ; Campbell 2006, ; Catalano 2004, ; Cotterell 1996, ; Erikson 1950, ; Gambone 2002, ; Hugo Lopez 2006, ; Invernizzi 2008, ; Keeter 2003, ; Levine 2007, ; McLaughlin 2000, 1994, ; Reeher 1997, ; Sugarman 2007, ; Wright 2006, ; Youniss 1999, ; Youniss 1997, ; Zakaras 2008) The names in this list are a sample of the literature presented in this overview, taking a look at developments in the past 30 years generally and in more recent years more specifically.

In order to answer the previously stated questions, we must first explore what constitutes civic engagement (and by extension, civic identity formation) in the first place and how it has been measured and perceived by both the public and specialists in the field of youth development and education. Furthermore, we must ask why youth make up such an important group for this type of research in the first place. This chapter explores both the socialization and civic education/identity piece in detail.

What Is Civic Engagement?

While discussions about identity politics proliferate, civic engagement and civic identity formation attends to a more subtle kind of identity politics than is most immediately apparent in our public consciousness. The question of how we form our civic identity is the question of how we become citizens, and this question does not arouse
much thought or speculation on the part of the general public. Given that we tend to take
this process for granted, discussions surrounding citizenship practices are scarce.
However, this question matters a great deal, and the reasons are as plentiful as the number
of actors which play a role in shaping our formative experiences which lead to citizenship.

Miranda Yates and James Youniss define civic engagement as “youth’s involvement
in community service and activism” (Youniss 1999). Voting and volunteering is how civic
engagement is traditionally defined and measured. More broadly, civic engagement is
measured by youth voting trends, membership in community service organizations, as well
as willingness to help solve community problems. These indices are categorized and
gathered from voting records and self-reported surveys (like CIRCLE’s Civic Health of the
Nation Report, 2006). Robert Putnam famously raised the alarm by commenting on the
drastic reduction in participation rates, particularly among youth in Bowling Alone (2001),
and despite the fact that I do not base my main argument on that volume, no literature
review could be complete without making mention of Putnam’s sobering perspective that
civic engagement has dropped off sharply in the information age.

Although voting tends to take center stage in any discussion of civic engagement,
as indicated by Henry Milner (2002), the Center for Information and Research on Civic
Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has established 19 core indicators of civic
engagement, listed in Table 2.1 below, grouped under three major categories pertaining to
civic work, electoral activity, and political voice (Keeter 2003, et al.). Running the gamut
from soliciting donations to protesting, these measures provide a means for testing youth
civic engagement in tangible ways by asking youth about any and all of the activities they may have undertaken which fall under the rubric set out by CIRCLE and Keeter et al. This rubric also provides a means to compare civic engagement across generational lines.

Table 2.1: Civic Engagement Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Activities</th>
<th>Electoral Activities</th>
<th>Political Voice Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in Community Problem Solving Activity</td>
<td>Regular Voter (ages 20 and older)</td>
<td>Contacted public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Volunteer for a non-electoral organization</td>
<td>Tried to Persuade others in an election</td>
<td>Contacted the print media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active member in a group or association</td>
<td>Displayed buttons, signs, stickers</td>
<td>Contacted the broadcast media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in fund-raising run/walk/ride</td>
<td>Made Campaign contributions</td>
<td>Protested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in Other fund-raising for charity</td>
<td>Volunteered for a candidate or political organization</td>
<td>Signed E-mail petitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Civic and Political Health of the Nation Report, October 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Henry Milner, “civic engagement is closely linked to political participation, and we have no more suitable indicator of political participation than voter turnout,” if for no other reason than that “the most basic expression of democratic citizenship [is] the exercise of the franchise” (2002, p. 25). Although voting trends may be useful for measuring the engagement of adults, for youth engagement understandably takes a different, less political focus.

Peter Levine in The Future of Democracy remarks that,
It seems incredible that we would live as workers, parents, and consumers only so that we could participate in politics – especially if political participation mainly means casting a vote once a year (2007, p. 37).

There is a much richer spectrum of participation and engagement that carries with it weight of equal if not greater importance, much closer to home on a daily, regular basis. After all, the importance of educating for civic engagement extends beyond keeping people interested and connected just long enough to half-heartedly cast a ballot, its ultimate purpose is to maintain a citizenry that cares and expresses this with direct involvement in local, state, and national affairs.

According to Levine, echoing sentiments made by numerous other scholars, “We are engaged in ‘politics’ when we debate and make decisions in religious congregations, schools, community associations, and theater groups” (2007, p. 37). The intrinsic value of civic engagement stems from such seemingly mundane, every-day conversations occurring within communities and organizations which sustain them. Levine goes on to quote John Dewey, the highly influential education reformer, taking a page from Dewey’s *The Public and Its Problems*: “the clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy” (1927, p. 42). Furthermore, “community-based civic education is essential if we view the education of the next generation as a community function” (Levine 2007, p. 157).

According to CIRCLE researchers, who are on the front lines of studying trends of youth civic engagement, “opportunities for civic engagement are more abundant among
youth relative to electoral and political voice behavior” (Keeter 2003). Furthermore, community involvement activities are not only more accessible to youth in general but do not depend on limitations of age or socio-economic status. Opportunities for community involvement are thus more or less democratically accessible and available to most if not all members of a given community. However, although these opportunities are, at least in theory, available and accessible to all, they are not valued or utilized by all groups equally, which brings us to the question of why youth provide a crucial focus for community engagement.

Why Youth?

Youth have a role to play in the development of society as much as any other major generational group, but their position is unique in many ways. They hold the key to either continuing or changing problematic policies of the past, but their contributions will not achieve full impact unless they are engaged in their society as a whole. Youth are responsible for revolutions and upheavals, and generate new cultural forms and norms. As civic engagement becomes a focus of greater importance for civil society, the position which youth play becomes just as important. The habits we carry throughout our lifetimes are formed quite early on. Whether it is the languages we speak, the cuisines and music we favor, our politics, and our aspirations, developmental psychologists and sociologists can point to childhood and adolescence as the crucial period where these tendencies take root.
and become established personal attributes. Civic engagement habits begin in childhood right around the time kids hit middle and high school, and “the civic norms within one’s adolescent social environment have an effect on civic participation well beyond adolescence” (Campbell 2006, p. 5). Youniss, McLellan, and Yates expand on this in “What we know about engendering civic identity”:

First, on a practical level, [organizational participation] introduces youth to the basic roles and processes (i.e., organizational practices) required for adult civic engagement. Second, on a personal level, it helps youth incorporate civic involvement into their identity during an opportune moment in its formative stages. Participation promotes the inclusion of a civic character into the construction of identity that, in turn, persists and mediates civic engagement into adulthood (Youniss 1997).

In *Why We Vote*, David Campbell explains that ideally we could look at the process of civic engagement over the course of a lifetime, but because of a lack of data as well as “a complete theory of how civic and political orientations develop over the entire course of life,” (2006, p. 96) we must make do with available data on childhood socialization.

Generational identity, identification with one’s generational cohort, also shapes worldviews in particular ways. People are fundamentally changed by where and how they grow into adulthood. These cohorts matter a great deal, and a lot of emphasis has been placed on the so-called Millennials, the first generation to grow up in a world of unparalleled technological access. Their norms of participation differ from the generations that came before them. Levine, with a historical viewpoint, and borrowing from Karl
Mannheim’s theoretical vision of generational identity, sets out a tangible and vivid explanation of how generational gaps contribute to civic norms:

First, generations share durable civic and political characteristics attributable to the political and cultural situation that prevailed when they were young. Second, particular experiences during adolescence have been found to influence individuals’ civic values and behaviors many decades later (2007, p. 70).

Regarding political autonomy and identification Levine writes that, “At stake is our identity; we either see ourselves as efficacious, obligated, critical members of a community, or we do not” (2007, p. 71). He discusses the formulation of civic values from youth more in terms of political and news awareness, but the focus on civic identity formation is key here, and one which I use to provide a focus for my own analysis. Youniss and Yates as well presented studies that examined an international cross-section of social-historical contexts regarding youth civic involvement, suggesting “that political practices acquired during youth can effectively result in identity-forming habits … that become part of the individual’s self-definition and shape the individual’s relationship to society” (1999, p. 7). This is why youth make such an important focus.

Arguments abound whether some youth are simply more predisposed to participate than others, or if formative experience alone shapes participation. Correlation and causality between participation and engagement must be distinguished, because research has shown only one to be definitive. Some personalities are certainly more inclined to participate, contribute, and vote, just as some are more apt to drop out or take a more isolationist
approach to dealing with society at large. Nevertheless, just as having a genetic predisposition to cancer or musical talent is only that, without the proper environmental triggers, active engagement in community programs and affairs plays a similar role for civic mindedness. Put simply, “participation changes people’s values and habits,” (Levine 2007, p. 73) because participation builds skills and awareness of society or the public sphere beyond the self. Positive Youth Development theory, discussed at length in the following chapter, provides an excellent framework for ways in which civic-mindedness can be become an indistinguishable part of youth-focused environments. For now, I will turn to the importance of social development and the challenges of formal civic education.

Social Development

In the foreword to Milbrey McLaughlin et al.’s Urban Sanctuaries, John Gardner, the Former Secretary of U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, as well a the founder of Common Cause, a non-profit advocacy organization devoted to government accountability and democratic citizen participation, writes that “like everyone else, young people need community” (1994, p. ix). I would argue that they, in fact, need it more than most. Childhood and adolescence are vital periods where young people foster a sense of self, forge their identities, and form their conceptions of society. As many social workers and social scientists have remarked, this formation arises from the surrounding community or lack thereof that they are able to experience. On every spectrum, (both politically and
socially) ways that young people are engaged during this crucial period can ultimately provide an accurate predictor of the adults and citizens they will become.

In the introduction to *If Kids Could Vote*, Sally Sugarman outlines a history of the development of childhood theories pertaining to children’s emotional, social, and political development. In her case, she looked at children’s interpretation of political events by way of media exposure, and noted that today’s youngsters spend a greater proportion of their time in peer groups, and from an earlier age. Sugarman is one among many scholars implying that thanks to changes in family structure, women in the workforce, and a host of other social trends that have revolutionized society from the time in which most theories on child development were constructed, peer socialization is as important if not more important to today’s youth (2007, p. 13).

Campbell reflects that adolescence has been recognized as the critical period, the “crucial bridge between the rules-oriented morality of childhood and the deeper ethical sense that orients adult life” (2006, p. 96). The importance of such experiences echoes the developmental theory of Erik Erikson, fleshed out in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959) and *Childhood and Society* (1950), stipulating that adolescence is a crucial period where a youth’s identity is formed which leads to notable adult-world concerns. Both career and moral aspirations figure prominently in this development.

Sugarman stresses the need,

To find a middle ground between the outcomes that community has decided are essential for children to learn and the outcomes that concern the children. Such a
compromise would not only enable better learning to occur, but would be a valuable lesson in democracy (2007, p. 115).

This brings us to the next important question of whether schools, institutions which are traditionally imbued with the responsibility for forging the connections which society deems important, with providing the footbridge from childhood to adulthood, have fared well with their charge. The next section examines the question of what is the role of schools in fostering civic engagement, and imparting lessons in democracy, and what makes their performance in this role unsatisfactory.

**Schools in the Role of Civic Education**

David Campbell, like others studying youth civic norms, focuses on “the social environment of what is arguably the greatest importance to adolescents: their schools” (2006, p. 8). Schools are where kids spend most of their waking hours, so it is natural that they would form the majority of formal analyses. According to Campbell,

Schools are a particularly critical institution affecting the state of our nation’s civic health. High schools in particular are where young people receive much of their preparation for a life of active citizenship (2006, p. 150).

In fact, it is in high school that students are most likely to encounter subjects which collectively constitute formal civic education, or the education for citizenship.
Although this sentiment is not embraced by all, Sugarman points out that “the school seems to play the strongest role in informing and shaping children’s political ideas, more so than most parents” (2007, p. 108). Even if schools do not play the strongest role, they have a central role to play in this development. So what is wrong with formal civic education that we need to look to after-school arts programs in creating future citizens? In order to answer these questions, we must look at what the goals of civic education are, and what constitutes civic curricula in the first place.

The goals of civics education curricula are two-fold. On one hand, the curriculum covers history and government, providing context for a shared sense of national belonging through shared national history. On the other hand, there is an expressed design to form an understanding around what it means to be a citizen, and what roles and responsibilities citizens share (Varshavsky 2009). Core knowledge transmitted via civics classrooms forms the foundation for participation in either case, and “we expect the public schools to educate citizens” (Zamosky 2008). It is one of the basic foundations of public education, even if it is one which has faded from view thanks to the focus on raising standardized test scores under federal mandates, like the No Child Left Behind. So while government and to some extent history courses may focus on teaching the make up of our governing bodies, they are also charged with instructing the values about what makes a ‘good citizen.’ And according to the National Council for the Social Studies: “some values are so central to our way of life and view of the common good that we need to develop student
commitment to them through systematic social studies experiences” (National Council for the Social Studies 2009).

However, as Diana Owen and others have pointed out, the specific values of democracy are not uniform and are frequently contested (Owen 2004). Even when civics curricula are valued and implemented, the results leave much to be desired and seem to overwhelmingly point to the fact that schools are not well equipped to translate civic engagement ideals into practice. Testing civics knowledge is in itself is a recent phenomena. For instance, the results of a 2001 National Center for Education Statistics put U.S. 9th graders above other international rankings for overall civics knowledge, (Baldi 2001), but the overly optimistic spin from the Department of Education does not override the poor results demonstrated elsewhere:

On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in civics, only a quarter of high school students were judged to be proficient and only 4 percent scored at the advanced level. A third of the students failed to demonstrate even a basic level of understanding. In the NAEP for U.S. history, only 11 percent scored at the proficient or advanced levels (The California Survey of Civic Education 2005).

Furthermore, civic education tends to focus on electoral engagement above and beyond other forms, such as political voice activities, which embody participation in protests or boycotts, or writing letters to the editor, and even less on other types of civic activities outlined earlier.
In a stark but sadly not too uncommon example of inadequate classroom preparation, a Chicago study by Kahne and colleagues (2000) of 135 8th through 10th grade social studies classrooms,

found that a typical social studies classroom primarily engaged students in lower-level thinking, provided a thin and fragmented knowledge base, offered few substantive opportunities to experience democracy, rarely linked content to understanding and respecting diversity, and provided limited opportunities to examine and respond to social problems. The problem was made worse when teachers were required to teach to state civics goals (Homana 2006).

Shifting the focus back to Washington D.C., it is important to note that the District of Columbia does have a credit requirement in government or civics for high school graduation, however there is no assessment or accountability system in place within DCPS to ensure that students are adequately prepared (Piscatelli 2004). The challenges faced by schools in the nation’s capital are inordinate, and oftentimes mean having to do more with less funding, particularly in the midst of the current fiscal crisis. The poor state of public education systems all mean poor results for producing students who are aware enough of their history to be able to make serious judgments as future citizens.

Civic Education Limitations

Exposure to community involvement and civic skills is sorely lacking in formal schooling for young adults in the U.S., as well as in the nation’s capital. Schools tend to provide authoritarian, top down curriculum which stifles students’ agency and personal
expression, and as such are nearly antithetical to democratic citizenship. Cotterell points out that “although it is known that smaller schools are associated with warmer and more cohesive climates, more chances for each student to participate in key roles, and great student commitment to pro-social values,” (1996, p. 106), most public high schools in fact are large, impersonal places insensitive to student voice and needs. Such places breed resentment, disaffection, and alienation, particularly for minority students who are provided with less support and fall into the trap of low expectations.

Even when topics of citizenship and civic engagement are addressed in the curriculum directly, a rarity in itself, the inherent contradiction with the needs of civic involvement in structured learning environments quickly becomes apparent. It is certainly apparent to students, who may inadvertently come to believe that their participation and involvement makes no difference. As Sugarman laments, “because teachers avoid controversial topics, just as the textbooks do, the focus becomes on the compliance aspects of citizenship and less on the responsibilities.” This leads to young adults feeling that “their schools failed to prepare them to become informed voters” (Sugarman 2007, p. 109).

The focus on service learning and community outreach experiences, as noted by Youniss and Yates (1999, ; 1997), Reeher and Cammarano (1997), Levine (2007), and others, indicates that schools are becoming more aware of this contradiction within the classroom as well. However, “research has found that private schools are more likely to encourage community service than their public counterparts” (Campbell 2006, p. 109).

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4 These issues of course extend far beyond civics and provide fodder for much of the education reform movement.
The focus for such experiences is absent in public schools and only emerges at the university level. It is telling that Reeher and Cammarano’s *Education for Citizenship* (1997) focuses entirely on university programs and courses. This means that those youth who may be most in need of empowering experiences connecting service and civic engagement, those who are unlikely to go to private schools and on to higher education, precisely the demographic of the youth of focus in this study, are those who miss out. Finally,

The question whether moral and civic values can ever be learned through direct teaching or instruction has vexed philosophers since the days of Plato… three other ways in which children may learn values [are] through observation, through participation and guided action, and through critical reflection (Richardson 2006, p. 140).

Public schools, it appears, are ill equipped to provide values and civic education on this level.

