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Adolescents' Characterization Of Their Neighborhood Through An Art-Based Community Project

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**ADOLESCENTS' CHARACTERIZATION OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD
THROUGH AN ART-BASED COMMUNITY PROJECT**

by

EILEEN FINNEGAN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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MAJOR: CURRICULUM AND
INSTRUCTION

Approved by:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the seventh grade class at the school where the study was conducted.

Thank you for all your help.

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Completing a dissertation is not a journey taken alone. I would like to acknowledge the help of the following people.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The overall population in the United States has increased since the 2010 census, including growth among the adolescent population, with the greatest increase among Hispanic youth. Statistics also show significant challenges among this segment of the population: The high school dropout rate decreased from 44% in 2000 to 13% in 2012 (de Anda, Franke, & Becerra, 2009; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013) for Hispanic adolescents. The Hispanic adolescent birth rate is the highest among adolescents from other ethnic backgrounds (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2003).

Many neighborhoods located in the southwest section of a large Midwest metropolitan area (the setting of the present study) are in a state of economic decline. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) reported that the unemployment rate in the state as of 2012 was over 10%. The unemployment rate increases to over 13% for the urban area that is included in the present study (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). The impact of unemployment on community residents is widespread, with adults, adolescents, and children feeling its effects. The once thriving neighborhood, with opportunities for employment, education, and health care, as well as goods and services and law enforcement is disappearing. Additionally non-English speaking members of the community are confounded by issues of isolation and fear. In some cases, adolescents are required to assume adult roles in the family, managing banking, translating, handling transportation needs, and helping with younger siblings.

Unfortunately these realities exist in economically disadvantaged communities, at a time of reductions in city services, community resources, social programs, recreational opportunities,

and health care. deAnda et al. (2009) examined community problems and societal stressors between parents and their adolescent children. The authors identified six factors (education, career development, abuse and victimization, behavior problems, adolescent sexuality, and relationships) as areas of contention between parents and their adolescent children. As a result, adolescents have few community supports to help foster their development. In addition, multilingual neighborhoods can create obstacles to communication among the residents because of cultural differences that can affect the cohesiveness of the neighborhood as a community (deAnda et al., 2009).

Adolescents want and need to be considered as contributing members of their community. This need is also a major focus of parents, civic leaders, policy makers, religious leaders, law enforcement, and educational leaders (Crosnoe & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993). The cost to communities when adolescents fail to successfully transition to adulthood is of growing concern across the nation (Behnke, Plunkett, Sands, & Bamaca-Colbert, 2011). Neighborhood risky behavior, such as belonging to a gang, bullying, or using graffiti on buildings, has been associated with diminished self-confidence and negative affect among both male and female adolescents. Frequent discord about cultural norms that occur in families also contribute to poor development of self-confidence.

Self-confidence is an important trait (Mruk, 2006) in adolescent development, having a key role in preventing depression (Dumont & Provast, 1999). When adolescents have high self-confidence, they may perceive life more optimistically, and have lower levels of depressive symptomatology. According to Phinney, Madden, and Santos (1998), a strong association has been noted between low self-confidence and negative affect in Hispanic American adolescents. Studies point to Hispanic youth, especially girls, as having the highest rate of depressive

symptoms of all ethnic groups (47% vs. 33% for Caucasians; Eaton et al., 2006). The cost of depression-related problems in adolescents is of growing national concern because of its relationship to leaving school before graduation (Behnke, 2011; deAnda et al., 2009; Eaton et al., 2006).

Problem Statement

Education is one way that adolescents can minimize depression-related problems and become productive adults in their communities. The aim of education is to prepare adolescents for life as adults and to enable them to live in dignity and with purpose. Educators have long believed in preparing youth for their future roles in life through connecting education with real life experiences and actions (Dewey, 1916). Dewey encouraged educators to prepare children to be full of life, engage rather than rebel, promote future inquiry, and create a desire to learn. This theory is exemplified in community-based art projects. Participating in a community-based art project can help adolescents use their experiences to create, become more aware of the community in which they live, and develop goals for improving their neighborhoods.

Informal learning also can promote growth toward adult productivity. Informal learning occurs throughout life in a highly personalized manner based on particular needs, interest, and past experiences (Dorsen, Carlson, & Goodyear, 2006). This type of learning can be experienced in any context, is unstructured, and lacks a formal curriculum, with learning outcomes specific to the individual. Informal learning in the context of creating an original artwork can promote an awareness of art, including the way in which it affects, provokes, and challenges both the art maker and the viewer. Art making is a transformative vehicle that can change the artist and viewer through participation, creation, and interpretation in the process. Meaning is constructed and beliefs are revealed in the symbols, metaphors, and idealism in works of visual arts (Taylor,

2002). A critical and reflective account of lived experiences demonstrates how adolescents can benefit from meaningful and socially relevant participation (Taylor, 2002). Participation in art activities in the school and community helps adolescents to reveal visually what they believe about themselves, their roles in society, and the places they hold within the social structure. In addition, students who find their ability to express their ideological beliefs are more likely to use visual images to communicate and then transform their previous beliefs. The meaning of artistic actions provides meaning to artists' relevance as people (Anning & Ring, 2004; Bolin, 2004).

Visual arts have long been the place where adolescents can explore and redefine their world with reconstruction of meaning highly charged with ideology. The opportunity to improve their skill development and experiment with a variety of techniques can enable the adolescent to develop a greater, more sophisticated level of proficiency in communicating and representing their ideological beliefs (Eisner, 2004). Participation in the art making project also can challenge them to solve complex problems, brainstorm, and improvise without concerns associated with assessment.

The process of collaborative art making promotes a dialogue that changes art makers. For the purpose of this study, the art makers are adolescents who participated in the creation of a mural depicting their neighborhoods through their perceptions. Collaborative participation has become popular among postmodern theorists because of its ability to facilitate dialogue and interactive learning (Boyle Baise et al., 2006; Hutzler, 2007; Taylor, 2004).

The work of artists, students, and educators who participate in community art has been documented numerous times in schools and communities (Gablik, 1992). The Philadelphia Mural Arts Project (O'Connell, 2008), Eastside Cultural Center (Wong, 2008), and Mural

Painting as Public Art (Caruso & Caruso, 2003) are examples of on-going art-based community projects. However, these projects have not been the subject of scholarly research.

Kay (2000) investigated the role that participation in arts projects play in regeneration and recognition of culture and identity and the value of creativity in collaborative activities. The findings provided evidence that the arts have an important place in the regeneration of a community. Taylor (2002) studied adolescents' service learning that focused on engaging students in civic responsibility and creating opportunities for informal learning in after school programs. The findings suggested that there is a transformative and reconstructive element where art has the power to educate. Taylor (2002) suggested that the real power in the art is in the art makers. Knowledge alone is not powerful, instead it is the adolescents' desire to know more and experience more. Taylor (2002) asserted that adolescents are able to develop self-confidence to question things inside and outside of their world. Adolescents in my study benefited from participation in an arts program that fostered creativity and collaboration. Consistent with the literature (reference) this community arts project improved awareness of their neighborhoods, provided a sense of accomplishment when the mural was completed, and increased confidence in adolescents' ability to be creative.

Art-based community projects are considered works of art, especially when created using a postmodern art education curriculum (Taylor, 2004). "It [art] is a transformative and socially reconstructive practice" (Taylor, 2004, p. 124). One example of an art-based community project is the creation of a community mural by middle school students.

The problem that was examined in this present study explored the use of a visual arts-based community program to increase adolescents' awareness of their community and to build self-confidence by creating an art project of which adolescents as artists in the community,

school, and neighborhoods could be proud. While art-based community projects have been the focus of prior research (Hutzel, 2007), these studies have not focused on extracurricular programs involving a specific ethnic group living in a low socioeconomic area of an urban city (de'Anda et al., 2009). Participation in these types of programs may provide adolescents with opportunities to use their free times in constructive programs and projects (Hutzel, 2007).

Some art-based community projects are specifically designed to engage large groups of participants actively. Working in groups to create art can provide a sense of connectedness in the lives of the participants (Lacy as cited in Gargarella, 2007). Adolescents can learn to problem solve, collaborate, use time management, conduct negotiations with others, and develop self-confidence from participating in visual arts programs such as creating a mural that reflects their views of their neighborhoods and community. Working together collaboratively to plan, execute, and display their mural is important educational activities that promote critical thinking and problem solving in this study. The adolescents were able to be creative by selecting the topics they wanted depicted in the mural and then using time management skills to complete the mural within the six-week period of the study. I facilitated the project, but the adolescents drove the completion of the mural. Participants in this research were expected to maintain journals that reflected what they did during each session, how their participation made them feel, and how they liked working with the other participants. The adolescents were encouraged to write and illustrate their journals, without comment from me. These after-school educational experiences in a nonthreatening environment were expected to promote the awareness of community and neighborhoods, while building skills and confidence along with exploring their creative instincts. Studying the effects of participation in after-school community arts programs is needed to

determine if these types of programs can promote such awareness and confidence and help adolescents become active participants in their communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to study adolescent participation in the development of a portable neighborhood mural as an art-based community project. I examined perceptions of the adolescents regarding the awareness of their community and neighborhoods. Additionally, I explored adolescents' perceptions of their own development in terms of building their self-confidence. To accomplish this, I facilitated the creation and design of a mural that depicts their perceptions of their neighborhoods, using art as a modality for expression.

Research Questions

The research questions that have been developed for the study include:

1. What are students' perceptions of themselves as they have participated in an art-based community project?
2. Does participation in an art-based community project by Hispanic adolescents aid in the development of self-confidence?
3. Does participation in an art-based community project encourage interaction among Hispanic adolescents and increase their awareness of community-based problems, such as socioeconomic stressors, adolescent risky behaviors, and education and career planning?

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the body of literature on the effects of participation in an art-based community project by Hispanic adolescents and the influence of this participation on their growth and development. Little prior research has focused on how participation in community-based programs, specifically art programs, affected the self-confidence of Hispanic adolescents.

This study may be meaningful and hopeful because it examines the participants' perceptions of their community in general and specifically in the neighborhood surrounding their homes. The curriculum design for the art-based community project incorporates social-action methods of art education to encourage social identity and reconstruction through action. The findings may provide information that could allow researchers to design community-based programs for adolescents in the future.

The arts speak culturally, ritualistically, and socially (Dissanayake, 1988) and use community relationships to nurture strength based collective identities of its members (Lowe, 2000). The arts facilitate change through local participation (Jones & Wyse, 2005) and regeneration (Kay, 2000). Participation in this arts project should help adolescents become more aware of the needs of their community and motivate them to take action in the future.

This research project is intended to help adolescents who are experiencing the rapid decline of the economic, educational, and social network in the urban community included in the study. Documenting, analyzing, and interpreting these insights within the community can provide awareness into adolescents' perceptions of their neighborhoods. Studying the effect of the intervention on adolescents can help researchers understand how to create change.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for the study:

- Adolescents are invested in their communities and want to do something to enhance the neighborhoods in which they live.
- Middle school Hispanic students have an interest in creating artistic projects working in a collaborative environment.
- Community art projects affect the creators.

Limitations

The following limitations are acknowledged for this study:

- The study is limited to middle school students living in a community that is home to a large Hispanic population. The study may not be generalizable to students who are in elementary or high school or who live in a heterogeneous community populated by many different ethnic/cultural groups.
- The participants were attending a parochial school. The findings may not be relevant to students attending either public schools or charter school academies.
- The study was six weeks long. This time may not have been sufficient to result in the changes in self-confidence that a longer study might have been able to facilitate.
- The study had no follow-up to determine if the adolescents remained involved in their communities or if participating in this type of program provided long-term appreciation for the arts.

Definitions

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Adolescence | A traditional state of physical, emotional, and mental development occurring at the beginning of puberty and continuing through adulthood (ages 11 through 19; <i>Dorlands Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers</i> , 2007). |
| Art-based Community Project | A teaching method that incorporates service to the community without a classroom curriculum. Community projects are a hand-on approach to mastering subject matter, while developing civic responsibility (Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, n.d). |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Mural | Mural painting is a technique for painting on walls. Artists use this technique to paint larger than visual narrative images. The mural is being stored and maintained by the church that is the hub of the community (Vacca, 2008). |
| Self-confidence | Adolescents' freedom from doubt; as well as their beliefs in themselves and their abilities (<i>Webster's New World College Dictionary</i> , 2002). |
| Postmodern Art Education | Postmodernism is defined differently by artists and their social action art education definitions may be inconsistent with other artists and educators (MacGregor, 1992). The postmodern art works are the result of social and political exchanges, with the themes in the artwork determined by the group supporting the project (MacGregor, 1992. According to Neprud (1995), artwork by young artists provides a depiction of their world as seen through their eyes. They are searching for meaning through their artwork. |

Overview of the Study

Chapter I has provided an overview of the study and provided a rationale for studying increased self-confidence of middle school students attending parochial schools who participated in a community-based art project; specifically, a mural. The review of related literature is presented in the second chapter. Chapter III presents the methods that were used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions presented in Chapter III. The results of

the content analyses of the research questions are included in Chapter IV. Conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the content analyses are included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Modern technology and its application has had a substantial impact on adolescent leisure time. The use of computers, video games, tablets, cell phones, and text messaging have increased the availability of social media and at the same time have isolated adolescents from group activities and social engagements. This study provides and examines an opportunity for adolescents to experience communal problem solving, design and create their aesthetic ideas, distinguish their perceptions, and execute their characterizations of their neighborhoods. A comprehensive literature review on visual art education and art-based community projects is presented in this chapter. The review of literature begins with the theoretical framework and includes sections on adolescent development in art making, self-confidence, community service identity and art projects, aesthetic perceptions of adolescents, symbolic resources, community involvement and extracurricular activities, school-based community service, and purpose of murals in society. The chapter ends with a summary of the review of literature.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist theory is linked to the present research because the intervention is experience-based learning, in which lessons build on prior knowledge and themes that focus on important lived experiences (Anderson & Melbrandt, 2005). The goal of the constructivist approach to learning is students' ability to understand and construct knowledge through exploring big ideas and solving complex problems, not by reproducing someone else's work. The theory of knowledge construction replaces formal choices in art making. Independent learning, as a goal, is based on an individual's prior lived experiences. Constructivist theory

supports the idea that knowledge is generated by art making that is expressed in the act of problem solving, practicing, using prior experiences, taking risks, and experimenting with new ideas.

Constructing knowledge is a dynamic process in which individuals' experience the world as it is in the moment, while they continue to build on prior lived experiences. The goal of constructivism is to examine participants' questioning of the meaning of art, the meaning of life, the meaning of engagement with others, and the meaning of the past. Piaget's (as cited in Kamii, 1996) basis for constructivist theory is that it is a scientific theory that makes clear the nature of human knowledge that explains adolescents' construction of knowledge.

Constructivist theory is used in my study as a basis of participant trial and error as well as problem solving as middle school aged students create a mural depicting their neighborhoods. My application of this theory has created the potential to serve the participants and their investigations of human knowledge and learning.

To illustrate the constructivist theory in the way that it was used in my study, I found research that demonstrated how students' prior experiences were used as the basis for developing knowledge. Researchers (Caldwell & Moore [1991]; Korsemyer [(1993]; Storocki & Dalahunt [2008]) conducted studies that illustrated my theoretical framework.

Caldwell and Moore (1991) examined drawing in preparation for writing activity with 42 second and third grade students. Along with student text, prior drawing activity was examined to investigate the conceptual foci of the invented stories. Teachers modeled the writing lesson, encouraging details and inviting students to share their actual and invented stories. The study consisted of two groups of students, a randomly assigned group and a control group. The participants attended 15 weekly sessions that were broken down into 15-minute sessions for

discussion and 45 minutes for drawing. The researcher used repeated measures ANOVA for data analysis. The results were reported that participants' writing quality in the drawing group were higher than the control group. The findings indicated that art exploration is a positive strategy for rehearsal for learning in social sciences.

A similar study (Stokrocki & Dalahunt, 2008) analyzed the plot of an ecological theme focused on bugs. The students based their stories on prior experiences. They made associative ideas by modeling instruction, then engaged in their own authentic activities connecting with the real world. The study included 25 male ($n = 12$) and female ($n = 13$) Caucasian students. A flow map was designed to measure the sequence of representational drawing. Gender distinctions were marked by girls (heroines and action sequence) and boys (strength and power). Most of the writing was conducted outside of class. Digital video disks (DVDs) were used to motivate youngsters. Use of bubble maps, group discussions, and artwork also were introduced. Teachers encouraged multiple answers for questions during the group discussion. Participants compared reality with fantasy images of bugs. The illustrations were used as a model for three-dimensional design. After completing the study, participants reported healing power for their bugs, awareness for the ecology, and preservation of the environment. Teachers linked lessons to practicing good hygiene, promoting care of species, and being aware of world conservation. Sixteen students identified future and possible life forms not yet in existence.

The constructivist and postmodern theories suggested that aesthetic perceptions are influenced by prior experiences and exposure to artwork. The constructivist view of aesthetic perception was supported by art educators who suggested that art experiences were socially constructed (Barrett, 1994; Eaton, 1994; Hagamann, 1990; Winner, 1997).

In Korsemeier's (1993) research study, the argument that the values, experiences, and personal interest of people viewing artwork was related to the constructivist views associated with understanding their aesthetic perceptions. Formal education in the arts was related to the formation of self and others (Bernard as cited in Best, 1983). As students pass through developmental stages, group discussions could change because of prior experiences, diverse opportunities, participation in special school projects, and exposure to a gifted curriculum (Gallagher, 1995). The findings of Gallagher's study suggested that these changes should be considered when discussing aesthetic perceptions and small group inquiry in regular classroom setting. Teachers should encourage discussions about the aesthetics of artwork among their students.

Constructivist views of aesthetics recognized that adolescents' levels of expressive abilities vary within a classroom setting. This level of expressive ability influences their inquiry and experiences with art (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). Understanding how personal, social, and cultural experiences shape perceptions of what is good, beautiful, or funny can be important in the study of aesthetics in students' artworks. This experience is complex, with constructivist theory or aesthetic perceptions needed to understand how perceptions about art are developed and shaped (Parsons & Blocker, 1993).

Adolescent Development in Art Making

Art programs strive to increase responsibility, encourage social change, and employ connectedness among adolescents and their neighborhoods (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). These programs focus on helping adolescents move toward becoming functioning, productive adults. One thing the program does is to promote a sense of community involvement.

Adolescents and those who work with them seek ways to help promote responsibility and reconstruction in an era of postmodern learning (Milbrandt, 2002). Wood, Larson, and Brown (2009) conducted a qualitative case study aimed at constructing theory and practice about development of responsibility by adolescents. A total of 108 participants from 11 community programs were interviewed about their experiences associated with participation in youth programs. The programs ranged from vocational (Future Farmers of America) in rural areas to art-based programs (Art-First where youth painted community murals) in urban areas. Approximately 50% of adolescents who participated in 3 of the 11 programs (Media Masters, Les Miserables, and Clarkson FFA) became more responsible as a result of their participation in the programs. The findings suggested that participants who demonstrated commitment to the program, more structure, and greater accountability for their actions considered that they had developed higher levels of responsibility. The authors concluded that these three programs provided support of the importance of youth programs in helping adolescents develop the responsibility that is required for work and family as adults.

The development of responsibility in adolescents can be linked to repeated social experiences that involve participation in group activities. One of the over-arching goals of adolescent development is being involved in programs that encourage socialization and help create relationships through social participation and work experience. Smith (2002) suggested that by providing opportunities for adolescents to be involved directly with their environment, they could grow and develop a greater ability to demonstrate responsibility, problem solve, and assume ownership for their learning. Working in a community environment provides opportunities for increased exploration during adolescence (Sobel, 1999), allowing them to discover themselves, society, and the environment. Long-term, complex projects set the stage for

developing strong motivation, endurance, creative thinking, and problem solving that are important steps in adolescence and necessary for adulthood. Students involved in community service projects have been offered opportunities for informal education that supports academic learning and has a positive influence on personal development.

Studies integrating art into other areas of education allowed adolescents to be seen as individuals. In these studies, children's voices were prominent, with words and pictures used to illustrate their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Alverman (2002) used group interviews with adolescents to explore how they integrated art and language. At five culturally diverse sites, the researcher videotaped classroom dialogue. Alverman found that adolescents were aware of the elements of good discussions of artwork and debated this topic in small focus groups. Alverman found that discussions influenced classroom participation and helped them comprehend their assignments. Alverman stressed that adolescents' own agendas, interests, and perceptions were important, and may be productive in regard to what adolescents are learning.

Dutton (2001) conducted a case study exploring the use of group work in the arts and its impact on positive adolescent development. The study included 10 adolescents from 10 to 13 years of age who participated in a program called the "Hip Hop Drama" group. The adolescents met twice weekly for approximately 90 minutes to choose a play, rehearse, and present the play to the public. Adolescent development was divided into two sections: decision making/competence and group identity (pride, strength, and support). The evaluations of the project by both the adolescents and their parents/families were extremely positive, with the adolescents wanting to participate in another play in which they could perform. The findings provided support that participation in an art-based group activity helped adolescents develop

decision-making skills, take pride in their accomplishments, and persist to see a project through to completion.

In another study to determine effects of a community-based arts program for adolescents in low-income communities (Wright, John, Alaggia, & Steel, 2006), 183 youth from 9 to 15 years of age were involved in a 9-month after-school arts program that involved performing arts, visual arts, and media arts for three-years. The study took place at five sites in Canada. The quasi-experimental study measured skill and social development, as well as changes in psychological and emotional problems for both an experimental and control group. Of the 183 youth, 15 (10 females and 5 males) and 15 parents were interviewed about their participation. The program, including snacks and transportation, was free to the participants. The programs were held twice a week for 9 months for a total of 74 sessions. The interviews indicated that parents and youth were generally satisfied with the program and felt they had grown from their participation. The qualitative findings were supported by the quantitative measures, including increased art skills, improved prosocial skills, as well as decreased psychological and emotional problems among adolescents in the experimental group. Wright et al. (2006) concluded that participation in this type of program could have positive outcomes for youth, especially in after-school hours.

Most research on group activities for adolescents provides support that adolescents can grow and develop positively through their participation. Adolescents can learn both independence and a sense of responsibility by participating in these programs. These findings suggest that having an opportunity to participate in the collaborative art program that I conducted might help adolescents from low-income ethnic groups learn to work toward a common

outcome, develop responsibility for their share of the project, and develop self-confidence that they are members of a community that values their contributions.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is defined as the belief an individual has in his/her ability to accomplish a task or perform in a given situation (Goel & Aggarwal, 2012; Jones, n.d.). Self-confidence is related to self-esteem, although one can have high self-esteem and low self-confidence. In addition, self-esteem is a holistic trait, while self-confidence is multi-dimensional (Jones, n.d.). A student may have high self-confidence in his/her ability to play football, but low self-confidence in his/her ability to get a good grade in mathematics. The most basic definition is described as an attitude. Viewing self-confidence as an attitude means that it can be measured.

Branden (1969) defined self-confidence using a philosophical foundation. Human beings have a fundamental need to feel confident. Acting confidently demonstrates problem solving in a rational manner. Participation in extracurricular activities during adolescence has broadened social benefits, increased self-confidence, linked adolescents with involvement in community, religious, and political organizations during adulthood (Mruk, 2006). Participation in cooperative activities during adolescence has been found to establish behavior patterns and a commitment to shared goals that continue through adulthood leading to a more civically and socially engaging society (Putnam, 2000; Schmidt, 2003).

Parental involvement is one of the first antecedents of self-confidence (Gecca, 1977; Mruk, 2006). Support from mother was related to developing a sense of worth, while support given by fathers appeared to foster competence. Middle class fathers spent more time with their children than fathers from the working class. Parents who demonstrate warmth and acceptance are important in the development of self-confidence (Mruk 2006). Self-confidence occupies an

important place in humanistic psychology. It is plausible to view self-confidence as a basic human value or strength in the field of positive psychology.

Kleitman and Stankov (2007) examined the nature of self-confidence as it applies to academic learning. The focus of their study was to determine the extent to which self-confidence was an indicator of academic outcomes. The study included 296 participants (85 males and 211 females) who were tested in groups of 20. The study was conducted using a variety of tests that were designed to measure three constructs: accuracy, speed, and confidence. The results suggested that self-confidence factors were linked to participant performance. The findings reflected results of previous studies that suggested self-confidence was essential for successful learning.

Understanding the interaction between peer groups and academic achievement and development of self-confidence is important. Antonio (2004) used a longitudinal quantitative research design with a sample of 2,222 third-year college students to study the role of friendship groups on intellectual self-confidence and educational aspirations. For the purpose of Antonio's study, friendship groups were defined as students' best friends on campus. Friendship groups had to have a minimum of two members. The students were tested in their freshman year using a general freshman survey. They were surveyed a second time in their third year using an instrument that had been created for the research. The survey was administered in two waves, resulting in a 31% response rate. Only participants ($N = 426$) who had participated in the freshman survey and had adequate data on their friendship groups were included in the final study. The study findings indicated that friendship groups positively influence intellectual self-confidence. In comparing the results from freshman to third-year, students who had high self-confidence continued to have high self-confidence. Another important finding was that racial

diversity within the friendship group was important for developing racial understanding. In addition, this diversity also plays a role in academic outcomes. My study of collaboration with peer groups can provide important information on how working toward a common goal can improve individual student self-confidence.

Self-confidence and Ethnic Identity

Evidence exists that ethnic identity is multi-dimensional and deeply complex (Phinney, 1990). Phinney asserted that there are “widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalizations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous” (Phinney, 1990, p. 500). Adolescent identity develops by engaging in the environment through community participation. Evidence has demonstrated that ethnic identity has a positive effect on the lives of individuals, but to-date, the research has been limited in studying self-confidence and adolescent well-being. Being able to identify with one’s ethnic background is a unique and important step in the development of adolescents and their preparation for adult living. Ethnic identity is said to have an impact on well-being (Ling, 2005). Having self-confidence can help adolescents support strong identification with his/her ethnic group.

The development of identity is a process that continues to progress through a lifetime based on continuous evolution of experiences (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). When Mexican American adolescents are a minority in a group, their ethnic identity appears to be lower. This concern is evident in their larger worldview of themselves when they watch TV programming, read books or magazines, see advertisements and billboards in their neighborhood.

Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2004) used a structural equation model to investigate the dynamics of ethnic identity among 513 Mexican adolescents, including 240 males and 272 females. The influence of ecological factors, familial ethnic socialization, and adolescent

autonomy were the foci of questionnaires completed by the adolescents. The findings indicated that adolescents with fewer relatives born in the United States were more likely to be in families that were teaching them about their ethnicity. In addition, the researchers found that ethnic identity was associated with “familial ethnic socialization experiences, the ethnic composition of adolescents’ schools, and families’ generational status” (p. 53). Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2004) suggested that future studies should be designed to include links with other minority and majority groups to determine the replicability of their findings with other ethnic groups. My study focused on working with the students to have pride in their neighborhoods and their ethnic identity. Understanding how these factors work to enhance self-confidence is important in understanding the emotional development of adolescents.

Adolescent development in many areas is linked directly to ethnic identity according to French, Stedman, Allen, and Aber (2006), especially for participants of Hispanic background. In French et al.’s three-year study of ethnic identity, 420 participants, including 152 (36.2%) European American, 147 (35.0%) African American, and 121 (28.8%) Hispanic early (12 to 13 years of age) and middle (14 to 16 years of age) adolescents completed an ethnic identity measure of their group esteem and exploration. The findings indicated that middle adolescents had higher levels of group esteem than early adolescents. Among the middle adolescents, European Americans and Hispanic adolescents had significantly higher scores for group esteem than African Americans. Among the early adolescents, European Americans had significantly higher scores than the other two ethnic groups, with no differences found between the Hispanic and African American early adolescents. When examined across the three years, European Americans remained consistent regarding ethnic identity, while the African American and Hispanic adolescents increased from year 1 to year 2, and then decreased slightly in year 3.

These findings provide support for the growth of ethnic identity from early to middle adolescence. French et al. cautioned that the findings of this study indicate growth in ethnic identity for all groups, but further research is needed to determine the source of this growth. For example, they indicated that group esteem may increase because of social influence from sports and music, as well as influence from peers and parents. They also suggest that further research should investigate ethnic identity in homogeneous neighborhoods, such as the one that I plan to use as the setting for my study. In my study, creating a mural depicting the adolescents' neighborhoods can become a point of pride in their ethnic identity and help build their self-confidence in their ability to produce an artwork of which they find meaningful.

Community Service Identity and Art Projects

A fundamental element of low-income populations is that strong identities are developed within their neighborhoods. When adolescents participate in art-based community projects, they are exposed to social, cultural, and political ideas as they develop relationships with their peers. Community-based art projects are distinguished by reciprocity of both giving and receiving between the server and the person being served. All parties in the community-based art project are learners and help determine what is to be achieved by the project. This understanding of reciprocity as a giving and receiving between parties has remained a constant feature of research on results of community-based learning experiences (Markus et al., 1993).