It should be mentioned that “much current interest in citizenship is largely propelled by the sense of crisis” regarding the status of democracy in nations that have experienced a significant drop of political participation and voting, particularly among the young (Richardson 2006, p. 15). Furthermore, “Young adults are emblematic of being the least regular and most non-political of all age cohorts” (Keeter 2002). CIRCLE’s most recent Civic Health of the Nation Report in 2006 showed that substantial numbers of young people are disconnected from politics and community life. A majority of young people (58%) are unable to cite two forms of civic or two forms of political engagement that they have done” (Hugo Lopez 2006, p. 9).
Other alarming statistics abound: “between 60 percent and 80 percent of the young people judged ‘seriously at risk’ live in this nation’s inner cities and are unlikely to achieve healthy, constructive adulthood,” note McLaughlin et. al in *Urban Sanctuaries* (1994, p. 2).

Despite this threat, Youniss and Yates have made the claim that the apparent apathy attributed to contemporary youth is more of a stereotype stemming from a society in crisis, not from any real drop in the ways that youth engage in society (1999). This is good news for youth involvement, and it is reflected in the work that community programs perform on the local level for youth in their neighborhoods, particularly for those youth who may be deemed “at risk.”

My focus lies outside classrooms, in out-of-school experiences. Arts participation in the after-school programs provide just the right middle ground, helping to fill in the gaps where schools have not been able to make their marks. Therefore in the next chapter, the importance of community groups and after-school programs, as well as the undeniable role which arts and cultural engagement play on the community level, will be brought out into the open.
Chapter 3: Positive Youth Development and Arts Participation

After-School Community Programs: Essential Foundations

Community-based programs may not have the universal reach or uniformity of public schools when creating civic foundations, but they possess several qualities which make them essential and as I would argue, more immediately effective than the standardized civics lessons taught from textbooks. For one, “community-based organizations have more flexibility to innovate and develop programs” and “are relatively free of the political limits that inevitably constrain public schools” (Levine 2007, p. 156).

For community art programs, “the assumption is that stories and events that are important to each community have a unique ecosystem,” (Cleveland 2005) meaning that one cannot reproduce these programs by picking them up and plopping them down elsewhere. This is one of the central reasons why non-profit, community after-school programs consider youth civic engagement to be a far higher priority than do in-school programs (Levine 2007, p. 159). For community programs and leaders, youth development is a priority, whereas testing and discipline may be the norm in school. These programs depend on “the embrace of the local ecology,” to quote William Cleveland, and are sensitive to it in ways that larger institutions such as schools, oftentimes cannot afford to be. The context of the community is key. It is precisely this context that is missing in many public schools where “community” as an entity may receive plenty of lip service, but little real-life reference through the course of every day experience within hostile hallways and
uninviting classrooms. Recognizing the importance of self-exploration and expression which provide means for youth to experience themselves as individuals with agency that artistic expression provides was in my mind a natural fit to the agency which fuels civic participation, and why after-school experiences seemed to be a likelier place to look for where this agency comes into play more effectively.

Campbell and others have noted that research in this area is lacking:

Studies exploring questions pertaining to young people’s civic engagement have largely missed the significance of community by having a scope that is either too wide or too narrow – on the one hand, the nation, on the other, the home and/or school (2006, p. 97).

This provides another excellent reason to focus on after-school experiences on the community level, to fill this gap in the literature. Campbell sets out a history of political analysis studies of civic culture as pertaining to youth, and notes that “while some have hinted that place, defined locally, matters for understanding youths’ attitudes, there has been little theoretical development of how this occurs.” Campbell is a big believer in the importance of context for socialization, and explores this at length in Why We Vote.

After-school programs provide that positive socialization context when schools do not. They provide the necessary environments, where in the words of John Gardner, “the young person has an identity, a role, and pride in membership; and family-like environments in which youth find the protection and security we all need,” (McLaughlin 1994, p. ix). The importance of alternative safety zones, the creation of spaces where voices are valued and the dangers and threats of the streets are minimized, is an often
indicated raison d’être of community after-school programs. Communities need these alternative spaces to teach and foster positive ideals because “the environment teaches – insistently and in many voices. Where family and community have disintegrated, the likelihood of good lessons is minimal” (McLaughlin 1994, p. x). More tellingly, Youth who find their way from the streets to the few effective youth organizations in their neighborhoods encounter different environments that transform their discretionary hours into resources and opportunities for growth and hope. (McLaughlin 1994, p. 7)

Furthermore, as pointed out by Morrill et al., young people are active participants in developing their own social, emotional and cognitive constructs through daily interaction with their peers. “Youths constantly must carve out cultural, social and physical spaces for themselves in the larger adult culture” (Morrill 2005, p. 94). This is what community after-school programs are able to help facilitate in a welcoming and less restricted fashion than most spaces that teens have access to. Community centers can become safe hangouts for youths to “constitute and explore relational interaction and interpersonal competence away from the regulation of their families, schools and workplaces” (Morrill 2005, p. 100).

To quote Peter Levine, “youth have an ‘autonomous culture’” (2007, p. 74) and building social networks is one of the most important activities in which youth engage that construct this culture. Social circles, neighborhoods, and the ways in which youth spend their time in-between the two major institutions of school and family, are of paramount importance for examining this process. In Together Alone (2005), Morrill et al. address ways in which youth socialize in public through the seemingly unproductive process of
“hanging out” and mention “a reemerging interest among social scientists in youth culture” (p. 94).

Despite abundant fears regarding negative peer pressures, “research finds more positive effects that negative ones: friends help friends not get in trouble” (Levine 2007, p. 75). Peers have an inordinate amount of influence upon others civic habits, and furthermore, “civic participation (also) arises from human relationships and obligations that can be intrinsically fulfilling” (Levine 2007, p. 104). This is why it is important to ask about social involvement as well as the construct of social networks and reliance upon social interaction by youth within particular programs of interest. Peer socialization is another function that after-school programs in my study provide, and one which they recognize and embrace openly, as can be seen in the following chapters.

Having established the importance of community programs and after-school experiences, the stage is set for examining a useful framework, a steady guide for the research outlined in these pages. Positive Youth Development, my theoretical framework of choice, is explained in detail in the next section.
Positive Youth Development

Despite the focus on youth in the consciousness of the public sphere, the importance of civic engagement for youth is not necessarily something which is inherently understood. If anything, “as a life stage, adolescence is most commonly presented in terms of antisocial and problem behavior” (Youniss 1999, p. 57). However, as Peter Levine and others have pointed out, civic foundations and non-profits shifted their focus to youth development in the 1990’s, particularly for youth between the ages of 15 and 25 (Levine 2007). The shift occurred with the advent of the Positive Youth Development movement in the 1970’s which sought to move away from a ‘deficit model’ of dealing with risky adolescent behavior, (i.e. drug use, premarital sex, violence, crime, and alienation) by way of heavy-handed control and surveillance, in favor of a more holistically minded, research-based approach which took into consideration child development theory, and valued exploration and creativity. In other words, the PYD movement sought to establish an approach to teens which treats them with dignity, as valued contributors, rather than “as potential problems or threats who have nothing to offer a community until they grow up” (Levine 2007, p. 63). This view takes a more encouraging approach to youth, focusing on the “promotion of children's social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development” overall, and recognizes the importance of nurturing budding civic and leadership tendencies, and works to foster these tendencies (Catalano 2004, p. 100). Positive Youth Development works to minimize the same unhealthy behaviors which punitive approaches
aimed to curb, but does so in a way that fosters “the individual, social, and environmental characteristics—such as positive identity, social competence, and independence—that promote healthy development” (Thurber 2006, p. 241). The ways in which these goals are attained will be outlined shortly.

The role of institutions such as civic groups, clubs, leagues, as well as arts and performance groups, “has tended to be neglected in our appraisals of youth at the peril of overlooking the full range of socialization processes, which extends well beyond the nuclear family and functions to integrate youth deeply into our social traditions” (Youniss 1999, p. 2). Positive youth development is a far more adequate and far more encompassing approach to the socialization process which youth pass through on their way to functioning adulthood. Youniss and Yates point out that only in the last few decades has the complexity of the process been given full credence, leading education and youth researchers to realize that the passive learning process idealized for so long did not give necessary room for reflection.

Furthermore, positive youth development provides a worthwhile, research-supported alternative: “an alternative to a deficit approach is to provide positive opportunities for adolescents to display and cultivate the assets that they need are aesthetic or athletic, but some are civic” (Levine 2007, p. 64). Moving away from past prevention efforts that aimed to combat single problem behaviors among youth, positive youth development focused instead on a wider range of experiences and factors (Catalano 2004,
et al. According to Catalano et al., programs with positive youth development missions include several of the following objectives:

1. Promotes bonding
2. Fosters resilience
3. Promotes social competence
4. Promotes emotional competence
5. Promotes cognitive competence
6. Promotes behavioral competence
7. Promotes moral competence
8. Fosters self-determination
9. Fosters spirituality
10. Fosters self-efficacy
11. Fosters clear and positive identity
12. Fosters belief in the future
13. Provides recognition for positive behavior
14. Provides opportunities for pro-social involvement
15. Fosters pro-social norms. (Catalano 2004, p. 101-102)

The significance of these indicators is that positive youth development is positively correlated with civic engagement (Levine 2007). To that end, these indicators serve as a handy guide for transmission of positive social values.

**The Significance of PYD Experience**

Research encompassing Positive Youth Development has a relatively narrow scope. A recent longitudinal study applying PYD to youth camp experiences provided an
illuminating study valuable for looking at enrichment activities for youth. The study reported “significant positive change” in four positive-focus domains of positive identity development, social skills, physical & thinking skills, as well as affirmative values, “more than would be expected by maturation alone” (Thurber 2006, p. 241). The Thurber et al. study looked at other research being done on camp experiences in light of positive youth development, and they reported numerous favorable findings:

Using questionnaires that asked youth to assess how they grew at 4-H camp, compared to what they knew or felt before camp, these researchers concluded that 4-H camp teaches important life skills, such as thoughtful decision making, wise use of resources, responsible citizenship, acceptance of differences, respectful treatment of others, and positive leadership (2006, p. 243).

The camp experience is particularly applicable when examining after-school experiences because the aims for these structured environments share numerous commonalities, and particularly because “the earliest camps were not-for-profit experiments directed by educators who saw opportunities to teach children in ways schools did not” (Thurber 2006, p. 242). In many ways after-school programs seek to fill in such gaps. However, camp experiences are limited to those who have the financial means, while after-school experiences, particularly in free, community-center contexts, are far more egalitarian. As Sugarman points out in *If Kids Could Vote*, “poor children, like middle and upper class children, need to learn how to be citizens” (2007, p. 114). And since schools fail those on the lowest rungs more often than not, looking towards after-school enrichment programs makes sense.
“Successful inner-city organizations present themselves in relation to no social institution or social problem. They explain themselves simply as ‘for youth’” (McLaughlin 1994, p. 8). Such programs also refrain from billing themselves as officially out-of-school or after-school, because schools are oftentimes viewed as “places that offer only discouragement or rejection” (McLaughlin 1994, p. 8). Furthermore, according to Levine, the reason after-school programs are successful in reducing problem behaviors and ameliorating the negative traits which plague adolescents, is not an outward focus on those traits, but utilization of youthful talents and redirecting them towards better aims (2007, p. 67). As pointed out by Milbrey McLaughlin (2000, ; 1994), the appeal of such programs for youth lies in the fact that “these efforts are not merely loosely organized activities to do with sports or arts or leadership that a young person can dip in and out of.”

What can make or break an after-school program in terms of attendance and sustained interest is whether there is a built-in aim to “deepen skills and competence” (McLaughlin 2000, p. 10). This is an important consideration, and one which plays right into what youth require developmentally to grow into roles envisioned by positive youth development programming. Another core element in sustaining interest is making material relevant to youth’s interests. Contemporary culture, through arts and music, can provide a great stepping stone to connect to youth in a language that speaks to them. In the following section, I look at how hip hop culture and leadership has been instrumental in raising the bar on youth participation and engagement.
Hip Hop Leadership

Community activists, organizers, service groups and nonprofit managers across the country are turning to hip-hop (Upski Wimsatt 1999).

Hip hop culture is synonymous with a do-it-yourself approach and vibrancy that epitomized the contemporary genre of art, music, dance, and lifestyle that blossomed out of the dilapidated neighborhoods of the Bronx in the 1970’s. Youths who had nothing created their own unique style and culture, and that culture has become synonymous with urban minority youth the world over. Harnessing the energy of hip hop towards community renewal and unification has taken on a whole new meaning with the birth of hip hop leadership in community non-profits and youth advocacy groups.

William Upski Wimsatt chronicles the rise of this movement: “from the beginning, hip-hop’s unstated goals were not that different from the stated goals of many community-based youth organizations.” In effect, those goals were the development something of an antidote to the bleak living conditions in urban ghettos, serving “as a bridge from crime, drugs and madness to work, creativity and citizenship” (Upski Wimsatt 1999, p. 105-106). The fact that Wimsatt uses the term citizenship when referring to hip-hop kids is indicative of the transformative positivity and community connection which is oftentimes overlooked in the mainstream focus on hip-hop as the world of materialistic concerns and loose morals. Wimsatt argues that
Hip-hop culture probably did as much to keep young urban males off of drugs, out of fights, and constructively engaged during the 1980’s as all the at-risk youth programs combined … in many circles, it is almost cliché to say, ‘Hip-hop saved my life’ (1999, p. 106).

However, I would argue that many after-school programs for at-risk youth have succeeded not in spite of hip hop, but possibly because of it. Certainly the groups I will explore in this pilot study have married hip hop culture to their programming. Upski Wimsatt quotes Najma Nazy’at, a national consultant on youth programs,

Before you can tell somebody to get off drugs, to be responsible, to vote, you have to build family, love, and culture. That’s what hip-hop is all about. That’s why young people are attracted to it (1999, p. 107).

Hip hop curricula is nothing new. There is a plethora of conferences, leadership advocacy campaigns, and efforts to involve both the hip-hop generation in politics as well as utilize the magnet of ‘speaking the kids’ language’ in order to reach minority youth struggling in schools. Cultural development and sensitivity to community connections is of paramount importance not just for struggling youth, but for communities that are struggling as a whole. The significance of the arts connection on a grander scale is explored in the next section.
Why Art? The Significance of Cultural Development

It is important to note that all of these programs were created by artists who were, in essence, self-mandated. Put simply, that mandate was a passionate belief in the power of art to make significant positive contributions to community life. This was, and remains, a hard sell (Cleveland 2005).

The appeal of arts and cultural engagement is not a recent development, nor are the demands of citizenship and civic engagement. In fact, since the 1960s “many organizations have used the arts to address social problems: to occupy idle youth, to babysit children, to empower the underprivileged, to generate pride in neighborhoods, to beautify drab areas” (Cleveland 1992, p. 236). What is different today is the newfound interest in researching the wealth of opportunities for change and empowerment, for positive youth development and cultural and civic revival in ‘our own backyard.’ The aim of my work is to document as well as fully explore these often hidden connections.

In *Cultural Democracy*, James Bau Graves raised the following question, which I feel effectively sets the tone for this chapter: “What is the pathway to engagement, and how can cultural institutions intervene in that process to effectively build participation?” (2005, p. 81). Furthermore, what is the role of cultural development and participation in civic engagement exactly? In asking what art has to do with citizenship, the most direct answer may be that given the focus on self-expression and collaboration in art participation programs, what better way could there be to engage students while indirectly fostering principles of democratic citizenship. More to the point, “arts and humanities education
can be a playground for the development of good citizens” (Damasio 2006, ; Goldbard 2009).

Arlene Goldbard tells the story of a speech at the 2006 UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education, where leading neuroscientists who have become advocates for arts education proposed that “for our brains to serve the future, we must develop our creative imagination and empathic capacities through arts participation.” Antonio and Hanna Damasio emphatically stressed that

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\text{Math and science alone do not make citizens. And, given that the development of citizenship is already under siege, math and science alone are not sufficient. … [A] a curriculum which features arts and humanities education is one way of conducting the moral exercises on which citizenship is grounded (Damasio 2006, ; Goldbard 2009).}
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In my previous work, I explored cultural participation – the engagement in, support of, and creation of artistic works, and the direct link inherent in such participation to greater community cohesion and involvement. Social cohesion, community development, and the nurturing of increased civic participation are undeniable constructive effects of cultural participation. Moreover, when “cultural content is appropriated into public life, ‘the end result of cultural participation is the improved capacity to take part in the collective life of society: cultural citizenship’” (Stanley 2006, ; Varshavsky 2008)

Arts programs and arts education are often seen as instrumental in fostering a life-long appreciation of the arts. Via the framework set out by cultural development on the community level, I argue that in addition to this lofty goal, civic engagement may be a
much needed ‘side-effect,’ if not the ‘main-effect.’ Furthermore, the importance of arts programs goes beyond utilizing art as a mere vehicle towards achieving social aims such as teen crime reduction.