Nieto (1994) conducted case study interviews with 10 adolescents from diverse backgrounds to determine their feelings regarding having a voice in student curriculum, unique and specific student needs, and participation in extracurricular activities. Nieto's research sought to identify characteristics of specific experiences that helped participants remain and succeed in school. Findings suggested that teachers could benefit from listening to students' critical

perspectives about school curriculum, the importance of extracurricular activities, and leadership training.

According to Dissanayake (1998), community-based art projects focus on specific experiences involving collective identities. This focus may act as a catalyst for change among the adolescents and encourage greater social responsibility. Group dynamics is an important element in these projects. Gude (2000) encouraged a social activist approach that reflects the specific community needs.

Clark and Zimmerman (2000) conducted a 3-year community-based art program with students in seven elementary schools. The schools were located in three geographic areas: Indiana (two elementary schools in different rural school districts), New Mexico (one elementary school with a Hispanic population and one elementary school with an American Indian population), and South Carolina (three elementary schools with African American populations). The schools served students with low socioeconomic backgrounds and were racially/ethnically diverse. Students who were interested in participating in performing and visual arts were identified in third grade and then followed through fourth and fifth grades. The culminating project in each of the schools was the creation of a mural that depicted their communities. Assessment of the project included portfolios of unfinished work (e.g., written notes, sketches, diagrams, models, and final products), peer critiques; self-evaluation; contracts; diary notes; and student journals that provided descriptions of the development of student ideas, reflections about their art work, and teacher comments; as well as observation notes, video interviews, and student works reflecting specific tasks. Community-based art projects were found to be a viable way of connecting the school to the community. The students at each site were able to establish a sense of community, becoming more entrenched in the culture. Additionally, through video

conferencing, the students and teachers also discovered they had similar interests and outcomes in their art making.

The link between adolescent art making and participation in community-based programs has been explored by Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins (2003) who referred to the connection between art making and community-based art projects. Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins investigated the life histories of adolescent participants in an after-school program, entitled “Artist in the Marketplace.” The program, conducted over two years, involved 40 students in middle and high school. The students who were drawn from economically depressed areas were mostly African American and Mexican. They worked with local artists and graduate art students to create art projects. The students were interviewed individually during one-hour open-ended meetings. They responded to 10 questions during the interviews. Six sessions were held during the two-year period, with the structured interviews occurring twice during each session. Major themes that evolved from the interviews were self-esteem or self-image relationships, anger issues, and peer pressure. In addition to the student interviews, observations were documented. Data were collected, coded, and analyzed using qualitative procedures. The findings indicated that the adolescents desired interactions with adult supporters, wanted interconnected means of social and community support, and developed trusting, caring relationships that built self-confidence.

Ulbricht (2005) suggested a wider notion of community-based art projects could encourage learning in adolescents’ neighborhoods. The types of art projects that could be considered include informal art, folk art, and public art. Ulbricht asserted that adolescents can learn about their local communities by participation in community-based art. Adejumo (2000) provided a definition of community-based art, indicating that it is a term that is used to:

... describe works of art produced by people living within the same locality, and defined by common interests such as shared concerns, cultural heritage, traditions, and language patterns. Community-based art consists of a wide variety of aesthetic objects, such as sculptures, murals, architecture, and various crafts. (p. 12)

Ulbright (2005) continued that while this type of art rarely is discussed in art history books, it is important and should be the focus of research.

The research studies on community service projects support the need for research on adolescents' involvement in community-based projects that can increase their perceptions of the culture of their neighborhoods and the importance of involvement in their communities. My research supports the need for evaluating what adolescents think and how they express their ideas, especially in regard to how they can become more aware of their places in their neighborhoods and larger community.

Aesthetic Perceptions of Adolescents

Aesthetic perceptions are the individuals' feelings about art (Chapman, 1998). A student's thoughts about beauty are based on his/her lived experiences and emotions. Students construct their aesthetic perceptions by building on their prior learning and exposure to different styles and images.

Renowned art educator, Viktor Lowenfeld (1957), believed that aesthetic perceptions cannot be separated from human development. Aesthetic perceptions should not be part of an instructed lesson, but must grow out of the individual work of the adolescent. Aesthetic growth is responsible for the changes an adolescent chooses to make along his journey. Feelings, integration of thinking and acute perceptions are responsible for how adolescents respond to art making. Lowenfeld (1957) claimed that an adolescent's personality is affected by aesthetic growth.

Stewart (1997) described aesthetics as a branch of philosophy that seeks to understand the nature of beauty and the interpretation of meaning. Some aesthetic issues are focused on the maker of the works of art, the actual activity of making the art, and the conditions that surround the expression of emotion of the maker. Adolescents' beliefs about the role and importance of the maker and the group he/she represents helps explain the characteristics that are valued in the community. Adolescents formulate their philosophy of beauty based on a series of lived experiences. As these events vary widely, they can overlap and become enmeshed. Their belief system is challenged by events that fall outside the spectrum of their belief system, providing opportunities to reevaluate what they know and accept. Adolescents must connect to their experiences and ideas and their relationships with global thinking.

The contribution of art making to the process of learning provides opportunities for self-expression and discovery (Eisner, 1992). Through active engagement in collaborative works of art participants are able to experience, feel, and respond actively in their art making. The act of participating in such activities provides aesthetic opportunities for exploration and quality educational experiences. Eisner (2002) asserted that aesthetic experience is similar to being "pervaded by an emotional tone made possible by the process of being engaged in a work of art" (p. 81). Maxine Greene (2001) concurred, describing aesthetic responses as a way to find new meanings by seeing, hearing, feeling, stirring, and seeking. She further labeled this type of response as learning to learn that was central to the development of cognition, perception, emotion, and imagination in adolescents.

Barrett (1997) wondered how adolescents interpreted the meanings inherent in their own work and the work of their peers. Barrett investigated how the relationship between aesthetic perception and how adolescents could increase their learning about art, resulting in lifelong

relationships with art. Barrett suggested that being engaged in the arts could help adolescents reflect on and recreate lived experiences associated with their own art and that of their peers. The use of these experiences can insure that students would apply what they have learned, share their artistic efforts, and improve their ability to design and use language to make art.

Barrett's (1997) research was important as adolescents and their peers were engaged in interviews on issues of intention and assumptions regarding numerous concerns including socially related concerns. In discussions with adolescents, Barrett recorded rich revealing conversations regarding their works of art. Barrett substantiated the value of adolescent voices about art and documented improved learning for adolescents through the creation of an environment that promoted a rich, multivoice dialogue about art.

Research on the ability of children and adolescents to render aesthetic responses has resulted in mixed findings. Certain researchers (Gardner, 2006; Gardner, Kircher, Winner, & Perkins, 1975) implied that some elementary students may not be ready for aesthetic instruction, while other studies (Parsons, 1976; Rosario & Collazo, 1981; Walk, Karusaitos, Lebowitz, & Falbo, 1971) suggested that adolescents could benefit by engaging in discussions about art. Research studies supporting aesthetic development that did not consider adolescents' backgrounds or used adult standards for comparison were not well planned (Garber, 2004; Taunton, 1998). They argued that research on adolescents and art should not assume either aesthetic development stages or that aesthetic development occurs in a natural setting. However, this research should consider adolescents' aesthetic development as an individual process and not as a linear progression through stages.

Jeffers (2005) proposed that questions in art education research should be changed from "What is art" (Children's responses to works of art) to "What is art all about?" She argued that

research studies should examine interactions between researchers and participants. Jeffers also suggested that these types of questions could empower researchers to participate in authentic debates regarding the nature of art. Art educators may want to understand teachers' roles in the socialization process and reasons why and which specific expectations about art are taught. Findings in this area may provide the foundation for additional research with adolescents, as Jeffers; (2005) research was concerned with teachers.

Schiller (1995) used Parson's (1987) theory of aesthetic development as a flexible framework and guideline for talking about art with adolescents. She reported that youngsters enjoyed talking about art and should be encouraged to participate in these types of discussions. Thompson and Bales (1991) investigated social interactions that were related to egocentric and social speech. According to Vygotsky (as cited in Thompson & Bales, 1991), adolescents' egocentric talk is used when initiating an activity, such as an art project. The Thompson and Bales (1991) study is noteworthy because of its focus on the collaborative learning process. While this study was important in understanding the classroom interactions that were occurring during the art making process, adolescents' responses toward their art making activities were not included.

Studies in which student perspectives were used as both a theoretical framework and a methodological approach have been found in unpublished dissertations (Champlin, 1991; Nichols, 1996). Nichols (1996) investigated students' responses while they were engaged in the artistic process. The study was relevant because it focused on the student's world from each individual's perspective. He found that by observing students while participating in art activities, adults can learn about adolescents' fears, fantasies, and relationships during their physical, cognitive, and emotional development.

Several studies (Dyson, 1984, 1989; Ernst, 1994, 1997; Finders, 1997) focused on student voices in art education. These researchers indicated that additional studies in art education are needed that focus on adolescents' thoughts and ideas about and their individual approaches to creating and appreciating art to understand and nurture their art making.

Adolescents' Art Making

Cochran-Smith and Frees (2005) noted that a variety of research methods and practices have been used to study contemporary adolescent art making. Their research established approaches for programs and developed the awareness for how art is a way of learning. Cochran-Smith and Frees argued that published research focusing on adolescent thoughts and feelings about art making is limited, which may infer that most research on student artwork is focused on presentation or adolescent art making from an adult perspective.

Cowan (2008) conducted a qualitative study of six Latino adolescents that examined how they constructed their drawings and their meaning. The drawings also were examined for the interpretative quality that could be read and understood by their peer reviewer. The researcher conducted six semi-structured interviews with participants who each provided six drawings for the study. The findings of the study indicated that participants' drawing could not be understood in isolation. To understand the drawings a dialogue was necessary. Dialog facilitated the embedded expressions of cultural identity to be made explicit.

Gamwell (2014) conducted a year-long action research study with 26 eighth grade students, examining meaning making in writing and art. The purpose was to incorporate student reflections as a source of data. Data collection methods included interviews, teacher observations, reflective journals, as well as audio and video recordings. The researcher found that art making provided opportunities for students to become physically engaged in self-

learning. Five major findings reported on how students created meaning during the process of art making, including:

1. Participatory involvement through art making provided a vehicle for student creativity.
2. Emotional engagement contributed to students' construction of personal understanding.
3. Contextual memory referred to the perception of learned material that grows to be considered background knowledge.
4. Social construction of meaning referred to the importance of student participation to investigate and problem solve group concerns.
5. Personal choice and control.

Participants understood and accepted flexibility and freedom in maintaining control of their personal art making. Gamwell's (2014) findings supported Smagorinsky's (1996) belief that creating new art objects through the process of translating thoughts became a catalyst for new ideas yet to be created.

Popular culture of narrative art and the proposed insight into why adolescents were drawn into art making was the focus of a study conducted by Manifold (2009). Although 300 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 24 volunteered to participate in the study, the final sample was comprised of 101 youth from 21 countries who were described as fans of superheroes and made art inspired by this phenomenon. On-line interviews were held with the adolescents who belonged to one of three on-line sites where their "fan art" could be posted. The interviews were conducted using email, with the adolescents responding to 12 open-ended

questions. The study examined how they constructed the artwork and their personal meanings.

The study findings included:

- 66% of respondents were between 12 and 14 years of age
- In early through late adolescence, respondents were obsessed with images of personal interest
- 25% of participants described their transition between childhood and adolescence
- 70% of students described their greatest interest was in fantasy
- 75% of students sought the friendship of likeminded students that they met predominantly through on-line sites
- Between 33% and 75% of the students reported that their high skill level came out of a practice of independent study. Their learning was driven by self-determination and practice.
- 18% of the participants reported that teachers often did not understand and appreciate the deeply meaningful self-revelation aspect of fan art.
- 70% of the participants described their art as copley in nature.

Adolescents in this study reported the importance of art making to the development of their personal identity. Their art making was for themselves. The research cited is important to the development of my study for several reasons: First, I have found few published studies that focused on adolescents and their personal journey during the art making experience, and documenting student reflections and incorporating both art and text is scarce. Second, the study found that student engagement was more successful than the formalized method of teacher questioning. Adolescents feel a kinship with their peers, and these feelings seemed to help them reveal more about themselves through their art.

The on-line study that reached the greatest number of participants appeared to be one that involved adolescents posting their art on-line, without guidance from the researcher. The art presented was satisfying for those who participated in the study. My study supports many of the same values described in Manifold's (2009) research, specifically cooperative art and decision making, personal style, working with fantasy, and producing art for the simple reason of self-expression.

Other studies looked at classroom conversations (Hamblen, 1984; Kakas, 1991; Schiller, 1995; Szekely, 1982, 2006; Thompson & Bales, 1991; Zander, 2003), with adolescents who were demonstrating art making. Among these, Hamblen (1984) and Szekely (1982, 2006) focused on the kind of questions that art teachers introduced in the classroom. Each study examined the purpose and time on task related to teacher-generated questions, rather than student-generated questions. Kakas (1991) and Stokrocki (2003) focused on teacher responses and their influence on student and teacher conversations, with a primary influence on teacher direction. Schiller (1995), and Thompson and Bales (1991) examined the talk of young students with a focus on language and the benefits of student engagement. Through discussion and collaborative dialogue, students were able either to work cooperatively or independently to create artworks that reflected their ideas and creativity.

The choices that children and adolescents make when deciding what type of art work to create and how to create it have been the subject of research by May (1987). May studied the art media preferences of preadolescents, along with their choices of art activities. Her sample included 144 students in one public, Midwestern, school system. She used multiple data collection methods, including participant observation, and semi-structured and formal interviews. Three focal points of May's study were: (a) adolescents' social understanding of the arts as a

discipline, (b) how art content was negotiated during the teaching and learning process, and (c) development of art knowledge. May (1987) found that art preferences were based on personal choices of the adolescents and prior experiences with different types of art media.

Exploring adolescents' preferences for expressive arts, including visual, music, drama, and writing, was the focus of Emery's (1989) research. Emery conducted a case study to examine the thought processes of 10 adolescents who were engaged in art creation, drama, dance, music, or writing. He found that engagement in the art activity was the result of three main dimensions: social interaction, transformation, and representation. A fourth dimension, beliefs, appeared to be the foundation of the artistic thinking process. Emery used his observations to develop a typology that could be used to characterize belief patterns of adolescents working on art activities. Emery concluded that believing in the value of art making and thinking were of greater importance than being engaged in formal art instruction.