In his *Art in Other Places* (1992), Cleveland chronicles a series of art programs set up in places that are not deemed inherently creative or artistic, such as prisons, mental hospitals, and nursing homes. These programs harness the power of creative pursuits, recognizing the therapeutic benefits as a given: “they do the most good by concentrating on the empowering qualities of the creative processes and not on the diagnosis or treatment of what is ‘wrong’” (Cleveland 1992, p. 6). Arts participation provides an avenue for participants to discover “the link between personal and social history,” where people can “find dignity, a sense of identity and belonging, and a deeper appreciation for both the particularity and the universality of their life experience” (Cleveland 1992, p. 41 quoting Susan Perlstein).

In *New Creative Community* (2006) Goldbard sets out the meaningful assertions of what she terms community cultural development – artistic and cultural grassroots revival, forged by “citizen-artists” bringing their communities “beauty and joy along with opportunities for reflection and growth” (2006, p. 11). The significance of this revival is timely, given that

The more complex and commercial the society, the more people experience a loss of agency, a decline in spontaneous connection, a tendency for consumer activities to supplant other social relationships and a stronger pull toward isolated pursuits, (Goldbard 2006, p. 23).
These are the very same tendencies which Putnam (2001) so famously bemoaned. Cultural engagement can thus be a key way to reinvigorate community involvement in the face of anti-social change within the public sphere. Active participation within the community, an appreciation of the diversity and vitality inherent in urban communities in particular, and the use of “cultural expression as a means of emancipation” and empowerment (Goldbard 2006, p. 54), are all unifying principles of this movement.

Community programs, particularly at the local level, start out small and often stay small even as they grow. They are successful as long as they maintain a direct connection to their community. Maintaining that ground allows such small programs to be successful, and it also works against the argument that they are ineffective against larger social ills. Cleveland points out that such local focus is ideal for fostering democratic principles: “In this type of environment, hierarchy often takes a back seat to necessity, and collective decision making is much more the norm” (2005). Furthermore, it is no accident that

Funders, reacting to failing schools and a rise in juvenile crime, have dramatically increased support for youth-oriented programming over the past decade and a half. These programs have responded with significant investments in training and mentorship that emphasize the development of arts skills and youth leadership (Cleveland 2005).

Through “artistic creation and performance” these groups focus on “achieving various youth-development outcomes,” the very same ones which were outlined earlier in this chapter.
The federal government has also taken notice, and according to a RAND report, “now spends $1 billion annually on after-school programs, primarily for at-risk youth… (shaping) an alternative delivery system for arts learning that previously did not exist” (Zakaras 2008, p. 37). However, arts in themselves remain a hard sell despite the availability of extra development dollars for general after-school programming. The successful programs outlined in the following section highlight what arts participation programming can do, and the important role they play on the community level.

**Successful Youth Programs**

A wide spectrum of community arts programs exists in the U.S. In order to present some context for my two case studies, as well as set out comparative examples, I present three successful youth programs which utilize the arts in facilitating positive youth growth and providing participants with valuable opportunities to connect to their communities. The first, CityKids Foundation, is a New York-based organization, and has received a great deal of acclaim in youth development literature, in particular by William Cleveland (2005). The two others, the Latin American Youth Center’s Art & Media House, and Life Pieces to Masterpieces, are both D.C.-based. They were chosen to serve as comparative examples due to being highly recommended by many of the community arts practitioners I spoke with. Their relative proximity to my case study groups in Northwest and Southeast Washington D.C., respectively, also make them notable.
CityKids Foundation

A multidisciplinary program with an emphasis on performing and media arts, CityKids was founded in New York City in 1985 by Laurie Meadoff, a “cultural activist,” according to William Cleveland, who profiled CityKids in his report on the impact of arts-based programs on youth and communities (2005) as well as in *Art in Other Places* (1992). Serving over 700 teenagers (ages 13 through 19), the majority of whom are minority students living near or below the poverty line, CityKids seeks to foster leadership skills by way of free performance arts programming.

The organization’s mission is to:

Develop the leadership potential of youth by engaging them in an education and artistic development process that is grounded in the grassroots philosophy of Safe Space, Youth-to-Youth Communication, Multi-Cultural Bridge-Building and Leadership Development (Cleveland 2005).

The CityKids Foundation has satellite programs operating in New Haven and all over New York City, including partnerships with ten New York public high schools. CityKids Repertory Company, “the performing arts arm of CityKids that takes ideas and issues from all of CityKids' programs and transforms them into original, youth-led, issue-based drama, music, song and dance performances,” has gained some renown by performing with well-known artists and venues (web page *CityKids Repertory Company (Rep)* 2004).
According to Cleveland, elements which are critical to the success of CityKids as well as similar after-school venues are “youth ownership, diversity, safety, focus on leadership, high standards, and entrepreneurship” (2005). Many if not all of these elements are present in the two programs which I chose for my case studies, and will be explored and discussed at length in the pages to come.

**Latin American Youth Center/ Art & Media House**

The Latin American Youth Center is a neighborhood youth center located near one of my chief research sites in the Columbia Heights/Adams Morgan area of Washington D.C. The Art & Media House is part of LAYC and provides a space for “youth to discover the power of their art as a means of self-expression” through the “hands-on training in media (photography, radio, video, and music production) and fine arts (drawing, painting, mixed media and murals)” (*Latin American Youth Center. Art & Media House* 2008).

Youth attending the Art & Media House, which in the Spring 2009 session included workshops on stencil art, internet journalism, urban art, graffiti, beat-making, and photography, to name a few, are encouraged to “to draw inspiration from their own lives, communities, and cultures” in creating their works and documenting their personal growth. A $15 registration fee covers all classes and supplies for youths aged 11-18. Marie Moll-Amego, the director of the Art & Media House, and a self professed “youth worker who sees media as a tool for young people,” sat down with me for an interview to discuss her work in the context of community arts. She explained that the culture created at the Art &
Media House seeks to preserve youth’s intent of the work rather than edit it out in the chase for sound-bites or higher production values (Moll-Amego 2009, personal interview).

The Art & Media House serves youth that seek a career in the arts through advanced portfolio production, as well as the majority of students for whom an interest in art is just a foot in the door. Far from being “just an arts program in the community,” the Art & Media House is tied to the “larger multi-service youth development agency” which is the Latin American Youth Center, and is able to meet the needs of the youth who come through on a variety of levels. Those that need it get access to counseling and services from school tutoring to residential care, to dealing with mental health and/or drug abuse issues, from on-site trained staff. As Ms. Moll-Amego is quick to point out,

Other programs don’t have that. Our biggest resource that we offer them is our ability to provide that safe space and that creative space, but it's also the ability to connect them with everything that's in our main building that they might need” (Moll-Amego, personal interview).

As the website of the Art & Media House explains, “as youth move through sequenced courses, they explore subjects beyond self, gaining the skills to document the neighborhood and explore community issues,” providing another clear connection in utilizing arts to foster community and civic engagement (Latin American Youth Center: Art & Media House 2008).
Life Pieces to Masterpieces

Another renowned community arts program in Washington D.C. is Life Pieces to Masterpieces (LPTM). Run and founded by Mary Brown, LPTM serves African-American “boys and young men ages 3 to 21 living in low-income and public housing east of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC,” utilizing the arts to drive positive youth development. The program which “began in 1996 with seven participants, now serves 150 young men and their families” (web page Life Pieces to Masterpieces: Creating Art... Changing Lives 2009). LPTM has been recognized by numerous awards, including by the Catalogue for Philanthropy, and mentioned by numerous community arts practitioners I had interviewed.

According to the LPTM website: “LPTM Apprentices have created over 1000 pieces of art over the past 11 years, exhibited locally, nationally and internationally” (2009). In addition, LPTM has been successful with raising grades, reducing problem behaviors and fostering leadership skills for participating young men, while helping them both contribute to their community as well as avoid the dangers of the juvenile justice system plaguing young African-American males. Through a program called LPTM Express: Destination Opportunity, the LPTM curriculum has also been made available for other in-school and out-of-school youth development programs in the District of Columbia.

Growing out of ongoing efforts in community outreach, Life Pieces to Masterpieces utilizes the arts to transform the lives of inner-city male youth as well as harness that energy for social change in the communities with which they come into
contact. “Life Pieces means life experiences being turned into a masterpiece,” explains Larry B. Quick, a co-founder, “the boys’ lives are changing from the whole program. We don’t create anything that we haven’t seen, everything is based on life experiences. Their life is the masterpiece” (*Life Pieces to Masterpieces: Creating Art... Changing Lives* 2009).

**Conclusion**

The past three chapters have provided significant context, setting the pace and the tone of this work. My aim has been to define and contextualize civic engagement, and provide a link to arts participation in a local environment as a major avenue for not only fostering strong communities but the nurturing of future citizens. Having established some clear examples of successful after-school programs that embody the elements thus far discussed, I move on to provide a full analysis of the two community after-school arts programs which form the core case studies of this work. The following chapter outlines my multi-part methodological approach to gathering and analyzing data collected over the course of four months, spanning December 2008 to March 2009.
Chapter 4: Methodology Overview

Introduction

In this chapter I clarify the methods by which data were collected, organized, and analyzed, and provide a context by way of a rich introduction to the case study sites. As previously described, I utilize a diverse set of methods in this project, employing a triangulation process to bring together strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. This strategy was employed to both test my hypothesis that participation in after-school arts programming has a demonstrable positive effect on civic identity formation by way of community involvement, as well as provide sufficient context for what is entailed in such a complex process. To that end, I utilized three main research methods – ethnography, survey, and interviews.

I used a qualitative ethnographic approach to observe the workshops at different site locations of both WBL and A.B.L.E. programs in order to document the ways in which participating youth build relationships and interact in those environments. I carried out a survey to capture participants’ attitudes regarding participation in the program and the wider community. I interviewed staff and instructors at all three locations, as well as the directors of the organizations. In the following pages, I go into more detail on the rationale behind these methods, how this research design evolved, and how it was put in motion.
Hypotheses: Defining the Landscape

Before going into detail as to the precise methods utilized in this study, I wish to review the initial study of the connection between after-school arts participation and community involvement. There are five main hypotheses which I identified during the course of my pilot study; the first three are as follows:

$H_1$: Youth who participate in after-school art programs think it is important to take part in community affairs.

$H_2$: Participation in after-school art programs is positively correlated with a greater tendency to view community involvement as important.

$H_3$: Longer participation in after-school art programs is positively correlated with increased community involvement.

$H_0$: Length of participation in after-school arts programs makes no difference on community involvement attitudes or action.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 are measured through two items on the survey, including two closed items (Q7 and Q10) and one open ended item (Q8). Q7 asked: *Do you think it’s important to help people in your community or neighborhood?* $^5$ Q10 asked: *Do you think participating in arts workshops like WBL gets you more involved in your community.* Meanwhile the open ended Q8 asked: *How have you helped out in your community?* I predict that length of participation will correlate positively with levels of community involvement among the youth surveyed.

$^5$ The full answer options were presented on a spectrum from “Yes, It’s super important” to “Not important at all.”
Furthermore, I predict that the reason for initial involvement with either A.B.L.E. or WBL will make a difference as to how involved the youth is on the community level, as the next two hypotheses show:

H₄: Social or subject motivated interest for attending after-school programs is positively correlated with longer and more active attendance.

H₅: Social or subject motivated interest for attendance is not positively correlated with longer or more active attendance.

H₆: Social or subject motivated interest for attending after-school art program is positively correlated with greater identification with the program as a meaningful community.

H₇: Social or subject motivated interest for attendance is not correlated with identification with the program as a meaningful community.

Hypotheses 4 & 5 are likewise measured by Q2: *Why did you start attending workshops?*, Q6: *What does community mean to you?* and Q7 on the survey.

For more information about the survey design and implementation, please see the survey section later on in this chapter. These are the core hypotheses, however more nuanced correlations will be addressed in Chapter 5. I will now steer the discussion towards data collection strategies, beginning with a description of the after-school programs which form the backbone of this pilot study.

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6 Q2 reads as follows: *Why did you start coming? My friends told me to come / It was close by / I liked the classes / There was nothing else to do / My teacher or parent told me to come / Other. See Appendix A for full survey text.*
Words Beats and Life: The Urban Arts Academy

I discovered WBL upon recommendation from a friend who had invited fellow graduate students to submit writing to the WBL Journal. Upon exploring the website, www.wblinc.org, I knew I wanted to get involved, being particularly taken with their approach and focus on graffiti and hip-hop culture. The Urban Arts Academy seemed like a perfect candidate for my case study, and an initial meeting with the N.W. site director and program director validated my presumptions. WBL presented itself as an organization run by young and committed staff, with a clear positive youth development mission, reaching out to youth in their own language – the language of hip-hop – in order to engage them artistically and entrepreneurially. From the get-go, there was a certain sense of togetherness, partially due to a shared love of the culture, but it was more than that. WBL represented a community in its own right.

WBL began as the vision of Mazi Mutafa, the organization’s founder and executive director, at “a hip-hop conference at the University of Maryland, College Park in the fall of 2000” (Words Beats & Life, Inc. 2009). The organization acquired a 501c3 status and developed the Urban Arts Academy in 2003. However, the after-school program is only one of several of WBL’s ventures. Others include the peer-reviewed WBL Journal; the Cipher – a non-profit entrepreneurial incubator; and the University Project, which focuses on the roots of the organization as a hip-hop workshop connection to college campuses. However, for the sake of this study, which focused on the Urban Arts Academy exclusively, when referring to WBL, I will be referencing only the Academy itself.
Currently, WBL serves anywhere from 100-150 students weekly, between the two main sites, and the school partnerships the organization has with DC’s Project My Time. The two main sites which formed the focus of my study with WBL are the center in Northwest Washington D.C., housed in St. Stephen’s Church in the Adams Morgan/Columbia Heights neighborhood, serving between 60-65 kids, and the Southeast site at the Benning Park Recreation Center, serving between 15 to 30 students. In order to participate, students sign up and get parents’ permission if they are under 18. All students have to sign an Urban Arts Academy pledge, a copy of which is included in Appendix C. As described by Goldie Deane, the Academy director, “the academy oath was a collaborative effort - what we ultimately do and what we want the kids to take away” (2009, personal interview). The pledge outlines student responsibilities as they pertain to the student’s class, family and community and states: “The things I learn in the academy I will apply at school, in my community and in my heart. I am hip-hop’s future.”

**Scrilla Apprenticeships**

The Urban Arts Academy encompasses nine different programs between the two main sites, including a graffiti mural program, a youth ambassador leadership program, a college preparation program, and gender specific programs which run at the S.E. site. The hip-hop based workshops encompass one of the nine (full list is available in Appendix C).

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7 Project My Time is a youth development after-school initiative of the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation and the Wallace Foundation providing enrichment programming in nine DCPS middle schools. The goal of the Project is to engage youth in activities they enjoy, such as art and sports, and provide them a smoother transition to high school. *(Project My Time 2009)*
In addition, there is a level of commitment which students make to the program, and in return are assigned levels of apprenticeship.

At the journeyman or entry level, students get a “pay rate” of $7/hr, which is increased to $25/hr as their commitment and leadership skills grow. The pay rate is attendance and commitment based, but students don’t receive actual cash. Instead, the pay rate is an incentive for students to build credit, which they can use to pay for arts supplies or equipment they may need, such as turntables, markers, and sketchbooks, for use at the Academy. These credits are called ‘scrilla,’ which is an African-American/hip-hop slang term for paper money. The pay rates and apprentice requirements are listed in table 4.1 below (Deane 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: WBL Apprenticeship Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journeyman</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning Apprentice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate Apprentice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pay Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>$18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced Apprentice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruction

The way we describe the management tree of the academy is that we're a body. And I'm the left side of the brain, the logical side, Paige is the right side of the brain, the artistic side, the site directors are the spinal cord, the teachers are the heart, the kids are the soul (Deane 2009, personal communication).

Instruction is provided by a core committed team of teachers, with site directors and program directors pitching in. WBL’s website lists ten staff members who provide instruction, but I met fifteen individuals who contribute on either a full or a part time basis to the Urban Arts Academy at both of the sites, and seven participated in this study. As with all small start-up non-profits, staff members wear several hats. Goldie Deane, the program director of the Urban Arts Academy is also a curriculum supervisor, and a substitute instructor for everything from creative writing to DJing. In fact, she assists with instruction in everything except graffiti and bboying, because for those courses, as Mrs. Deane tells it, “you just got to know how to do it, because the students are so talented”.

Other notable examples of multi-tasking by staffers include the N.W. site director, Paige Mandel who also happens to be the photography instructor as well as the outreach liaison (Mandel 2009). Lester Wallace (aka 2Tone), the S.E. site director, started out as a DJ instructor, and is now the chess instructor as well as the co-chair of Bum Rush the Boards, the hip hop chess tournament which WBL initiated and is now in its 4th year (Wallace 2009). Most of the staff volunteer extra time beyond paid hours as well.
Northwest: The Foundation

The offices of WBL are located at the N.W. site, although the program initially started as a Saturday academy at Benning Park in S.E. D.C. The N.W. site has become a flagship location for WBL, given “the emphasis on teaching the core elements of hip-hop,” (Deane 2009) and it services the majority of its students. The classes in N.W. are held in the open basement space of St. Stephen’s Church. Other community groups utilize other areas of the building, and there is also a Spanish-language day school for boys—San Miguel, on site. Several students from the day school also attend WBL programming in the evenings. There is an open stage area where breakdancing battles and other performance events are held, and a large no-frills open space area which is utilized for the simultaneous classes. See figures 4.1 & 4.2 below.