Using journals for writing and drawing helped adolescents make connections across the curriculum and empowered them to express inner thoughts and feelings, creating a community of learners (Ernst, 1994, 1997). Ernst focused on thinking, planning, and discovery both in words and pictures to show how thinking contributed to learning for both students and teachers. Ernst's work emphasized how synthesizing pictures and words could help expand the potential of literacy.

Symbolic Resources

From children's earliest years, they begin to recognize and develop an understanding of symbolic streams in their sociocultural world. Before children are able to read, they are actively engaged in decoding signs and symbols and creating a personal meaning that is linked to their identity (Dewey, 1934; Joseph, 1997; Tap & Malewska-Perpe, 1991). The smiley face, the

golden arches, heart shapes, crosses, and many other symbolic elements create repeated patterns of interaction that are interchangeable within text and video. Some symbolic elements are cultural. A symbolic element becomes a resource when it is used by someone for something to extend one's human experience (Vygotsky, 1976). Artwork produced by adolescents can have different meanings to different audiences. How adolescents use symbolic resources is important in understanding the evolution of their personal symbol systems and contributes to the development of their identity.

Chula (1991) conducted a qualitative study to investigate methodological techniques for analyzing visual data. The study focused on the use of graphic symbols as descriptors and interpretive inquiry. Chula interviewed 58 adolescents about their perceptions of their experiences while drawing and writing. The adolescents were from two middle schools with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Four topics were the focus of the study: (a) self-perception, (b) personal achievement, (c) inspiring teachers, and (d) ideal environment. The study findings indicated that artwork was a useful source of information. It was noted that interpretative inquiry was enhanced by the use of symbolic resources.

Adolescent symbols increasingly demonstrated the influence of television advertisements and comic art, as well as the influence of these symbols on their world. Themes that express consumerism, sports, fast food, and fashion were evidenced in their drawings. The semiotic value of adolescents' bedrooms may provide information that increases the understanding of their identity. Salinger (1995) investigated the private lives of 43 teenagers in his photographic images of their bedrooms over a two-year period. These case studies illustrated the passage from childhood to adulthood. Additionally, her interviews with the participants increased understanding the reality of their lives. The bedroom is one of the only personal spaces in which

adolescents are able to construct their lives and demonstrate control. This room is one of the few places that they display their rich world of symbols, image fantasies, memories, and harsh realities. Adolescents are increasingly influenced by technological advancements resulting in new construction of meaning making for adolescents using mass media in cell phones, computers, video games, tablets, and internet introducing entirely new symbol systems constantly.

Examining the symbol systems used by adolescents in their art and everyday life is important to my study. They reflect the adolescents' search for identity and may be a bridge to discovering their future selves.

Community Involvement and Extracurricular Activities

The matter of how youth use their free time is of great interest and concern to parents, educators, human service professionals, and youth themselves. Huebner and Mancini (2003) explored factors that predicted adolescent participation in structured, out-of-school activities. Participants in their research study included ninth through twelfth grade students (n = 454) living in a rural southeastern state. The findings of the study indicated that parents' and friends' endorsement of activities, as well as adolescents' ethnicity were predictive of participation in after-school extracurricular activities. Peer pressure, parent endorsement, and academic grades were found to predict the amount of time adolescents were involved in non-school clubs. Time spent in volunteering could be predicted by family socioeconomic status, family structure, the extent to which parents monitored activities of the adolescents, and the grade levels of the participant. Time spent in religious-related activities could be predicted from the adolescents' race, family composition, peers, and gender.

Relatively little research to date has focused on what predicts time use (Huebner & Mancini, 2003). Because everyday life experiences are influenced by multiple layers of relationship status and opportunities (Orthner, Barnett-Morris, & Mancini, 1994), time use was organized within two systems (self-system and the micro-system) of an ecological model of understanding (Huebner & Mancini, 2003).

Few researchers have conceptualized out-of-school time as an independent variable (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Perkins & Hartless, 2002). The approach that out-of-school time has an important outcome and is equal to outcomes such as achievement and risk behavior (Huebner & Mancini, 2003). Larson (2000) contended that conducting research and establishing theory can be difficult when including a variety of youth activities (e.g., after school, community involvement, and self-directed). Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford (1994) noted that adolescents who reported lower levels of self-confidence also reported many more constraints or barriers to leisure participation. Participation in an out-of-school activity can help adolescents build their self-confidence, especially when working on group projects with their peers, such as the development of a community-based mural.

According to researchers (Fredrick & Eccles, 2005; Larson & Verma, 1999), American adolescents participate in leisure activities and events for more than 50% of the hours that they are awake. Researchers and school administrators argued that productive use of free time could involve active membership in extracurricular activities, including sports programs, art projects, and school clubs (Larson & Verma, 1999). Frederick and Eccles (2005) also indicated that participation in these types of activities could promote adolescents' growth and development.

Darling's (2004) study of extracurricular activities in adolescents extends previous studies in the area of extracurricular activity participation and adjustment. Data were generated

from six California high schools. Students' self-reported their participation in extracurricular activity participation during the current school year. The findings of the study indicated that participation in extracurricular activities promotes positive growth and development for adolescents. In addition, use of alcohol and drugs is lower among youth who participate in extracurricular activities.

Youth organizations often focus on deficits instead of assets of the community youth. Most youth-serving organizations ignore the potential contribution of youth to public life. As a result, many young people grow up without a civil infrastructure that promotes their ability to develop and practice the skills and experience needed to engage in the public sphere (Schuster & Dobbie, 2011).

“Youth United,” is an example of one community-based group, which grew out of efforts to involve young people in social service delivery in southwest Detroit. The Youth United group was involved in mental health, journals, justice, child protective service, and assisting other social service providers implement more youth-friendly practices (Miner, 2006). The long-term organizational goals were to strengthen the capacity of youth to influence community change especially in their schools. This organization treated young people as serious citizens with a right to contribute to community change (Schuster & Dobbie, 2011) and offered opportunities for young people to take action on issues that mattered to them.

Literature on extracurricular activity has been criticized because quantitative research has not been used to examine the effects of participation in school-related and community-related extracurricular activities on the growth and development of adolescents (Frederick & Eccles, 2005). Researchers have speculated that participating in extracurricular activities promotes

prosocial associations with peer groups (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). But further research is warranted.

Prosocial activities are defined as involvement in physical activity, organized sports, organized nonsport extracurricular activities, as well as volunteer and religious activities (Eccles & Barber, 1997, Frederick & Eccles, 2005; Mahoney et al., 2005). Prosocial peer groups build an activity-based culture with a common ethos of shared values and norms. The collective values and behaviors of these peer groups can influence each member of the peer group (Fredericks & Eccles, 2005). Participation in extracurricular activities has been found to be a positive predictor of school engagement and self-worth, and a negative predictor of depression (Frederick & Eccles, 2005).

An important framework for adolescent development is leisure. Adolescents can use their leisure time to choose and handle their preferences, activities, and interests. Through their choice of activities, they can manage their personal environment and more toward being self-directed in their activities (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Research suggested that participating in structured leisure could aid development of strong prosocial support networks and act as a safeguard from the negative associations (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Oh, 2006, Iso-Ahola & Park, 2004). Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) suggested that joint activities with peers could be an important strategy in distracting adolescents and youth from their problems. Adolescents can interact with their peers on a regular basis by participating in school-based extracurricular activities. These activities could use skills development and shared interest to provide as a means of distracting the adolescents from their personal concerns (Renzulli, 1994).

School-based Community Service

The National and Community Service Act was signed into law by President George Bush in 1990. Resources for schools and community initiatives were provided by this important act.

Both liberals and conservatives supported the act at a time of outstanding budget cuts in education.

Community-based learning is grounded on the theories of John Dewey who believed that adolescents could be motivated and stimulated by action-oriented learning and social development. Nearly 100 years ago, Kilpatrick (1918) advocated “project method” learning that occurs outside of school and has a goal of promoting community needs. This type of learning is still something that is practiced today.

During the 1950s, school-based community projects re-emerged as part of the curriculum and then again in the 1970s. Goals reflecting the development of attitudes, skills, and knowledge useful in civic education were included. Goodlad (1984), in *A Place Called School*, suggested that school-based community service could create improved performance in education. School-based community education promotes engagement in a democratic society. Life lessons, such as developing a meaningful attitude toward community participation, working with adults and learning about civic principles of life were some of the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Community service has been suggested to affect adolescents’ sense of social responsibility in developing positive relationships with adults.

Conrad and Hedin (1991) reported that community service had an effect on self-confidence. They reported that higher levels of self-confidence appeared in adolescents who have taken a leadership role, tutored other students, engaged in peer counseling and interviews. A number of studies have provided support for the value of incorporating action and dialogue and suggested that scores improve in math and reading and risky behavior among peers is reduced.

Community Service Identity and Art Projects

A fundamental element of low-income population is that within their neighborhoods adolescents develop strong identities (deAnda, Franke, & Becerra, 2009). When adolescents involved in art-based community projects are exposed to social, cultural, and political ideas, they develop relationships among the members of their group. According to Dissanayake (1988), community-based art projects focus on specific experiences involving collective identities. This focus may act as a catalyst for change among the adolescents and encourage greater social responsibility. Gude (2000) asserted that a social activities approach might reflect specific community needs. Anderson (2003) referred to the connection between art making and community-based art projects, suggesting that group dynamics were an important element of these programs.

Sternberg and Davidson (2005) studied adolescents in a variety of social relations in the art studio to examine the dynamics of peer interactions. Their study provided support for an interconnection among adolescents, with social roles existing beyond the art studio. These roles influenced students in the art classroom, bringing meaning and value to their art making.

According to Harvey (2000), the ultimate goal of research in the creative arts was to understand how to meet the needs of people who were expected to use this art project to build partnerships through participatory action research. Participants strongly valued making art with others and wanted to complete their art projects in a community supportive of their efforts (Spanoil, 2008).

Thousands of public schools across the nation engage adolescents in community-based service projects each year. Examining the types of community-based service projects can

increase awareness of positive experiences for adolescents, while offering insights into strengthening policy and practice (Howard, 2004; Markus et al., 1993)

Community-Based Projects in Art Education

Community-based art projects assume many shapes and serve many purposes. These programs are highly visible in the field of art exploration because of the lasting art images created and because the target population typically are students and/or children. Viewing children's art developed as part of a community-based art program recognizes the meaning among the personal, social, and political nature of the work (Klein, 2007).

The reflection aspect of community-based artwork and postmodern art education pedagogy are associated. In the process of self-reflection, postmodern artists evaluate their work to assure that the artwork corresponds to the society in which they are involved (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). Efland et al. extended the purpose of art education beyond the power of the arts to educate by providing community-based opportunities that transform and give meaning to the community benefiting from the project.

Research in community-based art education examines participants' perceptions of their neighborhoods. This type of program, using community-based art education, provides opportunities for participants to evaluate social issues within their neighborhoods. The project can lead to a strong collective identity among participants, leading to the development of the community as a basis for social change. Community-based art projects in art education can assist in identifying specific needs of adolescent participants. According to Hutzel (2007):

. . . adolescents indicated that participants increasingly realize their own ability to affect change in their community to improve the landscape and promote a cleaner greener place through art. Data reveals that the community art curriculum contributes to social change in the community by highlighting the role of neighborhood children and reclaiming their community. (p. 299)

The adolescents' concepts of community were inspected using the curriculum. They were encouraged to make attempts at social restructuring through community-based activities that involved art education (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Basto, 1998), community art (Adejumo, 2000), and community development (Green & Haines, 2002). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) recognized that local residents played important roles in the sustainable regeneration of their community.

The objectives of community-based art projects are associated with principles of action research (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003). The community-based art curriculum is practitioner-based and focused on learning. Employing this curriculum could result in improving the personal and social environment within the community and making positive responses to societal issues that focus on community change.

Anderson (2003) discussed the importance of the underlying connection between art and the community by stating "the survival value of art lies in its community-making function" (p. 63). Freedman and Congdon (2005) described what they learned from other art educators, claiming certified art teachers often "tend to ignore artists' ways of understanding the world" (p. 138). Research in community-based art education (Taylor, 2002, 2004; Ulbricht, 2005) and various socially reconstructive art education practices (Wexler, 2002) was based in theories of authentic education and informal education. Ulbricht (2005) offered community-based art education as a support for a variety of art education practices. He encouraged a broader concept of community-based art education as one that promotes understanding of local art and cultures, including outreach and public art. The collective identity, strong social identity (Green & Haines, 2002), and a strong sense of community (Hiller, 2002) have been found in past studies, indicating the need for additional action research in art education.

Since the mid-20th century, cross-age art education programs have grown in popularity. These programs emphasize interactions among two or more generations to increase cooperation and collaboration in programs that involve young and old people who share skills, knowledge, and experience (Newman, 2006). These programs were developed to reduce social isolation that had increased among people of different age groups. Sociologists and gerontologists acknowledged the social and psychological benefits (e.g. improved autonomy, sense of community, etc.) that participating in cross-age art activities provide to all people (Newman, 2006).

Qualitative Research for Community-Based Art Projects

Research contributes to the development of principles and theories, while the enhancing the participants' self-efficacy and community involvement (Feen-Calligan, 2005; Reeb, Folger, Langsner, Ryan, & Crouse, 2010). Research involves ethical commitments to improve society (make it more just), self-improvement (encourage individuals to become more conscious members in their communities), and ultimately improve community living by building cooperation and collaboration (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2008). Knowledge, practice, and development connected to art-based community projects are supported by this type of research.

Qualitative research provides a methodology that allows the researcher to be involved in all aspects of the community-based art project. The goal of qualitative research is to understand the participants' meanings, assumptions, and beliefs, to examine the participants' actions, and to bring the project into closer alignment with their values and aspirations (Gay et al., 2008). The tasks for qualitative researchers include developing and testing theories about their work in a continuing cycle of action, as well as observing and reflecting on the outcomes of the actions.

Theories resulting from qualitative research involve self-critique, with researchers constantly examining their values and ethical commitment to improving the community

Research for community-based art projects is distinct from other forms of applied research in several ways. Community-based art projects are value oriented and typically use qualitative research methods to investigate the problem being studied (Gay et al., 2008). This type of research design allows professionals to examine their practice and establish methods for continuous growth toward socially constructive ends (Gay et al., 2008).

Purpose of Murals in Society

Murals serve a number of purposes in society. In the past, they were used to depict lessons before written language. Creating murals within a community is one indicator of the health and well-being of the community (Delgado & Barton, 1995). Murals have been called the newspapers on the walls because of the information contained in them. They serve an important element for youth empowerment and community strength. Murals identify issues and struggles within the community and support collective revitalization (O'Connell, 2012).

Public art provides the community with symbolic representation of collective beliefs and reaffirms the collective sense of self. Murals remain the quintessential public art. A mural is classified as any form of artwork that is designed and applied to a wall surface. A primary feature of the design is characterized by the elements of the size and space that feature the unity and harmony of pictured images. Murals date back to the Paleolithic period in southern France (around 30000 BC; Kleiner, 2012). The Egyptian tombs display wall murals dating back to 3150 BC and murals found in Minoan temples and Pompei (100 BC) still exist today. The most frequently identified mural was the Sistine Chapel ceiling created by Michelangelo from 1508 to 1512.

Boyte (1986) defined “free space” as a place in the neighborhood where participants are able to share their concerns and develop community participation. Project planning and other coordinated efforts transform spaces to inform, educate, and build support and strength among the residents. Targeting the internal audience is important when examining community murals. No specific style or theme is required for a projected community mural. They can be varied, depicting numerous ideas and images, but all demonstrate self-expression, ethnic pride, and personal communication.

Examining the community murals identifies a number of accepted themes that communicate a collective emotion and the importance of the mural making in the classroom. Many murals are symbols of ethnic pride within the community. They may include religious symbols, racial pride, other decorative symbols of social justice, national heroes, or memorials to local residents.

Holscher (1976) considered murals as a statement of protest. Issues of social justice and oppression are important in the community and are often the subject of works of art. Validation of community experience is elaborate and symbolic. A common goal of murals extends beyond simple communication. Mural painting educates adolescents in multiple skills that can be repeated in both school and work.

The purpose of mural making is important to my study. While the participants have had extensive opportunities throughout their young lives to observe, analyze, and interpret the famous murals in their community, they may develop a greater appreciation of the creativity, imagination, and hard work that was required to create the murals as works of art.

Murals can be found all over the world, including New York, Philadelphia, Belfast, Los Angeles, Mexico, Cuba, and India. During the modern period, Riviera, a Mexican muralist

painted in Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia. These murals are an effective tool used to encourage problem solving and create tourist attractions with the hope of boosting economic income. Community murals have become memorials to those who died supporting a cause. Philadelphia has been called the mural capital of the world, with a total of 2,700 community murals designed to help discourage graffiti and raise awareness and hope in some of the poorest neighborhoods (O'Connell, 2012), .

Some murals are created through a collaborative process used in making art as a vehicle for social change. "Pot Luck" is a mural created in 1994 in a multiethnic neighborhood in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The mural was created by local teens and community volunteers to show the unity of residents who live in the community (Fichter, 2006).

Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, murals became the artistic vehicle for educating the largely illiterate population, describing dreams of a new society and evils of the past. As part of the 1960s civil rights movement, murals became an important method for remembering the cultural heritage of the population being depicted in the murals.

The community-based mural movement took a firm hold in the Chicano community in Southern California. The largest group of Chicano murals in the United States was located in Los Angeles. It is estimated that between 1,000 and 15,000 murals were painted since 1969 (Crockcraft & Barnet-Sanchez, 1993). An existing mural, "CitySpirit," was created in Mexican town in Detroit Michigan by Chicano artists, George Vargas and Martín Moreno in 1977 for the civil rights movement (Miner, 2008). This mural is one of the few from the time of "*movimiento*" (Miner, 2008). *Movimiento* empowered community members to imagine and implement creative responses to the challenges of their time. A second mural in Detroit, "Cornfield," was installed across the street from the mural, "CitySpirit" in 1997. These murals provide artistic

documentation of the unique experiences of Chicano/as in this geographic area, which differ substantially from the environment of other Chicano/as in the United States (Miner, 2008).

The muralists, George Vargas and Martín Moreno, created their mural, “CitySpirit” within a regional framework of Chicano experience at the entrance or “home” for Detroit Chicano/as along an international border. In trying to create a more accurate history of the problems encountered in this community, a group of Chicano/as began interviewing residents to in the city’s Chicano/a community (Miner, 2008). This collective history used narratives from the community members to describe the methods used by the United States to force Chicano/as to return to Mexico. However, “the recording and documentation of Chicana/o murals, for instance, has received virtually no attention outside of California and the Southwest” (Miner, 2008, p. 102). Murals located in the Midwest documenting the community lives of Chicano/as have not been the subject of historical analysis (Schuster & Dobbie, 2011).

Within one city block, the two murals, “CityScape” and “Cornfields” are the main cultural attractions in the inner city community. A major cultural institution that has great influence in the community is the Catholic Church. Two parishes have served as a unifying force in the Latino colonia (Badillo, 2003). The two parishes provide worship services for Catholic Mexican Americans and offer community residents hope and dignity, as well as promoting cultural pride (Miner, 2008).

In creating murals that documented Chicano/a contributions to American society, muralists provided educational experiences that were not included in textbooks (Conrad, 1995). These community murals often were not taken seriously as art because they were judged by academic art history scholars or defined by European American art traditions (Desai, 2003).

Chicano/a artists in the United States introduced social realism in their art that reflected art at its highest level (LeFalle-Collins, Tibol, & Goldman, 1996).

The postmodern practices of collaboration included both artists and viewers, who became directly active in the art through participation as art critics (Kelley, 1994). The postmodern practices of collaboration extend beyond the artist themselves and to the viewer who becomes directly active in the art through participation. Kelley (1994), an art critic stated, “participation is not simply a matter of agreeing with the artist at the outset of the project or of her agreeing with her participation, rather participation is a dialogical process that changes both participant and artist” (p. 232). Mazeud (as cited in Taylor, 2002) defined the ritual performance of postmodern criteria:

- functions socially and politically;
- connects art through life by critical self-reflection;
- draws attention to social identity through mini narratives;
- is characterized by flexibility;
- is interdisciplinary;
- uses problem solving and conflicts while expanding the definition of what is;
- involves collaboration and viewer participation.

The desire for beauty and meaning in life is an essential characteristic of people (Dissanayake, 1988). Art reflects social and political events occurring at the time of its creation. The depiction of events and situations represented in the artwork is portrayed in its context and format (Miner, 2008). Art, when displayed in public places (e.g., murals on the sides of buildings) often is related to political, social, and economic structures in place in the community (Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011).

By 1970, murals were being used to beautify communities, with artists and young people creating murals that reflected relevant themes in the environment. These mural themes included depictions of religious, indigenous motifs, historical events, modern portraits, political and social, landscape, poetry, urban culture, family, and text (Crockcraft & Barnet-Sanchez, 1993). The authors continued, “A truly public art provides society with the symbolic representation of collected beliefs as well as continuing reaffirmation of the collective sense of self. . . . The desire by people for beauty and meaning in their lives is fundamental to their identity as human beings (p. 5).

Although Los Angeles was considered the mural capital of the world (Mural Conservancy of L.A, 2010) many other cities in the United States are challenging that title. Philadelphia Mural Arts Project claimed 2,700 murals to date and has changed the artistic landscape of the region and established a permanent investment in neighborhoods and communities. O’Connell’s (2012) study of the Philadelphia murals revealed religious, faith, racism, economic disparity, and violence were important elements in the composition and art as a catalyst in the journey of healing a broken city.

Summary

Educational research in the field of art reveals gaps in adolescent dialogue about art and art making. Research in the field of discipline-based art education in the 1980s highlighted curriculum reform movements. A paradigm shift in the field from skill development to a more rigorous content approach was introduced. Classroom practices and research often focused on the language used to interpret and evaluate works of art. In contrast, Barrett (1997) researched adolescent interpretation of meaning in their artwork. Critical engagement in art enables adolescents to reflect and reinvent learning.

Graphic representation is affected by culture, social, and educational factors. Visual representation is a source of data that requires the viewer to understand multiple meanings and consider the relationship between the viewer and reflection. The influences that define aesthetic consciousness are affected by social, family, and school experiences. Cognitive development levels can add to mastering aesthetic concepts.

Aesthetic perception is recognized as an experience that is socially constructed. Formal education in the arts contributes to the formation of self (Taylor, 2004). Self-confidence is described as an attitude that involves the real and perceived self. Self-esteem is understood to be a function of competence (Mruk, 2006). Self-confidence, as determined by competence, is reflected in a feeling of value. It is plausible to view self-confidence as a basic human attitudes that contributes to an adolescent's feelings of self-worth (Mruk, 2006). Parent involvement is an important element in the development of self-confidence. Parents who demonstrate warmth and acceptance encourage adolescents' sense of worth and value (deAnda et al., 2009).

Adolescents learn to make meaning in the community through interaction with adults and adolescents who have more experience. Attitudes to learn are determined by sociocultural content. The emphasis of this study is to create opportunities for adolescents to become visually literate. The present research attempts to provide adolescents with a framework for developing and producing images of their reconstructed community and learning to make meaning from their artwork.

The belief that out-of-school time is related to the importance of extracurricular activities and is reflected in self-confidence levels and barriers to leisure participation. Extracurricular activities were related to adolescents' favorable academic, psychological, and behavioral adjustments.

Students' involvement in community-based art projects can influence career preparation, increase awareness of community problems, and connect theory to practice (Howard, 2004). As a pedagogy, community-based art projects are grounded in experience. Participation in these types of artwork is a purposeful tool for preparing students to become contributing citizens and enhance academic achievement.

Participation in community-based art projects can be life changing (Taylor, 2004). The reflection aspect of community-based artwork and postmodern art theory are associated with critical forms of self-reflection. Self-reflection allows participants to integrate observations with existing knowledge and understanding. Research supports the theory that participation in cooperative learning or art learning activities may establish behavior patterns and commitment to shared goals and lead to a socially engaging society (Supple & Plunkett, 2011).

Community-based art projects are a form of action research (Hutzel, 2007). The goal of improving society, self-improvement, self-reflection, and community involvement is shared. Improving social conditions in the real world become elements in the problem solving process. In this study, I explored the community-based art project using a form of qualitative research in a case study. The goals and achievement as well as the nature and outcome of the community-based art project are defined as a function of:

- Methods employed or measured outcomes (Thompson, 2003)
- Cultural attitudes of causal approaches in educational research (Jeffers, 2005)
- Accurate data collection and analysis (Mruk, 2006)
- Program components (Alt & Medrich, 1994)
- Time commitment to service, skills, and program leadership (Howard, 2004).

Community murals provide graphic illustrations of real life and real people. According to Miner (2008), community murals are as important as works of art in a museum. Community murals have been accepted as a part of urban beautification and have been enjoyed by members of the Latino community, as well as people from surrounding areas (Miner, 2008).

A ritualized research agenda exists in the field of art therapy – art education at Wayne State University. This agenda includes a return to scholarly research that examines the collective identities of participants in community-based art projects to develop curriculum to meet the needs of adolescents and other participants living in an underserved community.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the methods that were used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions. The topics that are included in this chapter include: a restatement of the problem, research questions, research design, setting, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis. Each of these topics is presented separately.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore adolescent participation in the development of a community mural as an art-based community project.

Research Questions

The research questions that were developed for the study include:

1. What are students' perceptions of themselves as they have participated in an art-based community project?
2. Does participation in an art-based community project by Hispanic adolescents aid in the development of self-confidence?
3. Does participation in an art-based community project encourage interaction among Hispanic adolescents and increase their awareness of community-based problems, such as socioeconomic stressors, adolescent risky behaviors, and education and career planning?

Research Design

A qualitative research design, using an intrinsic case study approach, was used in this study. The case study was used to determine the effects of participation in an art-based community project involving the creation of a mural based on adolescents' perceptions of their

neighborhoods. According to Creswell (2013), intrinsic case studies are used to examine a particular phenomenon on which the study is focused. This case study examined a particular group of middle school students as they participated in a community-based art project. The group that was the focus of this study was unique in that it consisted of middle school students of Hispanic heritage, from a historic Hispanic neighborhood in a large urban area. The participants were bilingual and attended a parochial school that served as the anchor of the neighborhood. The adolescents in this study were involved in a six-week project that included designing and completing an original mural which was originally intended to focus on the asset-based elements in their neighborhood (e.g., landmarks, churches, schools, people, homes, etc.). Data were collected using researcher observations and field notes, one-on-one interviews with participants, adolescent journals documenting their experiences in the project, and photographs of the students' artwork taken at different steps in the process.

A case study approach is an appropriate method for this research. Creswell (2013) indicated that a case study is used when the boundary of the case study is clearly identified and can present findings that provide the reader with an understanding of the case. Additionally, according to Creswell, the case must be identified in terms of whether the case involves an individual, a group, a program, or an activity. For the purpose of the present study, the case involved an activity (development of a community-based mural by adolescents attending a private school in the neighborhood). Finally, the analysis of the data (interviews, adolescent journals, field notes, photographs) involves an holistic approach to describe the experiences of adolescents while working collaboratively to create a mural depicting their neighborhoods. This study used a single art project with one group of individuals. The specific steps used to collect and analyze the data for this study are presented later in the chapter.

A problem inherent in case studies is the difficulty in generalizing the results beyond the included participants. Replication of the findings also is problematic as the case study involves a unique situation that is unlikely to recur. However, Stake (1995) asserted that particularization should be the focus of a case study, not generalization. The case study should explain the phenomenon being studied and should not be concerned with generalizing to a larger population. The adolescents included in the present study learned to collaborate with others to create a single art project that reflected their neighborhoods and community. They learned to employ problem solving and critical thinking, time management, as well as artistic skills to create a mural that reflected their image of their community. Successful completion of this project could help the adolescents' improve their self-confidence by applying the skills they learned to other activities. In addition, the findings may be useful to teachers or counselors who are interested in developing other community-based programs for adolescents to increase their involvement in their neighborhoods and improve their self-confidence.

Setting for the Study

A neighborhood in a historic Southwest Community located in a large Midwest metropolitan area was the setting of this study. It is a heavily populated area where 100% of the children are from families that qualify for free or reduced lunch programs. Most families are Hispanic Catholics who attend church in the local parish. Many parents pay tuition for their children to attend parochial school, although they often have to sacrifice to meet the costs. The school is experiencing economic problems due to high unemployment rates, poor English language skills, and lack of transportation. Many teachers in private schools are responsible for instruction in three subject areas, as well as providing counseling and social services for the

children. Art and music programs are absent from the private school. Class size often exceeds 35 students (Personal Communication with School Principal, April 12, 2012).

Most adolescents are active members of their church that provides the social life for the community. Although there are sufficient parks in the neighborhoods, they have not been maintained for the safety and security of the children. Although the transportation system is only marginally dependable, it is the primary means of transportation to school, clinic, church, and work. No movie theatres, museums, skating rinks, community pool, athletic gym are located in the community. However, nine bars and six flea markets are located in the neighborhood. Police protection is undependable at best. Leadership within the neighborhoods is almost non-existent and gangs dominate the neighborhood (Personal communication with School Principal, April 12, 2012).