Figure 4.1: The N.W. Site

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8 The program has no official affiliation with the church other than utilizing community space provided.
The classes at the N.W. site are offered Monday-Thursday, from 5:00 to 8:30 p.m. and are open to the community, free-of-charge. Regular course offerings include the Bench - the graffiti writing workshop, Bboying – the breakdancing class, and chess. These staple courses are offered 3 days a week. Additional classes include photography, drawing, and beat production, as well as once-a-month special community events that all students pitch in to create. Movie nights and special guests, such as visiting artists and DJ’s, make an occasional appearance as well.

Southeast: The Element

This site is called ‘The Element’ because whenever you step foot in the Benning Park Rec Center, you can find our students deep in their ‘element.’ Whether it’s recreation, art activities, or building the community, it is clear that the students here
have helped build this community into a space of their own. ‘The Element’ best describes Benning Park and what the core elements of hip hop have grown into over time. (Deane 2009, personal communication)

The Benning Park Recreation Center is a community center in the Benning Park neighborhood of Southeast D.C. Tucked away in a housing complex, and a mile from either the Benning Road or Capitol Heights Metro stations, the Rec Center is not terribly accessible, and this has contributed to a difficulty for students who do not live in the neighborhood to make the trek. The original site for WBL programming, Benning Park started hosting a Saturday academy, a tradition that has continued in the six years since the WBL partnership with the center began. During the week programming is offered Monday-Thursday evenings, 6 to 9pm. Course offerings include MCing, DJing, creative writing, arts & crafts, chess, graphic arts, photography, and graffiti. Breakdancing is not offered despite interest from the students, as Geoffrey, the break dancing instructor at the N.W. site, is unable to get there.

The building itself would be an unremarkable community center were it not for the vibrant murals which adorn the building from all sides. Many of them are original works which were created by either graffiti students or visiting artists and gifted to the Rec Center as thanks for letting WBL utilize the facility. In addition to the two rooms which WBL has full use of, the facility boasts an outdoor pool, an indoor basketball court, a boxing ring, dance practice rooms, and an open stage area with ping-pong tables. Murals adorn walls throughout the building, most of them also done by WBL students under the leadership of
Cory Stowers, the graffiti instructor and director of design. One entire outdoor wall was done by a group of 15 graffiti artists that created the mural in partnership with WBL as part of their multi-city tour called Concrete Alchemy (ArtVisions 2009). A section of that wall is presented below in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. Figure 4.5 showcases artwork by WBL graffiti students.

Figure 4.3: Benning Park Mural Art – Concrete Alchemy

Photos by Alan Kayanan

Figure 4.4: Benning Park Mural Art – Concrete Alchemy

Photos by Alan Kayanan
Figure 4.5 Benning Park Mural Art created by WBL students

Photo by Alan Kayanan

A local boxing legend turned graphic artist has also painted the walls of the boxing ring with portraits of African American boxers (see Figure 4.6). He also teaches boxing in the Rec Center. Students who come to the Rec Center sometimes wander over to WBL, and the instructors have a close relationship with the Benning Park community.

A notable difference between the two sites, however, impacts the level of engagement experienced in the coursework. Goldie Deane, who is heavily involved with the curriculum and organization at both sites is quick to point out:

We have 100% engagement in N.W., cause they travel for it and the focus is on hip-hop. (At N.W.) they’re using the elements in a more engaged way. This space (S.E.) is literally in their neighborhood. The focus here is on introducing the elements to them (Deane 2009).
Ricardo Mavin, the site director for the Saturday Academy at S.E. which I visited on one of my observation days, notes that “Saturdays used to be bigger, I want it to be better, like Northwest” (Mavin 2009).

In addition to the creative arts courses, as well as the Saturday Academy, which has its own curriculum and staff, Benning Park provides gender-based programming two days a week. This marks another distinction for the S.E. site, as the N.W. location is frequented primarily by boys. Dubbed the *Brotherhood* (for boys) and *Diamonds and Pearls* (for girls), these programs work to engage youth more directly via community clean-up days and address gender-specific concerns. The *Brotherhood* was started by one of WBL young ambassadors, a young man who is something of star pupil and an accomplished DJ in his own right. *Diamonds and Pearls*, on the other hand, is a brainchild of Goldie Deane. Figures 4.5- 4.10 below showcase the Benning Park Community Recreation Center. The next section addresses the second program, New Community for Children’s A.B.L.E.
Figure 4.7 & 4.8: WBL Student Murals

Photos by author

Figures 4.9 & 4.10: WBL S.E

Photos by Alan Kayanan
New Community for Children: Adolescents Building Literacy through Expression

Through creativity and constant engagement, we are not reinventing the wheel, but using different drivers, our youth (Williams 2008).

I was fortunate to make the connection to the A.B.L.E. program through a colleague at my internship with Center for Inspired Teaching. After an informational meeting with Dr. Dwayne Williams, A.B.L.E.’s director, I was convinced that this particular after-school arts and literacy-focused program would make a wonderful counterbalance to WBL’s Urban Arts Academy. A.B.L.E.’s location in the historic Shaw/Howard district, just a half-a-block from the Shaw Metro, was an additional draw. At the time I had not known about the gender-based membership program at Benning Park, and A.B.L.E. has its own gender-specific programming which I wished to explore.

NCFC started as an after-school program for kids at a local elementary school by Grace Dickerson the wife of Rev Jim Dickerson, the pastor of the New Community Church, in 1988 (Whipple 2009). What began as a program for a handful of local kids, grew into the advocacy and direct service organization which serves nearly 300 youth daily (New Community for Children 2008). A.B.L.E. is one of four after-school programs run by NCFC, and with fewer than 50 students, is by far the smallest. The program was started in 1996 when according to NCFC director Marvin Coote, “the main purpose was to keep kids off the street. I think we've tried to evolve that, how to get them into college and succeed in college, that's where we stand now” (2009).
The stated purpose of A.B.L.E. is “creative and engaging out-of-school experiences for youth ages 11 – 19” (ABLE Pamphlet: Thinking Outside the School 2008). To that end, the program has 10 distinct projects which are provided as free and enriching after-school curricula from 4 to 7:30 pm, Monday through Friday.\(^9\) The teen center, a colorful, inviting space where the A.B.L.E. program makes its home, is on NCFC’s campus, a 4 story brick house with an historic carriage house. The church; ArtsSpace, – an exhibition space; The Midnight Forum – another standalone hip-hop program; and ONE DC – a housing advocacy firm, all make their home on this campus alongside small administrative offices of NCFC. Student murals cover exterior walls, as they do at Benning Park, but are of a more traditional, representational style. Photos of the space can be seen below in Figures 4.11 – 4.15.

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\(^9\) The pamphlet showcasing the A.B.L.E. programming is included in Appendix C.
Figure 4.11 & 4.12: New Community for Children

Photos by author

Figure 4.13: A.B.L.E. Teen Space
With the help of six instructors, as well as volunteers from Howard University and the local community, the program as it stands is in its first full year. Marvin Coote mentions that the program had not really gelled until 2008, when a dedicated director was recruited to help steer the work going forward, and several new grants. A.B.L.E. has a complicated role – it needs to fill the needs of the teen and pre-teen population by keeping the program fun, but it also needs to provide measurable results by raising literacy, graduation, and college acceptance rates. “80% of the kids we serve are little kids,” explains Mr. Coote. “We can do a wonderful job with them in elementary, but if they fall off through high school it doesn't matter what we do with them” (Coote 2009).
Instruction

The main A.B.L.E. workshop includes: *Black, Brown and White in the 'Chocolate’ City: Being a Teenager in the Nation’s Capitol*, a photography focused workshop that was inspired by the Literacy through Photography program at Duke University. Enacted in Durham, North Carolina in 1989 by artist-educator Wendy Ewald, the LTP program:

Framed around four thematic explorations — self-portrait, community, family, and dreams — LTP provides children and teachers with the expressive and investigative tools of photography and writing for use in the classroom (*Literacy Through Photography Overview: CDS Projects 2009*).

In the words of Dr. Williams, LTP “puts the whole philosophy of NCFC and A.B.L.E. on display. It’s a student driven process,” an exploration of racial identity and social history (2008, personal interview). *Lost in the City* is a creative writing and literacy program that explores youths’ urban experiences in their schools, neighborhoods, and Washington D.C. at large. Workshop instructor Judy Twedt explains that the purpose of *Lost in the City* is to get students to reflect on their experiences at school and in the city at large “so that they get a stronger sense of how the city has shaped them and how they are a part of it, and how their stories of their lives in the city are interesting and meaningful” (Twedt 2009).

*Loving Supreme*, the gender-based program for girls explores “the wide-range of adolescent health and social issues encountered by girls ages 11-19” (*ABLE Pamphlet: Thinking Outside the School 2008*). *The Hosea Project* is the mirror gender-specific program for boys. Other academic-focused, non-arts specific workshops include *Science for Poets*, which incorporates hands on creative science projects utilizing curriculum from NASA,
and the Algebra Project. A weekly movie night A.B.L.E. Visions is a low-key event where students write reactions to film screenings, Spectacular Vernacular and The Meaning of Freedom, journaling workshops focusing on hip hop culture and social history, round out the curriculum.

Methods & Data

2009 Youth Survey

The major quantitative piece within my tri-part methodological approach was the survey data collection. Surveying the participants provided me with an unobtrusive but generalizable way to capture youth experience both within and outside of the programs more directly than what I could with observations and informal conversations alone. Conducted at all three sites, the survey targeted the population of the participating youth attending programming at WBL and A.B.L.E. According to their respective program directors, WBL serves anywhere between 60-65 students at the N.W. site and 15-30 students at the S.E. site. Meanwhile A.B.L.E. serves between 17 and 25 students, for a total population in the range of 90 to 120, mostly African-American students, aged 10-25.

The purpose of carrying out the survey was to capture data regarding length of participation, the reasons for attendance, and youths’ own perceptions regarding both the importance of community involvement, as well as self-reported attitudes regarding the potential arts-civic link given their experiences. The survey allowed me to capture an
approximate sample of the discrete population of youth attending WBL and A.B.L.E. programming over the course of one month, from February 10th to March 9th 2009, utilizing a targeted sampling approach.

Given IRB stipulations for young participants, and given the optional and voluntary nature of the survey, students self-selected participation. The survey copy gave a brief outline of the project, and solicited agreement to participate in the survey, as well as to be photographed for the purpose of the project. The survey was introduced towards the end of my observation cycle (discussed in the next section) over the course of two separate site visits to ensure as many participants as possible would have the chance to complete the survey. The rationale for waiting towards the end of my site visits was so I could establish a rapport with the students, ensure that program staff had the chance to review and approve the survey, and have ample time to modify the questions based on insights gained from in-progress ethnographic observations. The Benning Park Academy was the one exception where due to logistical limitations the survey was carried out on both site visits. A total of 52 usable and completed surveys were collected with the help of site directors and staff from all three centers, including 21 from WBL N.W., 15 from WBL S.E., and 16 from A.B.L.E. This sample is typical, but not representative, capturing approximately 27% of my targeted population.

On-site instructors usually provided the introduction to the surveys, between regularly scheduled workshop activities whenever possible. I provided paper copies of the surveys, color-coded by site location, pens, and a short set of instructions to interested
participants. Most youths present at the workshops participated, with only a few openly abstaining. As a small incentive and to thank the students for their efforts, I brought along Starburst and Jolly Rancher candy to give out after the completion of the survey. Given that participation was completely voluntary and depended on the author being to entice students to complete the survey in the midst of workshop activities, I consider the survey completion a success. Survey results are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The survey questions were developed based on several factors, including the different types of dependent, independent, and control variables. The first list of questions was put together after consulting similar studies and interviewing practitioners in the field, as well as receiving numerous insights from my interviews with the instructors. I tested several key questions in the field informally to assess youth receptiveness. The survey was proofread and tested for readability among my peers and fellow thesis colloquium partners. The survey questions were written in a clear, friendly, age-appropriate style to make it accessible to participants. Completed surveys were coded, entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and finally converted into SPSS for analysis. The full survey and coding sheet are located in Appendix A.

Ethnography

Doing extensive ethnographic observation, by far the most time-consuming portion of my data collection, was the surest way to gain insight into the nature and organization of the workshops in question. As a qualitative research technique, ethnographic observations provide a rich array of observable data which are far more
difficult to capture by other means. More importantly, since the rest of my documentation relied heavily on self-reported data, observations by an outside observer provide a certain level of objectivity. Given that I am not a direct participant with the organizations in question, nor was I connected to them as a volunteer or staff member, my observations could provide a fresh look at the workshop experience.

After making initial connections with the directors of WBL and A.B.L.E. respectively, explaining the nature and demands of my project, and receiving their support, I made my initial forays into the field. During the first workshop visits, I made sure to introduce myself to all the instructors and participants who appeared curious about my presence or generally friendly. In some cases I would receive a short introduction from the instructor on staff to explain that I would be visiting and observing, as well as encouraging participants to answer any questions I might have. At this point I would pick an unobtrusive corner to occupy, notebook in hand, and simply observe for the duration of the first visit to get the lay of the land and become comfortable in the new surroundings. Each site visit lasted at least two hours. At no point was I questioned about the nature of my note-taking. I tried at all times to appear casual in my attempts to write down conversations so as not to arouse participants’ mistrust, but my repeat presence, as well as friendly demeanor seemed to have put the participants at relative ease.

To ensure I gained a well-rounded and representative exposure to the programs, my goal was to be present for the full duration of any given workshop at least three times. Given various logistical constraints, I was unable to do so for all three sites, but I was
nonetheless able to get a sufficiently broad exposure to ensure a familiarity with each site. Over the course of the three and a half months of ethnographic data collection, I made a total of 17 separate site visits across all three sites.

The breakdown of visits and workshops, along with the dates of the visits, are provided below in Tables 4.2 – 4.4. I made five site visits to WBL N.W., observing a total of 12 workshops, including one special event – the Heart Break Ball, a WBL community breakdancing battle. I made two site visits to WBL S.E., observing a total of 7 workshops, including the Saturday Academy, a weekend WBL experience with its own site director and curriculum. For the A.B.L.E. site, I made 9 site visits, observing a total of 10 workshops and two special events. All handwritten notes from these site visits were subsequently transcribed and collapsed.

**Table 4.2: WBL N.W. site visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop title</th>
<th>Bench</th>
<th>Bboying</th>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Chess</th>
<th>Special events (date)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.W. Visit 1</td>
<td>11/25/08</td>
<td>01/27/09</td>
<td>01/27/09</td>
<td>11/25/08</td>
<td>Heart Break Ball (02/07/09)</td>
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<td>N.W. Visit 2</td>
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<td>02/10/09</td>
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<td>02/25/09</td>
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<td>02/10/09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.W. Visit 4</td>
<td>02/25/09</td>
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</tr>
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**Table 4.3: WBL S.E. site visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DJing</th>
<th>MCing</th>
<th>Graphic Arts</th>
<th>Drawing</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
<th>Chess</th>
<th>Arts &amp; Crafts</th>
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<tr>
<td>02/24/09</td>
<td>03/07/09</td>
<td>02/24/09</td>
<td>03/07/09</td>
<td>02/24/09</td>
<td>02/24/09</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 4.4: A.B.L.E. site visits

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<th>A.B.L.E. Programs</th>
<th>Love Supreme</th>
<th>Lost in the City</th>
<th>Spectacular Vernacular/ Meaning of Freedom</th>
<th>Special Events (date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black, Brown and White</td>
<td>02/02/09</td>
<td>02/12/09</td>
<td>02/02/09</td>
<td>Self-portrait photo exhibit (12/19/08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/23/09</td>
<td>02/19/09</td>
<td>02/18/09</td>
<td>03/09/09</td>
<td>Women We Love photo exhibit (03/13/09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/09/09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During each session I attended I made sure to take careful notes, documenting the location, date, time of the workshop or session, the number of youths as well as adults present, and the gender and racial break-down whenever possible. In addition to providing a brief overview of the activities, I made note of the facilities and overall environment, furniture, equipment, lighting, music, etc.

My presence as an unobtrusive observer allowed me to listen in on conversations that youth would have amongst themselves, as well as with their instructors. In this way I was able to glean a direct glimpse into the ongoing social dynamics of each space, as well as the nature of the instruction itself. My goal was to gain first-hand perspective of what the experience of the workshops was like, and what sorts of social relationships were being developed within the programs. To that end I would jot down snippets of conversations I felt were indicative of this development, as well as anything particularly salient, vivid, or out of the ordinary.
I coded all observations based on the 15 indicators of Positive Youth Development. Taken from Chapter 3, these indicators include the following:

1. Promotes bonding
2. Fosters resilience
3. Promotes social competence
4. Promotes emotional competence
5. Promotes cognitive competence
6. Promotes behavioral competence
7. Promotes moral competence
8. Fosters self-determination
9. Fosters spirituality
10. Fosters self-efficacy
11. Fosters clear and positive identity
12. Fosters belief in the future
13. Provides recognition for positive behavior
14. Provides opportunities for pro-social involvement
15. Fosters pro-social norms. (Catalano 2004, p. 101-102)

Making note of instances where I observed one or more of the above in a given situation as exhibiting a positive social value, either through physical or verbal interaction as instances of cooperation, promotion of self-esteem or expression, I was able to quantify these indicators in action. Instances of divisive behavior or derogatory communication, such as an altercation between students, were coded as exhibiting a negative social value. The results of these observations are discussed in Chapter 6.
Photos

In addition to making ethnographic observations, I took photos of the workshops’ locale, as well as any posters, art, or other notable materials on site. After receiving signed approval by the staff and instructors, and informing students, I took photos of group activities. The documented activities occurred on the site of the workshop taking place, and in the case of A.B.L.E., on field trips. On two occasions, I enlisted the assistance of a local freelance photographer to help with documentation. All photos which appear are my own unless otherwise noted.

Interviews

Interviews with site directors, instructors and volunteers formed a major resource in my efforts to document the after-school workshops at WBL and A.B.L.E.. Interviews were another integral qualitative piece as they provided insight into the nature of the work from those on the front lines ensuring that these workshops took place and that the youths were properly engaged. I also conducted several interviews with practitioners in the field who provided insight and guidance regarding operations of community after-school programs in D.C., the role of arts programming, and in deciphering the link between civic engagement and arts participation. Marie Moll-Amego, director of the Latin American Arts Center, Mary Brown, director of Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Ed Spitzberg, director of the Sitar Arts Center, and Kristi Brubaker-Burns, Dean of Community Partnerships at University of Utah College of Fine Arts, were gracious in granting me invaluable personal interviews.
Time and again, the sentiment echoed by almost everyone I interviewed stressed the fact that the human capital of such community non-profits is the most precious commodity they possess. Therefore it was vital to capture the adults’ direct outlook regarding their involvement, why their work is important, what drives them to become contributing members of these organizations, in some cases as unpaid volunteers, and most importantly how they see their roles in assisting participating youth both artistically and developmentally.

After receiving IRB approval, I provided each staff member with printed information about my project, and acquired a signed release that allowed me to digitally audio-record each interview. The release form also obtained permission to photograph and carry out surveys with the students, described in the next section. In the interest of ensuring data manageability and sensitivity to instructors’ time, each interview lasted no more than 15 minutes, with the exception of site directors, whom I interviewed at greater length.

In all, I conducted a total of twelve interviews at all three sites. These interviews were purposive and structured. The interview questions were put together to elicit the most concise and meaningful responses in the time allotted, and the bulk of the questions were aimed at testing how the interviewee saw the connection between the students’ experience at the workshops and their involvement on a community level. My short list of questions invited instructors to speak to the following:

1) What drew you to participate at [program name]?
2) How do you see the role you play in shaping your students’ experience both inside and outside of [program name]? 

3) Do you feel students’ participation within after-school arts programs like [program name] provide them opportunities to connect more directly to their communities? How so? 

4) Describe a favorite moment you witnessed in the social consciousness development of one of your students. 

5) Do you volunteer or teach anyplace else? 

At the conclusion of the interview, I invited each staff person to share any additional information they felt would be relevant for my study. 

Interviews with site directors were more fluid, particularly when eliciting further details on different aspects of the programs. For the most part, directors were asked the same set of questions as the instructors, with several additional questions to probe logistical issues of funding, history of the program, special challenges faced by the organization, and what other programs and organizations the non-profit in question might have special partnerships or working relationships with. Given that the outlining mission and strategy of each of the sites differed to some extent, program and site directors received questions tailored directly to their organization, whereas instructors received the basic set of questions outlined above. 

At WBL, I interviewed a total of seven instructors/site directors. At A.B.L.E., I conducted six interviews, including two with both the program director for A.B.L.E. as well as the executive director of New Community for Children. A copy of the instructor
signature form is available in Appendix B. All but two interviews were captured with an Olympus WS-311M digital voice recorder, and all recoded with permission.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out the entirety of my methodological approach for a tri-part data collection strategy, including ethnographic observations, interviews with program staff and a survey aimed at youth program participants. In Chapters 5 & 6, the results of the various data collection analysis will be presented and discussed. In addition, my hypothesis regarding arts participation and greater community involvement as tied to the attendance of after-school community programming will be put to the test.
Chapter 5: Analysis By Numbers

Introduction

This chapter sets out pilot study findings regarding youth community involvement and arts participation by parsing out the analysis of the 2009 Youth Survey described in Chapter 4. Findings stemming from ethnography and interview data will be discussed in Chapter 6. In this chapter, I present demographic data of the survey sample, and move through rates of participation in both after-school activities as well as community involvement, providing a test of my hypotheses. While establishing a direct relationship between length of attendance and level of involvement was difficult given the small sample size of the 2009 Youth Survey, this chapter presents some favorable results which seem to indicate that the effects of longer attendance are very much present and influence the experiences of youth in art and community-based after-school programs. The implications and limitations of these findings are addressed in due course.

Most notably, longer attendance is positively correlated with how youth define community as well as the way they see the role they play within that community. Those who attend after-school arts programming longer tend to view their community as being synonymous with their neighborhood as well as that of the program in which they are enrolled, more so than any other measure of community. Furthermore, those who view community in this way tend to identify the importance of personal contribution as highly relevant. After-school activities shape involvement and definitions of community and
provide numerous insights. The reasons which draw participants to become involved in
the programming as well as those which inspire continued attendance are also important.
These findings will be discussed in detail in the following section. Though my findings
leave room for further research, the results provide initial support to the hypothesis that
after-school arts programming can play a significant role in fostering community and civic
involvement among urban youth.

**Breakdown of Survey Sample**

The sample that shaped my study can be characterized in many ways. Basic
demographics, such as breakdowns of age, gender, race, and residency provide an excellent
starting point for discussing the sample in greater detail. Furthermore, an analysis of this
breakdown helps to ensure that my sample matches the target population, and highlights
the accuracy of the study. The average subject was a 15 year old African American male
and D.C. native. The following sections will provide a more thorough analysis of the
students who participated in the 2009 Youth Survey.

**Age and Gender**

The spectrum of ages among the two programs and three program sites was
anywhere between 10 and 25, with a median age of 15 years. This fits the focus of both
programs on teen participants very well. A breakdown of youth ages by program and site can be seen below in Table 5.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages:</th>
<th>A.B.L.E.</th>
<th>WBL N.W.</th>
<th>WBL S.E.</th>
<th>Total Frequency</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 13 yrs old</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – 16 yrs old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 25 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

The gender breakdown was 71% boys to 29% girls. Given that most participants at WBL in particular are male, this ratio matches my population.

**Ethnicity**

Both WBL and A.B.L.E. serve predominantly African-American and minority youth, and my sample reflected this make-up as well. The 2009 Youth Survey accurately captured the diverse ethnic spectrum of the after-school programs, with the following breakdown: 62.7% Black, 19.6% Latino, 3.9% Asian, 3.9% White, 7.8% mixed-race, with 2% declining self-identification.

**Residency**

Over 94% of the surveyed youth in my sample reported to be U.S. citizens, with nearly 81% reporting to have grown up in D.C. In addition, students from at least 25 different schools were represented in this sample, including two colleges, three parochial, ten public, nine public charters, and one private school.
This diverse group presents an interesting study. Having covered the demographic basics, I would now like to turn my attention to how their participation in after-school arts programming can be beneficial in terms of contributing to civic education and community involvement.

**Arts Participation Matters**

My first hypothesis dealt with participants’ perception of the importance of maintaining involvement in their communities:

- **H₁**: Youth who participate in after-school art programs think it is important to take part in community affairs.
- **H₀**: Youth who participate in after-school art programs will not consider community involvement to be important.

The perception that young minority youth in particular are dismissive of or not interested in community and positive social values does not reflect reality. In fact, over 94% of surveyed participants at WBL and A.B.L.E. reported that they viewed community involvement as at least somewhat important, and approximately 58% reported that it is very important to contribute on a community level. In addition, 66% of surveyed students felt that participating in arts workshops such as those offered at their respective programs leads to community involvement.¹⁰

¹⁰ In responding to Q10, *Do you think participating in arts workshops like [your program] gets you more involved in your community*, on the survey, 28% reported that they did not feel participation led to greater involvement, while 6% were uncertain of the connection.
While these findings are very positive and do seem to support the initial hypothesis, it is important to view these numbers constructively and not rely on the response rate alone, as it could be that students merely chose to answer in a way that they perceived to be socially expedient. A better measure of the influence of participation on how youth view the relative importance of being involved in their communities is to see if responses shift depending on length of attendance, and depending on the types of activities they are engaged in, which I undertake in the next section in exploring related hypotheses.

Length of Attendance Matters

Two of my main five study hypotheses were directly linked to how length of participation in an after-school arts program would impact other factors, community involvement in particular. Table 5.2 below outlines the frequency of attendance for all programs combined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 6 months</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or more</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

The average reported attendance rate was about 2.3 years at WBL S.E., followed by A.B.L.E. averaging 2 years, and WBL N.W. averaging 1.1 years. To restate my hypotheses addressing the impact of program attendance:

H₂: Participation in after-school art programs is positively correlated with a greater tendency to view community involvement as important.
H₀: Length of participation in after-school arts programs is not correlated with attitudes regarding community involvement overall.

H₃: Longer participation in after-school art programs is positively correlated with increased community involvement.

H₀: Length of participation in after-school arts programs is not correlated with youth’s levels of community involvement.

H₄: Social or subject motivated interest for attending after-school programs is positively correlated with longer and more active attendance.

H₀: Social or subject motivated interest for attendance is not positively correlated with longer or more active attendance.

H₅: Social or subject motivated interest for attending after-school art program is positively correlated with greater identification with the program as a meaningful community.

H₀: Social or subject motivated interest for attendance is not correlated with identification with the program as a meaningful community.

Findings based on survey data illuminate some interesting trends, and although in some cases they fall short of statistical significance given the small sample size, they do suggest that participation in after-school arts programming makes a difference. As measured by length of attendance, participation in WBL and A.B.L.E. teen programs correlates positively with several of the variables tested. Those who attend the workshops
longer are more likely to identify community as their neighborhood as well as their program (as opposed to just their friends and family). They also tend to be those who value learning and increasing their skill set within their favorite workshop. However, contrary to H4, social or course motivated interest for attending after-school programs, such as “my friends told me to come,” do not correlate with longer attendance.

Collapsing data from the survey provided a way to gauge both the trends and the statistical significance of the results when running crosstabulations in SPSS. The results of that analysis appear below in Tables 5.3 & 5.4:

Table 5.3: Length of Attendance vs. Importance of Community Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Helping people in your community/neighborhood is important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 6 months</td>
<td>40% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>47% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or more</td>
<td>38% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 51
χ2 level of statistical significance p = .870

Table 5.4: Length of Attendance vs. Perception of Arts-Community Involvement Connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Participating in arts workshops leads to community involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 6 months</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>37.5% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or more</td>
<td>33% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 50
χ2 level of statistical significance p = .927

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

Although the chi-square value does not indicate this correlation to be statistically significant, both tables display a trend implying that attendance alone, at any level, raises the likelihood that participation in community affairs will be viewed as important. This is exhibited by much higher percentages in all the “yes” category cells in the tables above, meaning that a higher ratio of attending youth feel that community involvement is important or that they feel participating in these programs leads to greater community
involvement. However, since length of participation does not seem to affect these attitudes in a statistically significant way, these results raise the question of how length of attendance impacts participation in the programs.

Length of attendance however does correlate quite strongly with another independent variable, that which linked sustained participation with engaging in the arts process directly. When asked about favorite workshops or aspects of their respective programs, active learning was far from the most popular option chosen. However this level of engaged interest was very highly correlated with length of attendance, meaning that those students who attended for longer periods of time were more likely to say that they like to attend because they get to learn a lot about a particular skill or type of art (See Table 5.5 below). In order to address the small sample size, attendance categories were collapsed into those that have attended for less than a year, and those that have attended for longer than a year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Active Learning</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>74% (23)</td>
<td>26% (8)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 year</td>
<td>47.6% (10)</td>
<td>52.4% (11)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 50
χ² level of statistical significance p = .05

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

There is nearly a five-point difference for longer attendance among those that attended because they enjoyed engaging in active learning. There is a marked difference between
short-term and long-term attendees on this spectrum, and it indicates that active learning may engender longer attendance.

Furthermore, none of the other seemingly more popular options, such as “I like the subject”, or “I get to hang out with people I like,” elicited as direct of a connection to sustained attendance, pointing to the very special role these programs serve in the lives of their participants. This relationship will be discussed at greater length in the analysis of the qualitative data in the next chapter. Controlling for age, gender, and exposure to civics curricula had no impact on results overall, indicating that variables being tested and not outside factors which contributed to these trends.

Having established a tenuous connection between program attendance and positive attitudes towards community participation, it is time to turn attention towards how length of participation affects levels of community involvement for participating youth. In order to test the hypothesis that length of attendance impacts community involvement, we should see a marked distinction between those youth who have recently begun attending after-school arts programs, and those that have been attending for some time. To get a sense of community involvement for youth in these two programs it is first imperative to see how they themselves define community.
Meaning of Community

This section will address the key question of how youth in after-school arts programs view community involvement. Given the problems with school settings in constituting communities, I hypothesize that,

H₀: Youth definitions of community will not favor schools, but instead name neighborhoods, friends, family, and their respective programs to define community.

H₁: Youth definitions of community will favor schools in defining community.

The following question on the 2009 Youth Survey was used to gauge how the sample population perceived “their community,” Q6. What does community mean to you? Table 5.6 below displays the distribution of replies:

Table 5.6: Reported Meaning of Community for Youth Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does community mean to you?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Else</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results
It is important to note that nearly half (46.2%) of students surveyed reported that they felt their respective after-school arts program constituted a community onto itself. One participant from WBL N.W. had this to say regarding the link between community involvement and arts participation: “Within [a] workshop like WBL in a community, you begin to participate [in] things that make the community the way it is.” This was consistent with the messages communicated by staff and program directors, both by way of printed and informational materials as well as from one-on-one conversations and interviews.\(^{11}\)

It is quite natural that the top three most frequent responses defining community were neighborhood (73%), family (58%) and friends (54%), as seen in Table 5.6. As hypothesized, schools are the least frequent response (38%), given the limitations and difficulties of sustaining positive experiences in public schools that were discussed in Chapter 2, this is as expected. Other definitions of community offered up by respondents themselves included more expansive characterizations, such as “my society,” “cool, peaceful people,” and “everybody who contributes things.”

When broken down according to length of program attendance, very favorable trends came to light. As seen in Tables 5.7 & 5.8 below, longer attendance correlates highly with identifying one’s community in a particular way.

---

\(^{11}\) See Appendix C for examples of informational materials.
Table 5.7 & 5.8: Length of Attendance vs. Meaning of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Community means Neighborhood</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>35.3% (11)</td>
<td>64.5% (20)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 year</td>
<td>14.3% (3)</td>
<td>85.7% (18)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² level of statistical significance p = .09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Attendance</th>
<th>Community means Program</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>61% (19)</td>
<td>39% (12)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 year</td>
<td>43% (9)</td>
<td>57% (12)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² level of statistical significance p = .19

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

As the numbers above demonstrate, youths who have participated in after-school arts programming for longer than 1 year are much more likely to identify their community as that of either their neighborhood or program, and given that they were given the option to choose more than one definition dimension, possibly both. Furthermore these findings reflect trends which approach statistical significance (at least for the neighborhood measure). Both of these ‘meaning of community’ dimensions correlated favorably with perceived importance of community involvement as well, providing a direct link between the significance of longer attendance and community involvement.

Confirming the Arts Connection

In order to fully assess students’ involvement, I needed to understand their social worlds, and what types of experiences they had outside of school. There were several questions on the survey which specifically addressed how these teens spent their after-school hours when not attending programming at either WBL or A.B.L.E. Knowing that
youth who are engaged by multiple activities tend to be far more active in a lot of different ways, including civically, I was curious about the breakdown of after-school activities. Only nine (17%) mentioned attending other after-school programs or centers, not surprising given that programming at A.B.L.E. and WBL S.E. is offered five times a week, four times a week at WBL N.W. We can safely assume that any other specific extracurricular activities that the youth engage in encompass the majority of their free time, and thus tell an important story. Table 5.9 provides a breakdown of these activities, according to their answers for Q5. 