Participants

The participants in the present study were seventh-grade students enrolled in a large parochial school. The participants included male and female students in general education classes. These students generally were Hispanic and were fluent in both English and Spanish. . The only inclusion criterion was being in the seventh grade. The exclusion criteria were enrollment in a public or charter school and in a grade other than seventh grade.

The purpose of the study was explained to members of the seventh grade at the selected parochial school. The students then were invited to sign up to participate in the study. The school sent information sheets to parents whose children met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study. The parent information sheet included all information that was contained in an informed consent that had to be signed. The topics included in the parent information sheet were a description of the art project, the procedures that were used in the study, the instruments that the

children completed, assurances of confidentiality, and voluntary nature of participation. The parent information sheet was available in both Spanish and English. The parents did not have to sign and return the information sheet unless they did not want their child to participate in the art project. The parents had two weeks from the date of mailing to respond. If they did not respond, I assumed that the parents had given permission for their child to participate in the study.

I met with the children whose parents had given permission to participate in the study. I discussed the art project and provided information on what would be expected throughout the six weeks of the study. An adolescent assent form then was distributed to the children. They read the assent form with me, and I encouraged the children to ask questions about what they were going to do in the study. If any child decided that she/he did not want to participate, she/he was excused. The children did not have to sign the assent forms. The use of passive parent consent form and adolescent assent forms provided the required information to the parents and adolescents, but did not require a signature that could identify the students in the study.

All of the children who volunteered participated in the mural painting activity. However, the data analysis was based on five students who attended all of the sessions. Parents were invited to observe the art activity.

The Making of a Mural

This section describes the community-based art project that examined participants' perceptions of their community, and the resulting portable mural. Although the creation of the community mural was an after school project that was not a formal part of either the art or the social studies curriculum, some content from the social studies and art curriculum found its way into the mural activity, as the students discussed their neighborhood while planning and developing their art project. They discussed their neighborhoods both with me, as well as with each other. During the interview process and in writing in their journals, comments regarding

their conversations with their parents and their increased awareness of their neighborhoods were expected to emerge. Participation in the project was not graded, although the students received certificates of participation from me. At the end of the program, the mural was displayed at a community gathering, where the attendees were invited to view the mural.

Postmodern art does not focus on the rewards or awards for the experience. The most important element of postmodern art-based learning is reciprocity. In other words, collaborative art making provides opportunities to develop mutual respect. It changes the configuration of the participants and is redistribution of power: *shared power*.

The way that adolescents are educated is still shaped by a series of practices that encourage individualism, competitiveness, and independence, rather than cooperative learning, and connective experiences. Participation in the mural encouraged adolescents to develop a sense of social responsibility and connection to their community.. These changes were both personal and social, and manifested themselves in a reconstructive and transformative practice of living.

The benefits that adolescents could gain from participating in a community-based art project consist of an understanding and appreciation of reciprocity, the hallmark of a postmodern educational pedagogy (Taylor, 2002). Additionally, a deeper knowledge of civic responsibility, self-transformation, and respect for social justice issues were expected to emerge from their participation in this research. The interview questions sought information regarding the adolescents' perceptions of what they gained from their participation in the study. For example, they were asked to indicate how their participation changed their views of their neighborhoods, made them more aware of the relevance of collaborating on a community-based art project, and whether or how working on this mural increased their self-confidence.

Constructing a Community-Based Art Mural

The steps that were incorporated into this art project included the following:

1. Students viewed many paintings of city scenes created by various artists (e.g., Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Stuart Davis, Robert Corringham, Robert Estes, Ernest Kirchner, Vito Valdez, George Vargas and Martín Moreno).
2. Students discussed the differences and likeness of each painting. Students related paintings to their neighborhood and reflected on some images that they saw in their neighborhood.
3. Students discussed the unique images they saw in their own neighborhood.
4. Students were asked to bring a picture to class from their neighborhood that they felt was special and they wished to share with the group. A photo could be of a pot of flowers, a candy store, or a rough iron gate.
5. Students discussed how each photo might be included as well as other images they might consider for the mural.
6. Students began to sketch images they would like to include in their community mural.
7. Students discussed the finished sketches and how they might incorporate them into the mural design with an effort to create unity and harmony in their free-hand drawings.
8. Participants evaluated the design for images they could choose to add (people, animals, busses, workers, etc.) in reconstructing the design.
9. When the students indicated the design was satisfactory, it was outlined on the canvas with red oxide acrylic paint.
10. Participants chose a color palette for the mural that reflected the mood of the work.

11. Participants discussed and outlined areas of color to be applied.
12. A schedule of painting and observing was developed.
13. Participants often painted with the assistance of a others to establish a co-operative activity, although formal partnerships were not established.
14. After completing the mural, students invited their parents and friends to view their work.

Students were asked to draw and write in their journals. They had a series of prompts, with some generated by me and other prompts by the participants. At times, the participants were encouraged to write independently in their journals. Appendix A includes the prompts used to generate students' ideas for their journals.

Instruments and Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools are discussed in this section. These tools include the demographic survey, pre and post survey, student journals, face-to-face interviews, researcher observations and field notes, and photographs of students' artwork taken at various times throughout the study. The student journals, interviews, observations and field notes, and photographs were used to triangulate the data for the study.

Demographic Survey

A short pencil and paper demographic survey was used to obtain information about the participants. The eight items on the survey are age, gender, ethnicity, grade in school, background in art (completed art classes in elementary school, number of years of art classes, experience with the Detroit Institute of Arts and/or murals in the neighborhood; See Appendix B). The responses used a forced choice format. Students were told that all information on this survey was confidential and no student would be identifiable by name in the final results.

Pre/Post Survey

An original survey was used to measure changes in self-confidence of the adolescents participating in the study from before beginning work on the mural to after completing the mural. The 10 items on the survey were rated using a 3-point scale, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, and 3 = agree. Scoring was accomplished by summing the numeric ratings for each items. The total score can range from 10 to 30, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of self-confidence. See Appendix B for the survey.

Observations and Field Notes

I maintained a field note journal in which I wrote my observations of the students' actions, experiences, and progress in completing the portable mural. According to Thorpe (2008), field notes are notes taken by the researcher of his/her observations or discussions that occur while conducting research. Consistent with Thorpe's (2008) recommendations, my field notes were informal observations of the students as they worked and collaborated on the mural. I took brief notes during the sessions and then expanded them after each session. The field notes were used to document the students' progress in creating the community mural and their work as a group.

Student Journals

The adolescents participating in the study were asked to keep a journal. They were given approximately 15 minutes at the end of each session to write a synopsis of their experiences in their journals. While I prompted the students to reflect on their daily experiences, think critically (See Appendix A for examples of prompts), and connect their reflections with discussions among other students, they were able to use free expression to write or illustrate their feelings about their participation and the participation of their peers regarding the art project. I collected the

journals at the end of each session and redistributed them to the students at the next session. I read the journals, but did not respond to the students in the journal as a way of neither supporting nor negating their views of participating in the community-based art project.

Interviews

I engaged each participant in a debriefing interview following completion of the mural. A semi-structured interview format was used to ask the adolescents about their participation in the community-based art project. The themes that were included in the interviews were the adolescents' view of their participation in the community-based art project, their work in a group effort, and the effects of participation on their views of their neighborhood. Additional themes were expected to emerge from the interviews in addition to these three. The semi-structured interview used a list of standard questions (See Appendix C) that were asked of each student. Examples of these questions included:

1. What did you like best about participating in this art project?
2. Where you able to see your contributions within the mural?
3. How did you feel when you saw your design in the final mural?
4. Is there anything you would have done differently?

If the student did not provide a response to a question or gave an incomplete response, I would repeat what they said and then asked them to tell me more. The interview session for each student lasted 20 to 30 minutes.

Photographs

I took photographs of the artwork in progress. Photographs provided “an unmediated and unbiased visual report” (Schwartz, 1989, p. 120) of the project and served as evidence of the students' work. The students' work was photographed at the end of each session, with care taken not to include the faces of any of the students. Some photographs were displayed chronologically

in an appendix in the final dissertation to provide the chronology of the artwork from conception to completion. The purpose of the photographs was to provide visual images that documented the progress of the adolescents during the conception, development, and completion of the community mural. The students were asked to indicate what part of the mural they would like photographed at the end of each session and which they considered to be their major contribution. The reader is able to see the mural that is being discussed. Without the photographs, the reader might have difficulty in understanding the steps that were required to move the project from beginning to end.

Researcher Journal

I maintained a journal that incorporated my thoughts and feelings about the construction of the mural separate from the field notes. I included ideas to help keep the students motivated and strategies to ensure the successful completion of the mural. I updated the journal at the end of each session.

Data Collection Procedures

I met with the students to facilitate the mural three times a week for six weeks. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. In the first session, I distributed the demographic survey and the self-confidence pretest survey to the students at the first meeting. Participants completed and returned the surveys to me in the same envelopes in which they were received. I asked the students to put a pseudonym on the survey. I suggested that the students chose a pseudonym that was used on all data collection tools. After the surveys were returned, I discussed the art project.

At the end of each session, I distributed the student journals for the students to record their experiences and feelings about their participation in the project and making the community

mural. I wrote a question on the board that students could answer in the journal (See Appendix A for prompts). However, they were not required to use my prompts in their journals. After completing their journals, the students returned the journal books to me. I recorded my observations in the field notes at the end of the session. Photographs were taken during each session to document progress in the art project. I included some of the photographs in the final dissertation to illustrate the making of the community mural. At the last session of the project, I asked the students to complete the self-confidence posttest survey. They were asked to write their pseudonyms on the survey.

Following completion of the mural, I met with each student individually to complete the debriefing interview. A set of interview questions were used to obtain the same type of information from each student. In addition, if the students' responses were incomplete, I repeated their answer and then asked them to expand on their thoughts to obtain additional, in-depth information regarding their experiences during the art project. The interviews and student journals were triangulated with data from the field notes, researcher observations, and photographs to provide answers to the research questions posed for this study.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was used to help establish the credibility of the research. Peer debriefing, also called analytic triangulation (ThêNguyin, 2008), refers to asking a disinterested peer of the researcher (who was not participating in the research project) to assist the researcher in all or parts of the research process. In this case, I met with an art teacher who had a doctorate in qualitative research on a weekly basis. We discussed the process used to create the mural and the progress being made by the adolescents. The topics that were discussed included the methods used to create the mural, as well as the interpretation and analysis of the data.

Time Line for the Study

Six weeks were allotted for completion of the mural. The first week consisted of orientation and pretesting. The students learned about the art project and what was expected from them. Over the next five weeks, the students met to work collaboratively and design and complete a mural that reflected adolescents' perceptions of their community. The completed mural was available to be displayed at community events and at meetings of various community organizations. The agenda that was followed during the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Timeline and Agenda of Responsibilities for Each Week of the Study

| Week | Student | Researcher |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with me • Read assent forms and agreed to participate in the study • Completed demographic and self-confidence surveys • Explored master works of art at Detroit Institute of Arts • Discussed major concepts included in the mural • Began journal entries • Began sketching mural designs to represent the students' neighborhoods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study and students' expected involvement • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Began field study observations • Began personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed master works of art that depict neighborhoods • Made personal sketches of the neighborhood • Peer critiqued and discussed students' photographs of their neighborhoods • Write in journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Updated field study observations • Updated personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critiqued personal sketches of the community • Organized and transferred designs • Wrote in journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Updated field study observations • Updated personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |

| Week | Student | Researcher |
|------|--|---|
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided students into teams, one team painted and other team were involved in preparing canvas and materials; teams rotated jobs throughout the remainder of the study • Outlined and established design and choose color pallet • Began painting process • Began work on background of the mural • Students observed and assisted in the painting process • Wrote in journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Updated field study observations • Updated personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students met as a group to critique the previous session; critique was not intended to make a judgment on the students' production • Continued painting process • Students observed and assisted in the painting process • Wrote in journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Updated field study observations • Updated personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finished painting process • Students observed and assisted in the painting process • Students photographed important aspects of the mural • Wrote in journal • Students met as a group to discuss the mural project that included an exchange of ideas and reflect of their participation in completing a mural • Complete the self-confidence posttest at last session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the purpose of the study • Answered all questions regarding the assent form • Updated field study observations • Updated personal research journal • Photographed student activities • Peer debriefing |
| Post | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in face-to-face interviews with the me | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in face-to-face interviews with students |

At the end of each session, the students wrote about their experiences in creating and working on the mural. During the sixth week of the study, the students met together for a final session. I provided pizza for the students to thank them for their participation in the study. After the final session, I met with each participant separately to complete face-to-face interviews.

Data Analysis

The data analysis incorporated domain analysis into the case study method to address the research questions. The qualitative data analysis was adapted from Creswell's (2013) analysis procedures, as explained further in this paragraph. The data collected from the interviews, journals, and field notes were organized into files by adolescent to begin the analysis. As I read each adolescent's interview transcripts or journals, I made anecdotal notes to assist with beginning the coding process (Schwandt, 2007). The field notes and artifacts (photographs and sketches of mural) collected during the research were used to enhance and verify the interview responses. I began to code the interview data and adolescent journals, using predetermined categories (e.g., self-confidence, neighborhood awareness, art experiences, service to the community, that I expected to find (Schwandt, 2007; Stake, 1995). Codes were added for unexpected categories. Open coding was used to ensure that all possible topics expressed in each of the interviews and adolescent journals were included (Maxwell, 2013). After coding each of the interviews and adolescent journals, I coded my field notes. I triangulated the data from the interviews, student journals, and my field notes by consolidating and merging similar codes to reflect emerging patterns and categories (Stake, 1995).

This process was reviewed and changes were made to revise and refine the codes within the categories that have emerged from the data. This process, called domain analysis (Creswell, 2013), was used to group the codes into domains or themes that emerged in addition to the predetermined categories. After reading the interviews, journals, and my field notes, I began to color code the statements that appeared to be focused on similar topics (e.g., blue for collaboration, yellow for self-confidence, etc.). I then began to group the colors together and continued to refine the coding until the domains (themes) that emerged appeared to be cohesive and consistent. After coding each interview and adolescent journal, I consolidated the data and

continued to modify and summarize the codes. The emerging patterns could be used to understand how participation in a community art project affected the participants specifically and generally and how their working collaboratively on the project made them more aware of their community.

Trustworthiness of the Study

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), four criteria determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These four criteria include: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Shenton (2004) presented strategies and provisions for use in ensuring the trustworthiness of the research in terms of the four criteria (See Table 2).