What other after-school stuff do you spend time on besides [this program], on the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanging out</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chores</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/dance</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results.
(Note – results do not add up to 100% as participants could choose more than one)

On average, youths reported participation in at least two after-school activities from the list above. According to Table 5.9, 46.2% participants engage in arts related activities in their spare time, in addition to the arts programming offered by their community arts programs. Moreover, the results of a favorable factor analysis of active pursuits, such as sports, music, dance, and making art, led me to combine these activities because this loaded strongly on a single factor, representing a distinct dimension of after-
school activity. This new combined variable was used to test against two of my main dependent variables – the importance of community involvement and the link between arts participation and community involvement. Although failing to achieve statistical significance, the positive trends connecting these variables are quite apparent as seen in Table 5.10, and imply that active after-school pursuits correlate favorably with the dependent variables in question. Only the arts participation involvement test is displayed, but both variables presented similar results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating in arts workshops leads to community involvement</th>
<th>Active After-school</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53% (9)</td>
<td>47% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42% (14)</td>
<td>58% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 50
χ² level of statistical significance p = .48

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

In light of the full spectrum of thoughtful answers, it was interesting to see how students would respond to the open-ended survey question which solicited their personal contribution(s) to their community. Based on coded responses to survey Q8, I was able to break down types of participation into distinct community involvement activities. Results of this breakdown of either past or future contributions can be seen below in Tables 5.11 & 5.12:
Table 5.11: How do you contribute to your community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trash/Clean-up</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service/Charity</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Specific</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results

Unfortunately, because of the small sample size, and the fact that most responders fell into the “1 activity” pool (over 67% of respondents), correlations between level of involvement and other variables did not yield fruitful results. In addition, some of these activities were in fact part of the programming at the arts centers. The gender-based programming at WBL S.E. for boys, the *Brotherhood*, includes group community service activities, such as planting bushes in the neighborhood and engaging in other community beautification projects. Clean-up of the program centers and of mentoring younger participants were also frequently mentioned by youth in identifying direct ways they contribute to their communities. Overall, favorable trends were certainly observed when

Table 5.12: Community Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of activities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 activity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more activities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2009 Youth Survey Results
dealing with free-time after-school activities as related to length of program attendance and community involvement.

**Pilot Study Limitations**

Several limitations of this pilot study have already been discussed, such as the small sample size and self-reported results. However, one which has not yet been mentioned is how community after-school programs were selected for this study. Given that the research design called for substantial field research, coupled with the difficulty of engaging busy staff whose first priority was that of managing programs for the youth involved, and other scheduling limitations such as cancelled classes and special events, my decisions centered on what was both manageable and realistic within the time constraints of the project. The process for selecting after-school art programs for this study was convenience based and not nearly as deliberative as would befit a larger study with greater research staff, funds, and criteria.\(^\text{12}\)

Although my sample was overall representative of the population of my case study subject groups, it nevertheless was often too small to provide statistically significant exploration of the relationships my hypotheses aimed to uncover. Given the small populations of the case study groups, future research exploration of the relationship between arts and civic engagement would do well to encompass many more groups under

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\(^{12}\) *Lessons Learned from the National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project: Longitudinal Study of a Canadian After-School Program* by Wright et al. (2006) presents an excellent review of case selection, which given sufficient time and staff I would recommend utilizing in the future.
one study. In addition, such connections could prove fruitful in other ways as well. Many interesting findings were provided by the 2009 Youth Survey, however not as many direct connections as was originally anticipated.

Perhaps another lesson here is that a quantitative approach is not the best method in this case given small population samples and the need to protect young participants. Given human subjects stipulations governing minors, care must be taken that they are not coerced into participating and the risk is even higher given that most participants in urban programs are also minorities who are more likely to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous researchers. In my case, utilizing unobtrusive observations, and ensuring that youth never felt pressured to participate allowed me to steer clear of this danger.
Chapter 6: Analysis By Narrative

Introduction

In chapter 5 I laid out some of the more compelling quantitative findings from the 2009 Youth Survey conducted at A.B.L.E., WBL N.W. and WBL S.E. In this chapter the focus rests entirely on the qualitative information gathered from ethnographic observations, interviews and discussions with participants, staff instructors, and site directors of the respective programs. In the following sections the creation of sustained community involvement will be discussed in light of the aims and techniques of positive youth development. Both WBL and A.B.L.E. provide safe spaces which function as ‘third spaces’ for youth, where power dynamics shift from the way in which youth typically interact with adults at school or home (Oldenburg 1991). The importance of creative expression and arts participation in providing for this shift is contextualized in light of special events, opportunities, and leadership building which these programs successfully foster for their young participants.

Observation Data – Capturing Positive Social Values

Sometimes teens can be very mean to one another, and it's the exact opposite here. Everybody is really supportive...There wasn't an organization like this when I was growing up. And the kids connect in their element! And then they connect on so many other levels.

– Paige Mandel, Site director for WBL N.W.
In Chapter 3, I noted 15 indicators of Positive Youth Development, as set out by Catalano et al., (2004). These indicators were used to evaluate programs which promoted Positive Youth Development, however I found that they were also quite useful as a rubric for coding ethnographic observations gathered at WBL and A.B.L.E. workshops. A tally of the observations can be seen in Appendix D. Using this rubric was helpful in evaluating the relative success of each program site in fostering a sense of community, self-determination, behavioral, cognitive, emotional and social competence, a positive outlook on the future, and positive social values overall.

Taking into account the speech and actions of instructors and participants, observations were coded for instances of both positive and negative interactions or events. A positive instance was categorized by a single action or utterance, such as an instructor saying: “What game is there in being negative? You gotta be positive!” A negative instance could be categorized by an occasion where a student said “Why they gotta join us?” when students who do not normally attend the workshop were present. If a negative instance was followed by a socially positive response, the event would receive one tally for each category. The following breakdown was observed per site: 91% positive interactions at WBL N.W., 83% positive interactions at WBL S.E., and 67% positive interactions at A.B.L.E.

13 After all notes were transcribed, roughly ten pages for WBL N.W., five pages for WBL S.E. and seventeen pages for A.B.L.E., the observations were coded. The method I employed was to go through each set three times over the course of several days to ensure reliability of coding, and that any ambiguous cases were coded in the same manner. Ideally, coding reliability would be maintained by more than one coder, however in this pilot study I did not have the luxury of a research assistant.
There are several possible reasons for the differences which were observed between the program sites. The A.B.L.E. program is the youngest of the three by far, both in terms of population as well as how long the program itself has been running. Programming there is still in the process of being developed, so students have not yet grown accustomed to what the program entails. Additionally, although there is no binding participation contract at A.B.L.E. as there is at WBL, there is nevertheless the feeling that youth feel more compelled to attend than not. This was evident in that parents and guardians generally dropped off and/or picked up the students from the program, whereas at both WBL sites students came of their own accord. This was also expressed in that there were far more instances of students acting out and of various behavioral issues at A.B.L.E. than at either of the WBL sites. This is not to say that these types of challenges are not encountered at other sites but only that there is a different situational context for participants at each and every program. Additionally, it is quite possible that given smaller space and larger number of visits to A.B.L.E., I happened to observe more instances of negative behaviors, at WBL same kinds of behaviors might have been occurring out of my sight. In addition, different sites posed different challenges for the mentors and instructors as well.
Guided Support: A Safe Space

One of our students said the other day, it's not just that I love what I'm doing here, but it's that I have a place to go. He didn't have a place to go before (Mandel 2009, personal interview).

One of the defining features of alternative after-school programs is that they provide young people, particularly those who are at risk and living in high crime urban areas with few opportunities, with a safe place to be. Although very few students identified this as a direct need, nearly every staff member saw this component as an integral service provided by each center. Most instructors also saw their role as rising to the occasion to support youth on a number of levels. Paige Mandel, the N.W. site director and self-described youth development staff member for WBL discussed how throughout daily conversations with participants,

I learn where they’re at with school, and their life and what they're going through, and figure out what they need and how we can help support that. Whether it's college prep, GED prep, connection with a social worker, things going on at home, death in the family, making sure we're supportive not just in their art, but also outside, at home, in academics… (Mandel 2009, personal interview).

14 I am hesitant to make too much of this discrepancy, other than the fact that perhaps youth felt expected to answer that they chose to attend because of a positive reason (I liked the classes), than a negative reason (there was nothing else to do). A limitation of the survey design also did not provide for a distinct “I needed a safe place to be” option.
Mentoring relationships within these programs develop organically. As Ms. Mandel explains, she doesn’t have organized office hours, so any guiding conversations with youth occur spontaneously during the course of the workshop session.

Taking care of students and supporting their needs is an integral part of any program which has a core positive youth development focus. At A.B.L.E., all instructors greet and check in with each student as they arrive and sign in for that afternoon’s activities. Providing nutritious snacks, talking with parents (this doesn’t happen as much at WBL given that the kids for the most part are older), and discussing opportunities for engagement are all elements which sustain and nurture the community of staff and students.

In exploring the notion of third places, Ray Oldenburg asserts that “we enhance most experiences in these two ways – by increasing the directness of our involvement in an activity and by increasing our social involvement” (Oldenburg 1991, p. 47). WBL and A.B.L.E. provide their students with a sort of third place, where they are able to be themselves, connect with their peers, and be accepted in a welcoming, nurturing environment which is not structured in the way that school and home often are. This was particularly evident at WBL N.W., where the open one-room activity area is shared equally by chess players, break-dancers, and graffiti writers alike. However, WBL S.E. had many of the same elements as well, where youth who just happened to be coming down to the Rec Center interacted in the same space as that of WBL participants. The focus on artistic and creative self-expression is key because creativity is often stifled or not recognized
positively in the classroom setting, yet another way which such programs allow for an alternative ‘third place.’

Providing opportunities for self expression is invaluable in these contexts precisely because it shifts the customary power dynamics in the interactions between youth and adults. Kristian Whipple, the art director of the A.B.L.E. program described it this way:

In working with youth, if I can give them an experience that makes them feel like they've got some power over what they're doing, and a way to express themselves and potentially have economic output, then I think that opens up the floodgates to be able to do character education (Whipple 2009).

Character education can be seen as a component of civic education, and as I argue, this can occur within arts programming as well as programs which are built solely for the purpose of instilling ‘good character’. Ultimately of course, it is about guiding positive life choices, but to do so in a way which does not take away from the engaging and youth-oriented programming. The danger, as one of the WBL N.W. instructors pointed out, “being too preachy” runs the risk of driving the audience away in presenting information in a way that would create a sense of the issue being forced upon youth who attend for the purpose of creating art, not to get lectured.

The gender-based programs provided at WBL S.E. and A.B.L.E. focus on making positive choices without lecturing youth while simultaneously providing a space for constructive dialogue to take place. For instance at A.B.L.E.’s Love Supreme workshop for teen girls, topics surrounding body image and popular perceptions of beauty are discussed in the context of contemporary art portraits at a current museum exhibit. The
instructor asked each of the five girls present to pick one portrait they were particularly taken with from the exhibit, using a photo book from the exhibit as a guide. Each girl chose a different portrait and discussed her take on what she felt the photographer wanted to convey by positioning her model in a particular way (a distant scenic nude versus a harsh realistic close-up), and whether she felt the picture and the woman portrayed within was beautiful. As the instructor expressed,

> It was a surprise to me that students had so many things to say…We discussed the idea of ‘what is beautiful’ and how photographers communicate their idea of ‘beauty’. They connected this to their daily lives and how people judged others based on appearances. The conclusion was that we are all beautiful in ways beyond just the physical, and that we needed to resist judging people, learn to appreciate what is beautiful about each person (Chan 2009, personal interview).

In this case, instead of giving a one-sided sermon encompassing the idea that beauty means different things, the instructor led a discussion which allowed the girls to be honest about what they liked and disliked about the art as much as about socially prescribed norms of female beauty and sexuality.

In a casual conversation at one WBL N.W. graffiti session, the discussion of a recent celebrity scandal provided a natural opportunity for instructors to discuss topics of dating violence, safe sex and making responsible choices with the teen boys in attendance. Whenever instances of swearing or name-calling occurred, I witnessed the instructors at WBL deftly walk the line between censoring speech and fostering an atmosphere of respect for all students. In one particular instance, an instructor challenged students directly as
peers, rather than a controlling authority by saying “I’m not big on censorship, but still you can’t call someone [   ].” In this way, character education is a subtle target rather than an overt goal, and because it is approached holistically, recognizing and respecting the autonomy of the students, the youth are far more receptive. When instructors discuss needing to address all their students’ needs, providing guidance towards a sense of respectability and responsible behavior is one of them. Whether dealing with how students present themselves in terms of skills and employability, or fostering a strong sense of self-worth, ensuring that students feel safe and valued as individuals is the first step.

Field Trips: Teaching Moments

Field trips encompass a significant portion of the program for A.B.L.E.’s Black, Brown and White in the ‘Chocolate’ City: Being a Teenager in the Nation’s Capitol workshop, or BBW for short. I accompanied the group on two such particular excursions. Dr. Dwayne Williams takes the students out to local museums and historical districts to do photography projects, acting as the driver, chaperone and instructor. One of the trips involved taking the students down to Connecticut Avenue in Dupont Circle, a bustling shopping district to digitally capture students’ perceptions of race. Students were instructed to take four photos, one of themselves, and one each of a person, place or thing that fit their definition of “whiteness.” Later the students were instructed to write mini-essays on the significance of each. A.B.L.E. students seemed to relish the exercise, despite the bitterly cold weather that day.
On another trip, a small group of students viewed the Roads to Freedom exhibit of black and white photography of the civil rights era at the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center, as seen below in Figure 6.1. On this trip, discussions regarding civil rights history followed the exhibit, and students were engaged in an intense discussion of geographical locations and their importance for the struggle for civil rights in the 1960’s, and why it was significant that most of the pictures were taken in the Southern states.

Figure 6.1: A.B.L.E. students and volunteers at Road to Freedom exhibit

These trips help foster civic awareness as students are challenged by being taken out of their comfort zones and “by interacting with people and places around them that they are familiar with as well as not familiar with” (Chan 2009). In this way, students are presented with novel experiences which challenge their predisposed notions, instill an appreciation of where they come from, and encourage them to reflect on their surroundings in ways they may not have been made to reflect upon before. The overall effect of such experiences
provides an avenue for engaging students in the local history of the city and neighborhoods they call home, linking these experiences back to what community means and entails.

**Special events: A Community Showcase**

*Figure 6.2: Marvin Coote and student at A.B.L.E.'s Women We Love showcase*

*Figure 6.3: Student works from A.B.L.E. showcase*

Photos by the author
Particularly potent in displaying the link between the after-school program and the community were special exhibition events which provided opportunities for students to showcase their work to their peers, as well as family members and the community at large. As pointed out by McLaughlin in *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development*, “These culminating events and public displays are more than important goals and rewards for youth. They also provide opportunities for youth and adults in their community to see each other in new ways” (2000, p. 13). The art director and photography instructor at A.B.L.E. echoed this precisely when he spoke about one of the photography shows as an example of when he witnessed a glimpse of social consciousness raising that occurred during the course of the program:

The production that came out of the A.B.L.E. show from December when students were able to see their final presentations, and then their parents joined them for that. It was a different look that I don't [think is] experienced a lot… Those experiences are when you can see the differences in how they're able to interact because they have something they're able to show, something that they're really proud of. I think those things are interesting barometers (Whipple 2009, personal interview).

I was present at two special events at A.B.L.E., both art openings at the organization’s ArtSpace designed to showcase students’ photographic and literary works, including the show which Kristian Whipple referred to above. Given NCFC’s small, intimate community and exhibition space, the events had the feel of a family gathering, complete with a chicken and rice buffet dinner.
At WBL I participated in one special event, the Heart Break Ball, a breakdancing dance-off battle. The Heart Break Ball brought together several hundred teens from all over the city, as well as several family members and younger siblings. The event played the role of an organization fundraiser as well as a skills showcase, with an exhibition of artwork by Cory Stowers’ Writers Bench (graffiti) students. Numerous tag-team breakdancing battles took place on stage and in the crowd, complete with DJ’s, MC’s, judges and an enthusiastic audience.

Figure 6.4 & 6.5: Heart Break Ball

Figure 6.6: Tag-Team Battle

Photos by the author
One other important role that such special events play is that they provide ways for students to take on greater leadership roles in helping put the events together. At A.B.L.E., different students curate the exhibitions, while at WBL, students help with art design, set-up and concession sales. WBL instructors also see special events as opportunities for students, as Paige Mandel points out,

> We always create different environments for students to actually get out there and do something in the community, whether it's our b-boy battles or we're creating a public mural, or a chess tournament. Different events that the students create, allow the community to come together (Mandel 2009).

Bum Rush the Boards, WBL’s annual hip hop chess tournament, is another special event which fosters community connection and involvement. This year’s event occurred on April 18th 2009 with sponsorship from the D.C. Commission on the Arts & Humanities, District of Columbia Parks and Recreation, and the D.C. Children & Youth Investment Trust Corporation. It was the 4th iteration since its inception in 2006 “to promote the idea to the hip-hop generation of overcoming through strategic struggle” (*Words Beats & Life, Inc.* 2009). The event is put on with a great deal of hands-on assistance from students, who also participate in making videos to promote WBL’s biggest event. Sustaining that immediate community through harnessing the leadership potential of their own students, these programs build lasting civic connections which are powerful mechanisms of channeling artistic self-expression for city-wide impact.