Table 2

Provisions that may be Made by a Qualitative Researcher Wishing to Address Guba's Four Criteria for Trustworthiness

| Quality Criterion | Possible Provisions Made by Researcher |
|-------------------|---|
| Credibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of appropriate, well-recognized research methods • Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organization • Random sampling of individuals • Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants, and different sites • Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants • Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues • Negative case analysis • Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors [dissertation committee] • Peer scrutiny of paper • Use of "reflective commentary" • Description of background, qualifications, and experience of the researcher • Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed • Thick description of phenomenon under scrutiny • Examination of previous research to frame findings |
| Transferability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made |
| Dependability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of "overlapping methods" • In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated |
| Confirmability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias • Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions • Recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects • In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized • Use of diagrams to demonstrate "audit trail" |

Note: Shenton (2004, p. 73)

Many researchers have discussed the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research. While these suggestions for trustworthiness are possible, not all are necessary in every study. For the purpose of the present study, credibility was supported by adopting well-established research methods from Creswell (2013), Stake (1995), and Yin (1989). These authors are well respected as experts in conducting case studies and qualitative research. As an art teacher and an artist, I too am well respected; I am very familiar with the creation of murals and

the concepts behind creating a neighborhood mural. I also am well-known at the school and in the neighborhood from where the sample was drawn.

Details of the context of the study and the rich description support the *transferability* of the study. The description of the setting and background in this study help to show that the findings have applicability in other settings. The transferability of the study was also ensured by presenting a comprehensive review of related literature that documented the use of neighborhood murals and the effects of having students involved in community art projects. The findings of the present study were also compared to previous research to determine the similarities and differences.

The *dependability* criterion was accomplished through a detailed description of the methods. Furthermore, the dependability of the study was maintained by using overlapping methods for data collection (completed mural, photographs of the progression of the artwork, student journals, researcher field notes, and face-to-face interviews. I also presented a step-by-step agenda and curriculum in the methodology to allow an unacquainted art teacher to replicate my study in another geographic area.

To achieve *confirmability*, I show through triangulation of the data, that the findings of the study emerged from the data and not from suppositions made by me. The multiple data sources (mural-finished product), photographs of the progress of the mural, student journals, teacher field notes, and face-to-face interviews) also helped to reduce researcher bias through the cross-referencing of the different sources of information.

Changes in self-confidence among the adolescents were determined in part using pretest and posttest surveys. The face-to-face interviews were conducted to verify the information by

overlapping the questions and probing for in-depth information about the students' experiences in working on the mural.

I met with my committee chair on a regular basis to report on the progress of the research, as well as with my research peer. The field notes that I maintained throughout the study served as my reflective commentary about the progress of the mural and the students' attitudes and behaviors during the six-week intervention. The use of a personal journal also provided information regarding how the various data collected for the study (e.g., student interviews, student journals, photographs, and field notes) overlap. The inclusion of personal observations to track methodological barriers could help researchers wishing to replicate the findings on ways to avoid problems in conducting a similar study. The dissertation committee used the personal journal to conduct an audit that can provide assurances that the study was conducted in an ethical manner, using appropriate research methods.

Summary

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess participants' experiences, determine the effectiveness of the art-based community project in improving students' self-confidence, increase their awareness of their surrounding community, and develop reciprocity as part of the project. This case study research used data from multiple sources (surveys, observations, interviews, photographs, field notes, student journals, and student artwork) to address the research questions posed for the study. The use of these data sources results in a triangulation of the data that ensures the findings reflected the dynamic experiences of the participants and the researcher in creating an artwork as the focus of an art-based community project.

The students selected for participation in this study were enrolled in a private school in their neighborhood. The students worked closely with the researcher to create a portable mural

that reflected their vision of their neighborhoods. This mural is available for display at community events and in the students' school.

Data for the study were collected using an ongoing process (Stake, 1995). The students completed the demographic survey at the first meeting of the research. At each session, the students and the researcher completed journal entries that reflect their experiences during that session. Photographs were taken during the sessions to provide evidence of progress on the mural. At the end of the project, the students were interviewed individually to obtain in-depth information on their experiences during the art-based community project. The journals and interviews were transcribed by an independent transcriptionist to assure the information is unbiased. Students were asked to review their interview transcripts for accuracy and completeness.

The data analysis used content analysis methods to address the research questions. The qualitative data analysis incorporated Creswell (2013) analysis procedures. The independent art teacher reviewed results to determine their relevance to the effectiveness of using a community-

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to study adolescent participation in the development of a neighborhood mural as an art-based community project. I examined perceptions of the adolescents regarding the awareness of their community and neighborhoods. Additionally, I explored adolescents' perceptions of their own development in terms of building their self-confidence. To accomplish this, I facilitated the creation and design of a mural that depicts their perceptions of their neighborhoods, using art as a modality for expression. This chapter provides the background and setting of the community project and the setting of the program that was an essential element in encouraging social change in the participants. The discussion of the data analysis revealed the actions and reactions of the youth, which were different from other adolescent activities.

Setting of the Community-based Mural Project

Our room assignment was a vacant classroom (20' x 22'). Six large windows provided natural light and a 22-foot ceiling created echoes of footsteps, moving bodies, voices, and outside activities. I cleared the room of distractions, desk chairs, etc. so the mural would be the focus of interest in the room.

Our next task was to explore how the participants perceived their neighborhood and to think and talk about important images to develop a "cultural marker" in their community.

The participating students went on a field trip to the Detroit Institute of Arts to see Diego Riviera's famous mural, "Detroit-Industry." Riviera painted the history of the assembly line and the automotive industry in 1920. Jack commented that Riviera only painted with a minimal amount of colors, although they were spread around, he managed to create a masterpiece.

We used the “Detroit Industry” mural as a source of inspiration. We identified the themes that Riviera used in the mural, along with stories that were pictured. The students examined the design and colors used. They identified the contrasting figures used against the smaller patterns of human workers.

Next, we created a series of important images that might be included in the space. The students began to draw numerous sketches of landmarks they wanted to include on their mural. The list grew and grew until it was time to move on and eliminate many of the weaker drawings. This task was difficult and led to frustration. Eliminating some drawings was the most difficult point for the students as indicted by comments such as these:

That doesn't look like a taco stand...What are you going to do with that ice cream cone?...Put it on a billboard with lights around it... You can't put Van Gogh's Starry Night into the mural... it isn't Van Gogh's if you change the colors.

The above summary was included to give readers a sense of the process. I will continue to describe the process with a focus on the participants:

Participants

The entire seventh grade class was invited to participate in the study, and 14 seventh grade students participated at some point while the mural was being created. However, as previously stated, this study focused on the five students who consistently participated in all phases of the program.

Demographic characteristics were provided by the participants and more information was collected during the painting activity through general conversation between the students and myself. Table 3 provides information on the five students who were included in the study.

Table 3

Description of the Participants

| Name* | Age | Gender | Grade | High School |
|-------|-----|--------|-------|-------------|
| Jack | 13 | M | 7 | Private |
| Mary | 13 | F | 7 | Catholic |
| Ellen | 13 | F | 7 | Catholic |
| Carl | 13 | M | 7 | Catholic |
| Ella | 13 | F | 7 | Unknown |

*Pseudonym

Each participant was a member of the 7th grade class at the inner city private school. The students were all 13 years of age and included three girls and two boys. Three students were planning the next step in their education, with three going to a nontraditional private school and one planning to attend a private high school located in the suburbs. The fifth student was uncertain about her plans for high school. Four of the five participants were living in two-parent families and had between four and six siblings. Each of the participants was the oldest child in the family.

Jack: Jack is a small youngster, the smallest in the group. He proved himself to be a taskmaster. He knew how to encourage others and how to challenge the most difficult tasks himself. He set out to illustrate the Ambassador Bridge, the People Mover, and the Renaissance Center. He thought these landmarks were important as they defined the boundaries of the city and the nation. Figure 1 presents the section of the mural on which Jack worked.



Figure 1: Jack's section of the mural incorporating the People Mover, Renaissance Center and Ambassador Bridge

The other participants agreed and continued with the design of the landmarks, Comerica Park, the Detroit Zoo, and the Holy Redeemer Church. The Fisher Building also was included. Jack said painting the bridge was hard because it was a lot of straight lines and continuous pattern of dots. Some of the dots had to be done a second time, but it looked better. Jack commented, "I think I did a good job." Jack demonstrated characteristics of leadership. He was encouraging to other participants and modeled good work habits.

Ellen: Ellen is a slim teenager, with a very soft voice and a serious nature. Everyday Ellen would run over to her painting, bend over, and examine her previous work. She would look at it for a long time and then reply, "It looks good." She began her work with great frustration when sketching the panda she was going to bring to the Detroit Zoo. Ellen commented, "Why

shouldn't the Detroit Zoo have a panda? Seattle and Washington DC have two. We have a spectacular zoo and there is room for a panda." With a bit of examination, Ellen was able to see that the panda's body was comprised of just a few organic shapes. After identifying the parts, she assembled the panda, enlarged it on the canvas, and was ready for painting. Her concerns appeared again when she attempted to draw the bamboo in the background. The same exercise occurred and she was able to move on with her painting. Lastly, I encouraged her to include other zoo creatures that would add to her painting. She said, "The monarch butterfly migrates from the north to Mexico. I will paint butterflies in the background." Her work was the largest independent piece in the mural, but it did not overcome the other sections. She was extremely proud of her finished painting and continued day after day to run in, throw her backpack against the wall, bend over to study the painting and then reply, "it looks good." She also spent lots of time helping her classmates by painting large sections of canvas, outlining windows and buildings, and cleaning brushes. Figure 2 presents the section of the mural that included the panda.

Mary: Mary was the largest in stature of all the participants. She appeared older than her 13 years. She was tall with medium brown hair that hung in ringlets to her waist. Every time we entered into a discussion of the neighborhoods, Mary would reply that hers was the only house on the street. The family had four dogs that lived outside. There were five children younger than she in a two-parent household. Both of her parents worked every day. Her father was a construction worker and she did not know what her mother did for a living. She wrote a poem in her journal about her neighborhood:



Figure 2: Ellen's depiction of the panda that should be at the Detroit Zoo

Nothing good ever happens in my neighborhood
 Every day I wake up to the dogs barking
 They bark day and night
 No one lives on my block
 Just us and the barking dogs
 Nothing good ever happens in my neighborhood.

She asked me, "Why do you ask us so many questions. I responded, "I thought I would try to know you a little better. Mary made man contributions to the mural by painting some of the most difficult images and helping other members complete their painting. Mary painted a large pink dog covered with green spots in the sky. The dog's mouth was opened. "Psycho" dog was one of the labels used to identify the image. It was the favorite image of many participants. Figure 3 presents Mary's depiction of Psycho dog.



Figure 3: Mary's Depiction of Psycho Dog

Carl: Carl was the only African American participants on the team. He was a quick thinker and confident in this ability. He solved a number of problems that came up, such as a place for the Holy Redeemer steeple and ways to paint the trees so they looked like a cartoon. He often requested that we listen to music during our work time, but I wanted to hear what the students were saying about the mural painting, although the students ceased talking because they were consumed in the experience of painting. The room remained quiet until I asked some questions. Carl painted large areas of sky and water around the Ambassador Bridge and designed an amusement park in the center of the mural. He was certain that a community fair should be included so that the neighbors who did not get to see each other could meet. Carl's painting of a community fair is presented in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Carl's community fair

Ella: Ella is a shy 12-year old with long black hair that is parted in the middle. She wears blue glasses and is very careful of her uniform. Of all the participants, Ella is the quietest. She carries her bluebird cell phone in one hand and a paintbrush in the other. Throughout the project, she claimed that she could not draw, but she painted delicately and neatly with another partner. They worked together on the sky, water, trees, and fireworks. Many times, I would talk to Ella or ask her questions and often she would not respond. Figure 5 presents Ella's depiction of the Grand Prix and the Big Tire that greets people on I-94 coming into the city.



Figure 5: Ella's depiction of the Grand Prix and the Big Tire on I-94

Analysis of the Data

Themes that Emerged from the Data

After interviewing the students, I transcribed the interviews and grouped the responses by question. I began to read the student surveys, interviews, observations, field notes, and participants' narratives and journal reflections that were collected during the six-week period. I expected that themes involving self-confidence, relationships with the community, and collaboration would emerge from the data. During the reading, I began to notice domains emerging from the data, based on the similarity of activities. After reading the interviews, journals, and my field notes, I began to color code the statements that appeared to be focused on

similar topics (e.g., blue for collaboration, yellow for self-confidence, etc.). I then began to group the colors together and continued to refine the coding until the five domains (themes) that emerged appeared to be cohesive and consistent. After coding each interview and adolescent journal, I consolidated the data and continued to modify and summarize the codes. The emerging patterns could be used to understand how participation in a community art project affected the participants specifically and generally and how their working collaboratively on the project made them more aware of their community. The themes were engagement, collaboration, growth and change, and self-confidence, and relationships to the community. The following themes are discussed as follows, with the sources of the data noted in parentheses. (See Table 4)

Table 4

Source of Data and Codes

| Source of Data | Coding Technique |
|----------------------|--|
| Student Interviews | I to indicate interview, Student pseudonym initial followed by Interview Question Number (e.g., IC#3 is Carl's interview response to interview question 3) |
| Student Journals | Student journals are designated by SJ followed by the students' ID number and the date (e.g., SJ 1234 03-05 indicates the statement is from an entry to a students' journal on 03/03/2014. |
| Field Notes | Field notes have been lined numbered and the notation in the text indicates FN for field notes followed by the line number |
| Narrative Statements | Students' narrative statements made to other students or to me while working on the mural. The narrative statements were coded as NS followed by the students' pseudonym initial and the date. (e.g., NS C 03-05 would indicate a comment by Carl made on 03/05/2014.) |

Engagement

The students had not worked on an art project larger than a 12 x 17 piece of paper before starting on the mural. They stood together looking at the 20' x 21' stretch of canvas in amazement. They discussed landmark sites that they intended to include on the mural. They

began to draw many sketches that they would incorporate into the mural. They looked at photographs of another group of seventh grade students who had painted a mural in the previous year. They were able to identify the steps of (a) sketching, (b) transferring, and (c) painting that were necessary to complete the project.

One student wanted to include a big fish and another wanted to include a panda (FN12). Ellen said, “I wish I could draw. I want to draw.” (NS E1 04-02). Many of the participants held themselves to high standards for their work. They saw the mural as an authentic challenge to their artistic skills. Carl reported “Drawing on the canvas was difficult and tracing the design (IC#1.