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15 Unfortunately, due to deadline constraints, I was unable to attend this event.
16 Called War and Piece, the video was produced by the WBL Urban Arts Academy on site at Benning Park, and can be seen here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XODIYSn1WZI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XODIYSn1WZI).
Leadership Qualities: Sustaining Community Involvement


Hip-Hop leadership, as was pointed out in Chapter 3, is not a misnomer, and this movement has flourished within the youth development work found locally in Washington D.C. WBL is just one member within this movement, as exemplified by several notable accomplishments. As Milbrey McLaughlin pointed out in *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development*, “Club programs that appeal to youth similarly offer an assortment of focused, tightly organized activities that may vary according to the interests of youth” (2000, p. 10). At both programs, staff and instructors work to ensure that community impact is one of those interests, and to encourage and channel that interest most effectively. As Cory Stowers, the graffiti-writing instructor at WBL points out,

> [Graffiti] has a negative connotation to it in the general public, and so one of the things that I really try and emphasize with the kids that I work with is a greater appreciation for community and community service. So through what you love to do, you can become a contributing member of the community as opposed to being a detrimental one (Stowers 2009, personal interview).

He goes on to explain that part of community service is the whitewashing of inappropriately placed graffiti as well as the creation of new murals. Mr. Stowers also speaks about teaching “civic-minded graffiti writers,” a somewhat paradoxical but not altogether fanciful notion of street artists who value and appreciate local history and
architecture. In practice, this means that writers in this group are strongly discouraged from putting up unsolicited work illegally in the areas surrounding the centers, or any off-site events. Additionally, it is about providing young writers with the chance to improve in a structured, supportive environment so they are less tempted to test their skills out on the street, and to respect both private property and public architecture:

What I'm teaching them rather, while it could be looked at something that could be harmful to a responsible young person's life, it actually is an empowering piece. Because I don't seek to create new writers from scratch, the kids that come here were already doing it (Stowers 2009).

In this way, WBL provides local would-be taggers with a positive outlet. Through doing design work, young artists are also encouraged to transform their talents into marketable skills and get paid for creating their art, rather than getting arrested for it.\footnote{The DC Mural Initiative is another program that provides youth with opportunities to express their art in publically recognized and sanctioned ways. Sanctioned by D.C. City Council, the Midnight Forum partners with youth to paint graffiti-inspired murals during the summer. The Midnight Forum is a next-door neighbor of the A.B.L.E. program and holds hip hop art and leadership classes in the ArtSpace at NCFC. (The Midnight Forum: Empowering Youth Through Hip-Hop 2007).}

By fostering this civic-minded approach, WBL promotes graffiti art in positive ways that are socially acceptable, thereby working to remove the stigma attached to this popular art-form and the youth who create it. Many of the murals painted at Benning Park, the WBL S.E. site, were done by Cory Stower's group as a thank you for the entire Benning Park community. The organization also fosters and maintains a good-neighbor relationship with the neighborhood through positive contributions to the Rec Center. As Zach Mason, another WBL instructor notes, “they're already involved very much with their
community and it's about giving them a space to do constructive things” (Mason 2009, personal interview).

**WBL Student Ambassadors**

Beyond murals, WBL has an entire program devoted to channeling constructive community involvement which fosters students with high artistic and leadership skills to become a voice for the community. The Student Ambassador Program provides students with opportunities to speak at D.C. city council meetings and mentors them in creating their own business plans and public speaking; fostering advocacy skills for whatever they may be passionate about. Several WBL students, particularly from Benning Park, have become outspoken advocates on issues of school transportation, in advocating for D.C. to provide free Metro access for students so they are not saddled with travel expenses just to go to school (Leonie 2009). For example, students have lobbied city council for funding to fix the heating and air-conditioning system at Benning Park Recreation Center and address other needs of the center.

The Delta Experience at WBL builds on advances made in the Student Ambassador Program to provide students with opportunities to travel nationally to another program on an exchange basis and represent their community at large. Program stipulations require participants to curate a professional show documenting their experience upon completion of this exchange (Deane 2009). Only five to ten students a year participate in this program, but become powerful role models and mentors to other participants as well, exhibiting civic skills at the highest level.
The arts component however remains an essential step towards such traditional civic engagement experiences. It is not enough for students to exhibit leadership qualities, they must also prove themselves to be artistically engaged. Furthermore, it is the art itself as well as an affinity for hip hop components of the curriculum which entice students to join. Finally, it is the level of civic engagement that these programs are able to encourage while utilizing arts participation is what makes these particular programs so special.

Conclusion

He had never really thought of doing art as a career, had no inclination to go to college, and was painfully shy. And he's blossomed. Just in a year. He was able to go out and see the community and see what that has to offer, and his world got bigger. I keep telling the kids, once you make it, don't forget about the area that nurtured you and fostered this.

– Beth Leonie, volunteer teaching assistant at WBL S.E.

It is the job of communities and the adults within them to prepare the younger generation for joining the adult world. In urban areas where there are few outlets and even fewer opportunities for positive futures, youth are at risk for severe scholastic and civic disengagement and lack of faith in their own ability to succeed. Zach Mason, the chess instructor at WBL noted that “Kids who participate in our program are more at risk and they need these skills.” As Catalano et al. point out,
Belief in the future is the internalization of hope and optimism about possible outcomes. This construct is linked to studies on long-range goal setting, belief in higher education, and beliefs that support employment or work values (2004, p. 107).

All these aspects are pushed by the committed staff at A.B.L.E. and WBL, and are just as integral to their mission as the opportunities they provide for students’ artistic expression.

**Figure 6.7: “Support Values Success Inspire Lead” sign at A.B.L.E.**

Whether through WBL’s Student Ambassador Program, or through engaging students to curate photo exhibitions for the entire A.B.L.E. community, opportunities for personal, social, and civic engagement are provided as a whole package at both of these after-school community art programs as they push their students to express themselves, to achieve, and to give back.

In discussing the value of third places where personal expression is valued and fostered, Oldenburg notes that alas,
The latitude for spirited expression in modern society is lessened. People are made nervous by it. The public pays no attention to the young man walking along with a radio blaring near his ear nowadays, but let him sing – let him make his own music – and they're apt to frown at him (Oldenburg 1991, p. 59).

As programs like WBL and A.B.L.E. encourage youth to make their own music, they are fostering empowering principles of positive youth development, providing youth with a reason to connect, to sustain, and nurture their own talents as well as direct contributions to their communities, in effect teaching them active citizenship via personal expression.
Chapter 7: Alternative Engagement

Civic Literacy in the Community

There are many different kinds of literacies, A.B.L.E. works to foster literacy in the traditional sense of reading, writing and critical thinking. WBL works to foster literacy in terms of arts and business, with a smaller emphasis on the R&R. However, both set the foundation for civic literacy where the importance of debate, dialogue and mutual respect are paramount. At A.B.L.E. in particular, literacy is fostered by the utilization of Wendy Ewald's Literacy Through Photography program (LTP). This is just one way in which arts experience is central to teaching across curricula and embeds students within their communities. The development of an understanding of the significance of this experience occurs through journaling and dialogue.

Dialogue forms the basis of functioning democracy, in that dialogue is necessary for the development an awareness and an understanding of others’ differences, as well as the ability to reach common ground despite those differences. More than anything, “communication skills are essential for effective civic participation. Speech, argument, and persuasive communication are all important elements of democratic literacy” (Reecher 1997). These elements are harnessed for the cause of community development on the individual level within WBL and A.B.I.E. programming. The experience that youth receive at these community sites provide them with building blocks for continued of
successful citizen development. They do so in an environment which oftentimes is hostile
towards youth in many ways.\footnote{For more on the topic of perception of youth in public space, see Gill Valentine (1999; 2004), Caitlin Cahill (2002), Karen Malone (2002), Mats Lieberg (2006), and Tatyana Varshavsky (2009, unpublished).}

Youth are shunned from public places, and it is hard for them to navigate civic
landscapes (i.e. local, state, and national government channels) because although those
channels pay lip service to their involvement, youth are seldom addressed in ways which
effectively communicate how involvement with or action on government bureaucracies
relate to their everyday lives. Art programs can integrate youth back into their
communities and provide a means to make positive contributions that they can take pride
in. These programs create urban sanctuaries for their participants, in the words of Milbrey
McLaughlin (1994). Staff at WBL and A.B.L.E. work to create “personalized
environments” that can function as “familial settings and contexts for hope,” while
providing youth with accessible role models (Reeher 1997), thereby setting the tone for
youth involvement as something that is both feasible and desirable. Youth empowerment
is fostered through the lens of positive youth development, outlined in earlier chapters. It
also occurs at least in part through both programs’ intimate links with hip hop culture,
something with which students identify strongly.
The Hip Hop Connection

The growing pedagogical influence of hip hop is illustrated by the increasing use of hip hop and graffiti as teaching tools. This is occurring everywhere from the District of Columbia (Beckman 2008) to Toronto, Canada (Siad 2007) and Birmingham in the U.K (Deane 2008). Even public libraries, considered to be generally conservative institutions, have hosted events to highlight legitimate applications of graffiti as an art form (Denver Public Library: Teens 2009). Organizations like the International Association for Hip Hop Education (IAHHE) have been proliferating and spreading the message that hip hop can be a positive educational force since the 1990’s. In a recent IAHHE effort, hip hop literacy is being used to “teach children verbal skills, self-esteem and music history” at an after-school program at Payne Elementary in Southeast D.C. (Beckman 2008). IAHHE has been developing curricula based around utilization of hip hop culture as a powerful teaching tool in the classroom (International Association for Hip Hop Education 2008).

However, IAHHE is not the first, nor the last to make this connection. The New York based Hip-Hop Association, or H2A, has a mission to:

Facilitate critical thinking, foster constructive social change and unity to instill tolerance, civic participation, social reform, and economic sustainability, while advancing Hip-Hop’s culture through innovative programming (Hip-Hop Association 2008, emphasis added).

Many well-known and respected hip hop performers and producers, such as Def Jam record label founder Russel Simmons, and Chuck D of Public Enemy fame, started
organizations in the mid 1990’s to encourage positive expression, civic involvement and youth empowerment through hip hop. The avenues by which such civic-minded ventures proliferate are limited only by the imagination. The art forms’ do-it-yourself or DIY roots have propelled many of those involved with the culture seek to actively perpetuate it, by engaging and encouraging youth, particularly minority and urban youth, to discover greater possibilities for themselves and their communities, transcending their limiting circumstances.

It was my personal interest in graffiti art and civic education which inspired me to get involved with these programs, and to take on this pilot project. However, until I was taken under the wing of WBL, I had a little more than a cursory knowledge of hip hop influences and connections. As I became a temporary member of the WBL family I eagerly learned a great deal about hip hop and the movement through my research. On the way, I also learned a great deal about the youth at these programs, and confirmed my main research question regarding the potential of arts programming to be a vehicle for the formation of civic identity.

Arts Participation: A Civic Engagement Tool

Art, particularly on the local community level, is frequently employed towards social justice aims, and it is not much of a conscious leap from social justice to civic

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19 WBL’s Bum Rush the Boards Hip Hop Chess Tournament takes its name from Public Enemy’s 1987 debut album, Yo! Bum Rush the Show (Stowers 2009).
engagement. In some ways, the two are irrevocably intertwined. Marie Moll-Amego at the Latin American Youth Center is just one of many passionate community youth advocates and organizers that look to the integration of arts participation with social justice aims to directly impact on the health of the community:

In engaging more teens, the teen homicide rate can go down [in D.C.]. If more young people are engaged in their communities, then they're less likely to be engaged in things that aren't healthy for them, but engaged in meaningful ways for them. It's a different way of thinking about advocacy or social change (2009, personal interview).

Art is a valuable engagement tool, and has been shown to be in many different ways, whether used as therapy for those who are ill or incarcerated (Cleveland 1992, ; Powell 2005), as an empowerment tool to inspire the those with little authority, as a learning tool to bring back the spark that is lost in traditional methodologies, and as a tool to create cultural capital that brings tangible transformation to downtrodden communities (Goldbard 2006, ; Graves 2005).

My proposal is that in this case art matters by forging community connections, where the seeds of civic engagement take root. Engagement on a community level is not limited to small acts like picking up trash or being respectful to one’s neighbors, but ultimately those lessons can also become the foundation of a constructive dialogue of what it means to be a positive member of one’s society. Arts participation also provides a modicum of expression and identity building. By enhancing and allowing this process to take shape, a richer understanding of the greater meaning of that self in relation to one’s
community sets in. A young person’s identity always develops as part of their community context, to echo the familiar refrain of “it takes a village to raise a child.” The significance of special events and performances that provide youth with a chance to show off their skills for this community is great. These events impart norms and meanings regarding participation and direct contribution.

When youthful contributions are appreciated and recognized, the tone for youth involvement is set to a certain extent and appreciated youth will respond in kind. As any youth development worker knows, when young voices are muffled and ignored as they often are in the public school system, apathetic or defeatist attitudes prevail. It is no wonder that those youth who have the experience of being contributing members, through artistic and entrepreneurial means as they are at WBL and A.B.L.E., are more likely to think that participation on a greater scale is important.

Because these programs encompass more than just the arts, it may be difficult to distinguish that it is the contribution of arts participation and not other factors that leads to civic engagement. However, my goal was not to point to the superiority of art and cultural programs in fostering engagement, but that such participation ought to be thought of as another means of getting to the goal of sustaining civic involvement. There are innumerable possibilities to expand upon connections and trends uncovered in this work for a cross-sectional longitudinal study of participation and community involvement from an arts perspective.
Ultimately, the main goal is to foster communities, large or small, where youth see themselves as an integral part and are willing to invest their energies in improving quality of life for others, as well as that of their own futures. There is also another lesson about the importance of steering youth’s own genuine interests in fostering engagement. As the director of the Latin American Youth Center’s Art & Media House points out:

It's creating a space where everyone is valued, and setting a culture of what this space is about. And in a weird way that might not be considered civic engagement, but it's setting a tone for a world, or what we'd like this place to be like (Moll-Amego 2009).

I strongly agree with Moll-Amego that civic engagement takes many forms. For youth the most important forms of this engagement are, as I have tried to show, local and immediate, forming the origin for greater civic involvement down the line.

Closing Recommendations

Harnessing inter-organizational connections is crucial for many of these small community groups on many levels. Solidifying partnerships with governmental or otherwise established and respected entities, such as the DC Youth Initiative/Project-My-Time for WBL, NASA\textsuperscript{20} and the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant

\textsuperscript{20} A.B.L.E. utilized NASA curriculum for its Science for Poets workshop.
Program\textsuperscript{21} for A.B.L.E. and NCFC, is a powerful way to strengthen their ranks and reputation. On another level, fostering stronger connections among these after-school programs and the organizations which sustain them could lead to even greater impact. Many of these small non-profits compete for the same funding, are guided by similar mission statements. There are many valuable lessons to be learned when competition turns to collaboration. For example, the appropriation of the apprenticeship pay scale by WBL from Life Pieces to Masterpieces, furnished WBL with a strategy that proved effective for a group whose mission and population are very similar in scope. If connections between programs and organizations that have so much in common could be maintained on a greater level, best practices and lessons learned could be shared for the benefit of all.

There will always be pioneers at the forefront of youth advocacy and development. Inevitably, those will be community leaders most familiar with the particular community challenges. It is important for them to connect to raise strength in numbers, to prevent a small but promising program from going under due to lack of visibility and sustaining connections. The work that these arts groups do matters, it matters most of all to the youth who regularly attend, and it matters for the communities where these centers are situated. Ultimately it matters because when youth are engaged constructively, they are less likely to become society burdens but rather productive and contributing citizens.

\textsuperscript{21} The 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant Program was enacted by Congress to aid after-school programs serving inner-city youth. The Grant Program seeks grantees which enact positive youth development and “encourage family and community involvement in learning”\cite{21st Century Community Learning Center Grant 2009}. NCFC is a grant recipient and has utilized it for the benefit of the A.B.L.E. program \cite{Coote 2009}.
Cultural development on the community level provides residents, participants, and youth in particular with a contextualization and meaningful expression of their lives (Goldbard 2006). At a time when the information age is obliterating local roots, connections and specific, local cultural significance, the importance of this contribution should not be overlooked. Local community arts provide this context. When students at A.B.L.E. are engaged in photography projects by going out into the community to tackle race and identity issues, or when students at WBL come together to paint murals at a community rec center or petition city council, their experience roots them in the significance and local history of their neighborhoods. Additionally, they are provided with a context for the struggles of African American artists and citizens in D.C. as well as the nation at large, a historical context which is often overlooked entirely in their classrooms.

Programs like WBL and A.B.L.E. exist all over the country, but like many community arts programs, they are underutilized, underfunded, and under-reported. Part of the challenge in building a well-functioning civil society in the 21st century is recognizing that small organizations whose missions involve leveraging community involvement by engaging youth civically and artistically have a vital role to play. The purpose of this pilot project was to highlight how and why they do what they do as youth advocates and community builders, to the extent that their success can be documented. My hope is that this work can be a testament to their triumphs as well as a dialogue starter on alternative ways civic engagement can be achieved.
Appendix A: Survey Material

2009 Youth Survey

Hi! My name is Tatyana Varshavsky, and I am doing this survey to find out about why you decided to come to the [Urban Arts Academy] and a little about You! I am doing this study for my thesis research, and your answers will help me a lot.

Some ground rules:
You don't have to participate if you don't want to.

You do not have to put your name on this survey, and all answers will remain confidential.

This short survey (18 questions) should take you about 10 minutes.

Is this ok? If you agree, please check here: ___Yes, I agree to participate.

I will be taking pictures during the course of my study for use in the presentation of my work. If it is ok for me to take your picture, please check here: ___Yes, I agree.

If you have any questions or comments about the survey or study, please feel free to talk to me. Thank you!!

Directions:
Circle or check off your answer. You can write in your own answer if you like, or write on the back if you need more space.
When you're done, please return the survey to your instructor. Thanks!

1) How long have you been coming to this workshop?

___ Just started (Less than a month)
___ 1-6 Months
___ 6 Months to a Year
___ More than a Year. Please tell me how many years: _______

2) Why did you start coming?
__ My friends told me to come __ It was close by  
__ I liked the classes __ There was nothing else to do  
__ My teacher or parent told me to come  
__ Other:_______________________________________________________

3a) What is your favorite class/workshop at [WBL]?______________________

3b) Why? (you can pick more than one)
   __ I like the instructor __ I like the subject  
   __ I get to hang out with people I like __ I get to learn a lot about:___________________________________________  
   __ Another reason: ________________________________ ___________________

3c) What other workshops at [WBL] do you attend? ______________________

4a) Do you go to other after-school centers?
   __ Yes       __ No

4b) Which one(s)? _________________________

5) What other after-school stuff do you spend time on besides [WBL]?
(more than one’s ok)
   __ Sports __ Church/bible study __ Music/dance  
   __ Just hang out __ Make art __ Tutoring for school  
   __ Help out at home __ Other _________________________

6) What does community mean to you? (pick any that you agree with or write in your own)
   __ My family __ My neighborhood __ My friends  
   __ My school ___ [WBL] __ Other _________________________

7) Do you think it's important to help people in your community or neighborhood?
   __ Yes, It's super important __ It's kinda important  
   __ Not really important __ Not important at all  
   __ Your take: ____________________________________

8) How have you helped out in your community? If you haven't, name some ways you could:
9) Other people you know who come to WBL (no naming names!):

__ My friend(s) from school  __ My friend(s) from my neighborhood
__ My relative(s) (sisters/brothers/cousins)
__ My girlfriend/boyfriend

10) Do you think participating in arts workshops like WBL gets you more involved in your community?

__ Yes  __ No  More info here: ________________________

11) In your school, did you ever take a class in American history, government, or civics?

__ Yes
__ No, but other kids in my school have
__ No, but I have at another school/place
__ No  __ Other _________________________________

12) What is your age? ____

13) I'm a: __ guy/ __ girl

14) What is your race? ___________________________

15) If you're in school, what school do you go to? ___________________________

16) What grade are you in? ______________________

17) Did you grow up in D.C.? 18) Were you born in the U.S.?

__ Yes  __ Yes
__ No  __ No

That’s it!

Please don’t forget to return the survey to me or your instructor.
If you have any questions about this survey, my thesis project, or anything else, just ask! You can reach me here:

(email/phone #)

Tatyana Varshavsky, MA Candidate
Communication, Culture and Technology
Georgetown University
3520 Prospect St. NW, Suite 311, Washington, DC 20057  Thanks for your help!!

Thanks for your help!!

Thanks for your help!!

Thanks for your help!!

Thanks for your help!!
### Survey Coding Sheet

**Agree to participate:** Yes = 1/ No = 0

#### 1) Length of Attendance:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-6 Months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Months to a Year</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Yr &gt; 2Yrs.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Yrs</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>4 Yrs</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Yrs +</td>
<td>8</td>
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#### 2) Reason for Attendance:

<table>
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<th>Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close by</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No alternatives</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Parent</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3a) Favorite Class:

- **WBL:**
  - Bench = 1/0
  - BBBoy = 1/0
  - Photo = 1/0
  - Drawing = 1/0
  - Chess = 1/0
  - Other = 1/0

- **Other workshops attended:**
  - Bench = 1/0
  - BBBoy = 1/0
  - Photo = 1/0
  - Drawing = 1/0
  - Chess = 1/0
  - DJing = 1/0

**Agree to be photographed:** Yes = 1/ No = 0

#### 3c) Other workshops attended:

- **WBL:**
  - Bench = 1/0
  - BBBoy = 1/0
  - Photo = 1/0
  - Drawing = 1/0
  - Chess = 1/0
  - DJing = 1/0

#### 4a) Do you go to other after-school centers?

Yes = 1   No = 0

#### 4b) Which one(s)?

- AALead = 1
- SAT Prep = 2

#### 5) After-school activities:

- Sports = 1/0
- Church = 1/0
- Music/dance = 1/0
- Hang out = 1/0
- Art = 1/0
- Tutoring = 1/0
- Home = 1/0
- Other = 1/0

#### 6) What does community mean:

- Family = 1/0
- Neighborhood = 1/0
- Friends = 1/0
- School = 1/0
- WBL = 1/0
- Other = 1/0

#### 7) Importance of community involvement:

- Super important = 4
- Kinda important = 3
- Not really important = 2
- Not important = 1
- Other = Fill in

#### 8) Community involvement examples – open ended

#### 9) Other people you know who attend:

- School friends = 1/0
- Neighborhood friends = 1/0
10) Does participation = community involvement?
Yes = 1  No = 0  Unsure = 2

11) Civics coursework:
No = 0
Yes = 1
Offered = 2
Elsewhere = 3
Other = 4

12) Age = numerical value

13) Gender:
Girl = 2
Guy = 1

14) Race
Black = 1
Latino = 2
Asian = 3
White = 4
Other = 5
Mixed = 6

15) School attended = name

16) Grade = numerical value

17) Grow up in D.C.?
Yes = 1
No = 0

18) US Citizen
Yes = 1
No = 2
Appendix B: Instructor Consent Form

Dear Instructor,

I am a graduate student at Georgetown University. I am conducting a study called *Building Civic Youth Identities in Community After-School Programs*. I am examining how art workshops, like the Urban Arts Academy, foster a sense of community and contribute to how a youth’s identity is formed. I am interested in finding out about the experiences of your students during this workshop and request your permission to let your students participate in this study.

Students will be asked to complete a short survey about their involvement in this, and any other art study or activity they participate in. Students who express interest may be interviewed one on one, and audio recorded, upon your recommendation. Participation is completely voluntary with no risk or penalty for refusal. All information will be kept entirely confidential. Participants’ names will not appear on the survey or on the interview materials. There will be no way for me to identify the responses, and once submitted they will be accessible by me and no one else, and destroyed once the research is done. The survey will take no more than ten minutes of your students’ time.

Please note I will be taking digital photographs during the course of my study. Digital information gathered in this study (photos and digitally recorded interviews) will be kept secure on a password protected external hard drive accessible by the researcher only, will be kept confidential and will not be disseminated beyond this project.

Everyone will be free to withdraw at any time with no risk or penalty. This study will provide benefits in terms of assessing the success of outside-of-school programs like the Urban Arts Academy.

My contact information is below. If you have any questions about this study at any time you are welcome to contact me at (cell number) or (email)

Thank you!

Tatyana Varshavsky
MA Candidate, Georgetown University
3520 Prospect St. NW, Suite 311, Washington, DC 20057

Please check the box to show your consent or refusal to let your students participate in this study:
__ I AGREE to let my students participate in this study.

__ I _______________________ (name) AGREE to be interviewed and audio recorded for this study.

Signature of Instructor: ________________________________Date ____________

Investigator seeking consent: ______________________________Date: ____________

If you have any questions about your students’ rights as research participants, please call the Georgetown University IRB Office during regular business hours.

Institutional Review Board
Georgetown University
SW104 Med-Dent Building
3900 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington DC 20057
Phone: (202) 687 -1506
Email: irboard@georgetown.edu
Appendix C: Program Materials

WBL Student Pledge

On this day, I pledge to be a student in the Urban Arts Academy, and apart of the Words Beats & Life Family. I understand my responsibility is to my class, my family, and my community. I will work hard to become better each day and strive to get closer to my goals. With self-discipline, confidence, and knowledge of who I am, there is no limit to what I can and WILL achieve. I am apart of something big! I am the beginning of something even bigger. I will be creative, supportive and dynamic. I will train my mind to understand the rules and why they exist; and train my imagination to create new and better ways to do what’s already been done. The things I learn in the academy I will apply at school, in my community and in my heart. I am hip-hop’s future. I have one mind and body, and I will work hard to keep them equally fit and healthy. My words and my behavior will reflect who I am as a leader, artists, and trendsetter. I am the extension of history and in my creativity the world will be shaped. I am Words Beats & Life.

_________________________________________  _________________________________________
Student’s Name  Student’s Signature

_________________________________________  _________________________________________
Site Director’s Signature  Academy Director’s Signature

_________________________________________
Executive Director’s Signature
Programs at the Urban Arts Academy

“The interactive workshops are a staple of every student’s experience at the Urban Arts Academy. Workshops have include fashion and design, graphic arts, introduction to visual arts, DJ’ing Beat Production, Jewelry Making, Creative Writing, Lyrical Analysis, Graffiti, Muraling, Hip-Hop Dance, Event Planning and Chess. This wide range of experiences has helped the Urban Arts Academy to cast a wide net and attract a number of different students across gender and racial lines.

(2) Success Around Every Corner: Speaker Series
Success Around Every Corner: Speaker Series starts each Saturday off with a guest speaker brunch. The invited guests provide insight into their own success, challenges and how the arts generally and hip-hop specifically have impacted their lives. This interaction between students and speakers impacts each student’s self-image and understanding of what is possible for their own lives.

(3) The Brotherhood/Jr Brotherhood and Diamonds/Pearls
The Brotherhood/Jr Brotherhood and Diamonds/Pearls are gender based discussion groups and activity series that create a gender based and age appropriate space to build bonds between young men or young women of the Academy in a weekly meeting. We found over the course of the years, especially for out teen participants, that there are a number of issues and challenges that have to do with a particular gender experience. We found that students were more likely to be honest and open without the opposite sex present to embarrass them.

(4) The Youth Ambassadors Program
The Youth Ambassadors Program is designed to give students an opportunity to exercise leadership within the Academy. Youth Ambassadors help plan trips, interview potential staff and plan monthly Community Arts Projects. Youth Ambassadors also participate in the grant writing process by writing grants for Community Arts Projects. Ambassadors play a vital role in curriculum design and implementation.

(5) City Full of Walls: DC Graffiti Mural Project
Academy students have been behind the planning and development of 16 murals WBL has painted in the past three years. This is especially important because it offers them a real world application for what they are learning in the classroom. The majority of the murals have been painted at the Benning Park Recreation Center in SE Washington DC. We have even brought students form the Northwest site to the southeast site to participate in the creation of murals. In the next fiscal year, we anticipate securing 5-6 contracts to paint murals for Parks and Rec. Our intention is to turn muraling into a way for students to secure an honoraria and participate in generating revenue for the Urban Arts Academy.
(6) Mentoring Clusters
Rather than having one to one mentoring, the Academy has a system set up where two adult mentors work with 5 youth. The idea here is that each student has more than one adult who works with him or her as a mentor. Where possible the mentors represent each gender so that the children not only are able to develop positive relationships with adults but they also have a personal connection with a man and women who become role models of positive relationships between men and women. This is especially important because so many of our students only see women in their community.

(7) Reading More than Books
“Reading More than Books” is a multi medium literacy program for Urban Arts Academy students age 5-23. This project is dedicated to connecting written media to other forms of media and mediums. This is an attempt on the part of the WBL to work to connect reading to the interests of the DCPS students who are part of the Urban Arts Academy. The project connects methods and mediums Academy students already use to learn about hip-hop and uses them to teach them about history and literature. Students read books and articles, watch movies, go on field trips and create murals, poems or photos that reflect back on the book that they read.

(8) Hustlenomics
Hustlenomics is a career-based curriculum designed to prepare Academy students for real life. This includes a health and wellness module, a financial literacy module, and a small business/workforce development series of modules. The development of the skills necessary to be successful in life is always tied back to attending trade schools and higher education. Many of our students are preparing to transition out of foster care, graduating from high school, in many cases preparing for college enrollment.

(9) College Material
College Material is one of the newest programs of the Urban Arts Academy. It is a multi media experiential learning based programs that allows students to make the connection between what they want to do, and the steps necessary to achieve those goals. As an organization Words Beats & Life at all levels promotes the idea that every single student, regardless of age or academic status has the potential to be College Material. We realize though however that for many of our students, our staff and volunteers are the only people in their lives, other than their teachers, who graduated from college. Because our students’ range in age from 5 to 23, we developed College Material to not only provide resources to our students, but to equip our students to be resources to their peers.”
WBL Application for Enrollment

( ) Benning Park ( ) St Stephens ( ) Lincoln Middle School ( ) Riverside Center

Application for enrollment

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<tbody>
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<table>
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<td>How many hours a week do you spend studying?</td>
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<td>On average, how many book have you read in the past 12 months?</td>
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<td>Do you plan to go to college?</td>
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<td>Do you consider yourself a leader?</td>
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One a scale of 1-6 rate how much you enjoy the following courses

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>PE/Gym</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
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<td>Art</td>
<td>1 2</td>
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Application for enrollment

Parents Information

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<th>Ward of residence (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (MD) (VA)</th>
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Student Information

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<td>4-5</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>more than 10</td>
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<td>Do you plan to go to college?</td>
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<td>Do you consider yourself a leader?</td>
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One a scale of 1-6 rate how much you enjoy the following courses

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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle your experience level with following skill sets</th>
<th>(None)</th>
<th>(Very Little)</th>
<th>(Some)</th>
<th>(A Lot)</th>
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<tr>
<td>DJ'ing</td>
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<td>MC'ing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Production</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing Design</td>
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<td>Video Production</td>
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<td>Essay Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working in groups</td>
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<td>Journalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
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</table>
A.B.L.E. Programs:

Our programs are designed to enrich and enhance the literacy of participants in creative ways. We aim to achieve this goal by engaging middle and high school students in a wide range of learning activities that encourage them to reflect, respond and resolve questions that shape their learning experience inside and outside of school.

Who: Students ages 11–18 years old (Grades 6–12)

When: After school 4:00 to 7:30 pm M–F and bi-monthly on Saturdays

Where: 1722 6th St NW, Washington, DC 20001

Shaw/Howard U Metro

No Cost!!!

New Community for Children

INTERESTED?

New Community for Children
Dr. Dwayne Williams
Program Director, A.B.L.E.
1722 6th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Phone: 202.320.0663 or 232-0457
Email: dwilliams@ncof-dc.org

Adolescents
Building
Literacy through Expression

Creative and Engaging Out-of-School Experiences for Youth
Ages 11–19
Adolescents Building Literacy through Expression Programs “Thinking Outside the School”

A.B.L.E.'s Transformative Programs for Fall 2008

Black, Brown and White in the Chocolate City: Being a Teenager in the Nation’s Capitol.
This project is inspired by the Literacy through Photography program at Duke University and designed for middle school and high school students who want to share their vision of life in DC.
Mon & Wed 4-6 pm

Algebra Project/Algebra in Middle School
The aim and purpose of the Algebra Project is to strengthen the math literacy of middle and high school students.
Mon—Thurs 3-6 pm

Love Supreme: Adolescent Health
This program is designed to address the wide-range of adolescent health and social issues encountered by girls ages 11–19. Tues & Thurs 4-4 pm

A.B.L.E.'s Transformative Programs for Fall 2008

Lost in the City
This program builds student literacy skills by exploring stories that focus in Washington, D.C. Tues & Thurs 4-6 pm

Spectacular Vernacular
This program uses the core elements of hip-hop culture (graffiti, rapping/DJing, and break dancing) to strengthen the writing, reading, technical literacy of students. Mon & Wed 6-7:30 pm

The Meaning of Freedom: Public History
The program is designed to increase students’ capacity to be fully engaged citizens by exploring the many meanings of freedom and the history of Washington, D.C. Tues & Thurs 6-7:30 pm

Science for Poets After School Universe
This program is a 15-week science program that introduces middle and high school students to the science of astronomy through hands-on learning. Mon & Wed 6-7:30 pm

“The future is not simply about the past; it is about the present and all that we do.”
—James Baldwin

A.B.L.E.'s Transformative Programs for Fall 2008

The Hosea Project: Building Character/Making Choices
This program is designed to give adolescent boys ages 12-19 a space to discuss how to make sound choices about difficult issues. Wed 5-6 pm

ABLE Visions: Adolescents on Film
A weekly film series exploring the images and ideas that define how society views adolescents and the challenges that they face. Fri 4-7:30 pm

Middle Passages
A bi-monthly program aimed at helping middle school and high school students negotiate social and academic milestones. Sat 12-2 pm
### Appendix D: Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Center</th>
<th>Observation Date</th>
<th>Positive Value Observations</th>
<th>Negative Value Observations</th>
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<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/3/2009</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/13/2009</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/18/2009</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/19/2009</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/23/2009</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/9/2009</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
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<td>WBL N.W.</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/7/2009</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/10/2009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/25/2009</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
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<td>WBL S.E.</td>
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<td>3/7/2009</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
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Citations


From Rust Belt to Artist Belt: Challenges and Opportunities in Rust Belt Cities. 2008. Cleveland, OH: Community Partnership for Arts and Culture.


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