The first day of practicing painting on canvas proved to be difficult for the students. A few students did not want to their hands dirty (FN 52). Working on the mural made me really think about the community and the part I [Carl] play in making it a better place (NS C 03-04). Carl found a purpose for his engagement. Mary said, “The sky was drab and boring. We need something in the sky that looks like the Thanksgiving Day parade” (NS M 05-07). On the same day, I discovered an interesting entry into Mary’s journal, “Today was very dull and boring. There was no homework and I never seen the teacher as serious before. It was deadly, until after school appeared. It got better and laughs appeared. That was a day for today” (SJ 2501 02-24). Mary designed a tremendous portrait head floating in the sky like a Thanksgiving Parade balloon in magenta and violet. She accompanied it with a leaping pink dog with green spots that she called Psycho Dog (NS M 04-03). She commented that she thought her design was pretty good (NS M 03-24).

Carl was proud that he “gave ideas, drew designs... drew the steeple, ferris wheel, fair grounds, traced them and painted them” (I C #2). Mary said “Dude are you for real?” in response

to Carl's question of carnival rides (NS M 05-08). The carnival was positioned in the center of the mural without opposition.

Ella assumed her place painting buildings and homes. "We all begin to paint the areas we designed ourselves. We had to check first about the colors we used, but later we could figure it out ourselves. When we painted, it was quiet and peaceful. You couldn't hear a sound" (I E1 #2). Often the students would take turns painting an area. Although Mary designed the floating head, Ellen also participated. "When I worked on the mural today, I painted the lady with the floating head. I painted it orange" (SJ 4255 03-27).

Landmarks were important to the students. Jack continued to support the inclusion of tall buildings and a large bridge as important landmarks. Painting the bridge was hard because it was a lot of straight lines and dot patterns. Some of the dots did not show up, so I did them again. "I did a good job, it looked better," wrote Jack (NS J 03-03). Ella was able to envision the finished mural long before it was completed. She wrote in her journal:

All of the parts of the mural come together when you look at the carnival scene and see how the city is operated by a smart phone. Others who look at the mural will come to understand that this is a magical place that will come true one day. I think the title of the mural should be 'Wonderland.' (SJ 5204 03-03)

Collaboration.

Collaboration among the students on the mural seemed to evolve with a series of interactions. The first was the manner in which the students communicated with each other. They used gestures and eye contact to map out lines, create shapes, and complete each other's work. The students shared their sketches and discussed how they pictured the unified design. Carl said "We all have pretty good ideas" (NS C 5-8).

The students had a long history of working together as a group. They knew the strengths and weaknesses of each member. They knew to accept and respect the work of each member, no matter how bad it was (NS J 04-14).

The second outcome emerged when the students were attempting to enlarge their designs. Jack said the initial drawing and putting it together was most difficult (NS J 03-31). Drawing the picture on canvas was hard (NS C 04-07). The participants were confident about their attempts to collaborate in designing the mural (FN 104-105). Additional outcomes related to the collaborative effort came from student support:

Ellen said, “I wish I could draw better” (NS E1 04-02).

Jack said, “Carl draws the bet, let Carl help” (FN 104).

The students continued to assist each other throughout the development of the project. All continuously worked collaboratively together. Students expressed their commitment to the work. Jack replied, “I was careful to make sure that everything looked just right” (NS J03-26). Carl said, “The mural looks bright and very nice and colorful” (SJ 7572 04-14). The students challenged their artistic skills and knowledge. They reported positive experiences in their interviews. Ellen reported that she picked out all the colors carefully on purpose so the mural would look bright and colorful (NS E1 05-21). Figure 6 provides evidence of the collaboration used by students in working on their sections of the mural.



Figure 6: Collaboration on Mural

Growth and change.

The participants in this study had never worked on such a lofty project as a 20' x 22' mural. They experienced ups and downs, challenged barriers to their success, and encountered numerous problems to solve along the way. In the early part of the study, Ellen continued to say, "I wish I could draw, I can't draw" (NS E1 04-02). Ella commented, "The think I like least about the mural was the mistakes we made and the repainting that we had to do. Sometimes we made a mess and didn't know what to do" (IE Interview). Obtaining inspiration derived from positive support of self and others contributed to their self-confidence.

The students experienced the frustrations initially when they began to paint. Ellen said, "We had our own part to do and sometimes we would make mistakes that had to be repainted" (IE1 #1). Mary said, "It was a hard job to produce the mural (NS M1 04-14). Mary chose the most difficult objects to paint. She had drawn a series of old cars piled up against each other in

an alley. “I least liked working on the cars. They looked cluttered and like they were in a car crash. They were tiny and hard to paint (I M #1).

Another opportunity for growth presented itself to Ella, “The mural looks better but there is a big empty space. I must decide what to do with it” (FN 204-205). The mural gave students lots of choices for self-expression. Each student chose from a list that they had generated of landmarks in the big city.

Jack said, “Painting the bridge was hard because of all the straight lines and patterns of dots. Some of the dots didn’t show up so I did them again. I did a good job, it looked good (NS J 03-13). Mary indicated that painting makes her feel peaceful and it feels like I can have something to color what we are all creating (SJ 2501 03-27). The students appeared happy and engrossed in their painting. Jack added:

The students worked diligently on their painting activity. I noticed their color choices were bolder, complementary, and balanced (FN 5-05 154). When I looked at the mural, I saw the beauty of our city. I liked the mural because it shows how beautiful our city is. What stands out for me is my work on the Ambassador Bridge, the Zoo, People Mover, and Tiger Stadium. People who see the mural would finally recognize the beauty of the city. (SJ 2134 04-10)

Carl added, “The mural looks bright and colorful. The painting process is easy, but the brushes have hard bristles” (SJ 7572 04-03). Students played with fantasy and imagination throughout the painting process. Mary identified one of her images in the mural as “Psycho Dog” (NS M 4-43). Carl commented, “The mural looks like a movie of Batman” (SJ 7572 04-03). While Ellen was bowing and saying, “You must greet the great panda when you come to the mural” (NS E1-04-21).

Nevertheless, significant growth was accomplished during the research period. Mary reported that the cars were especially difficult to paint and seemed less important because you eye just moved past them to another object. They were symbols of cars: (NS M 04-14). “If you look at the smart phone at the base of the mural, you can see that the city is operating in the digital age. Others who view the mural will see that operates in a magical place” (SJ 5204 43).

The students came to an impasse on a few occasions and had to demonstrate growth and change to solve the issue. Carl stated, “I am going to paint this part blue!” Mary replies, “No dude, there is too much blue already.” Carl said “I still want to paint it blue.” Mary said, “Dude, it will throw off the balance of light and dark in the composition. Besides the color you have in your hand is green.” Carl looked won at his paint and replies “It looks blue to me” (FN 180-184). Mary’s last retort, “Go ahead dude” (FN 185).

According to Mary, “All the pieces of the mural fit together. They make a great culture and a great city. The mural design was very well thought out and created. I think I would call the mural the City of Ethnicity” (SJ 2501 04-03).

Self-Confidence.

Self-confidence was one theme that I expected to find that emerged from the data. Self-confidence factors are linked to participant performance (Klistman & Slankoo, 2007) and are necessary components in successful learning. Jack stated “I felt important by working on the mural and was proud that others would see my artwork” (NS J 03-26). Mary indicated that “When I looked at the finished mural, I see a colorful world with things that are imagined and things that are real that I have made” (SJ 2015 03-27).

The students searched for places to organize the design of the city scenes, demonstrating confidence in their work (FN 12). Although the students felt confident, they had no background

knowledge in designing and painting a mural. I outlined the procedure for the students and displayed pictures of a previous completed mural designed by another group of seventh grade students at a neighborhood school. The students appeared confident and excited at the start of their creation. The students felt that they were special and that their investment in the art project was important to their school, their community, and each other. They discussed the sites that were most important to the group. Carl said, “When your community looks good, you feel better (NS C 03-24). Mary said, “I was an important participant because I was here every day and I did my best to help others complete their design” (I M #2).

Ellen confidently sketched the panda she would paint. She worked independently for most of the research period until her work was completed (FN 03-26). She stated, “Satisfied, yes. I really love pandas and you [researcher/art teacher] helped me enlarge the drawing and painting after putting it together. I made it look beautiful” (I E #3).

The students identified major buildings, arenas, and bridges (SJ 2134 04-10) and many more landmarks. Carl appeared to a skillful and confident participant. He reported that “I am happy with my part and what I did (I C #3). He spoke about painting the mural, “It was easy, no trouble at all (I C #6).

According to Brandon (1969), human beings have a fundamental need to feel self-confident about what they do. Participation in group activity helped establish behavior patterns and commitment to shared goals in adult life (Putnam, 2000). Jack wrote, “I feel best about myself when I win honors, when I get a 4.0 grade point, and when I win my soccer game. Then I become my best (SJ 2134 04-08).

Mary’s journal included an entry, “I feel best about myself when I am sleeping. I get rest and I do not have to deal with arguments. I gain energy (SJ 2501 3-27). Student self-confidence

was challenged on a daily basis with each new task that was introduced. The students were able to accept the challenge. Jack said “I felt important by working on the mural and was proud that others would see my artwork” (NS J 03-26).

The students completed a short survey to measure changes in their self-confidence. Eleven items were included on the survey that students rated using a 3-point scale, agree (1), neutral (2), and disagree (3). The ratings were summed to obtain a total score, with lower scores indicating higher self-confidence. The total scores were compared using t-tests for dependent samples. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

t-Test for Dependent Samples – Change in Self-confidence from Pre to Posttest.

| Time | N | Mean | SD | DF | t | p |
|----------|----|------|-----|----|------|-------|
| Pretest | 12 | 1.45 | .16 | 11 | 6.61 | <.001 |
| Posttest | 12 | 1.26 | .16 | | | |

The comparison of the mean scores from pretest ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .16$) to posttest ($M = 1.26$, $SD = .16$) using t-tests for dependent samples was statistically significant, $t(11) = 6.61$, $p < .001$. This finding provides additional support that self-confidence improved significantly from prior to beginning the mural to completion of the mural. To determine which of the items was contributing to the statistically significant results, the individual items were compared using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. Table 6 presents results of these analyses.

Table 6

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test – Change in Self-Confidence from Pre to Posttest

| Item | Increased* | Decreased* | Unchanged* | Z | p |
|--|------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. How confident are you that you can create a mural? | 0 | 4 | 8 | -2.00 | .046 |
| 2. Everyone should play a role in making a community mural. | 0 | 1 | 11 | -1.00 | .317 |
| 3. It is important that my ideals should be considered in the mural's design. | 0 | 3 | 9 | -1.73 | .046 |
| 4. A collaborative mural might reflect a world in which I want to live. | 0 | 4 | 8 | -2.00 | .046 |
| 5. Murals can bring students, parents, and community members closer together. | 1 | 1 | 10 | .00 | 1.000 |
| 6. Working on the mural can inspire me to become more active in my community. | 1 | 4 | 7 | -1.34 | .180 |
| 7. Making a mural can build my skills and confidence to take on other community projects. | 0 | 3 | 9 | -1.63 | .102 |
| 8. I can learn new things by working together with other students. | 0 | 0 | 11 | .00 | 1.000 |
| 9. Mural making can give me a voice in my community. | 0 | 5 | 7 | -2.24 | .025 |
| 10. Mural making provides me with a way to illustrate my thoughts about my neighborhood. | 0 | 2 | 10 | -1.41 | .157 |
| 11. Keeping a personal journal during this project let me think about how this project made me feel. | 1 | 0 | 11 | -1.00 | .317 |

*Increased indicates a negative change (agree to neutral, neutral to disagree)

Decreased indicates a positive change (disagree to neutral, neutral to agree)

Unchanged indicates the same response pretest and posttest.

The ratings for three items (#1, 4, 9) changed significantly from pretest to posttest. For each item the change was positive with more students moving from neutral to agree. The students voiced concerns about having to journal at the end of each session and their entries into their journals reflected their disinterest in this part of the project. Based on the results of the t-tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks test, the

students generally appeared to have increased self-confidence in their ability to participate in a collaborative artwork with their peers.

Self-confidence may be considered a personal outcome of the community based mural. Carl said, “I want the mural to say that I can do something, I have ideas, I have motivation, I have faith in myself” (NS C 05-08).

Relationship to the community.

The participants indicated that the mural project affected their understanding of the importance of community. Jack claimed “it is important to have pride in your community and be committed to being an active member” (NS J 03-03). Carl commented, “When your community looks better, you feel better” (NS C 04-03). Mary stated that she felt responsible for the growth of her neighborhood (I M #3). Ella had many insightful solutions for the mural design. Her creative responses were reflected in the development of the community (NS E2 5-21). Ella asserted that “Painting the mural was important to me. I want to be part of the group and I want the community to have respect.” The students demonstrated a sense of pride in their perceptions of their community. Carl said “It made me think of the community, the things around us, the fair, the old baseball stadium, The church steeple, memories of the community. Simple stuff that gives us a smile (NS C 05-21).

By teaching others that they can do something that they do not think they can do, they find they have influence within the community. Mary said, “I want to spread the news throughout the community. Mary painted out the stacked boxes piled up on the side of the buildings. These boxes would be filled with food for the needy in the community (NS M 05-15).

Carl said that his entire family takes part in community activities to clean up and recycle (NS C 05-02). He said that some places use art to educate the community to teach them about different things (FN 218). This was a reflection of his museum visit where he asked “Why is

there a baby in the mural about the automobile industry (NS C 05-01). He found the answer to his question, art is to educate.

All of the participants expressed in their interviews that the art experience helped them appreciate their community. Mary said, “Her family valued its place in the community” (NS M 05-08) and Jack commented, “My neighborhood is very important to me because it is my place in the community to help. My neighborhood is littered with graffiti. I keep my place clean, but my neighbor is dirty” (SJ J 2-24).

Assessing the student mural was done daily. Three participants talked about the bright and cheerfulness of their painting, writing, “Why doesn’t the ‘D’ look like this? (FN 153). Participants’ responses suggested that they had a greater understanding of their community and were committed to building strength and participation in the community.

Analysis of Major Themes

Students made reference throughout the study that they sought accepting mentors to guide their self-expression. The students, in their interviews, and journal reflections described their desire to lead a peaceful life. They stated their opposition to graffiti, garbage in the streets, and falling down houses. All students said they wanted opportunities to matter and to change the world in some way. They talked about wanting to be part of the community in their interviews, as well as in their personal and group actions.

Throughout the research period, the students often talked of the expectations they held for themselves. They felt privileged to be a part of the public artwork. They often pushed each other to challenge their own artwork and that of each other. Many of the students in the program revealed in their interviews that they held themselves to high standards. Mary shared that her teacher had unreasonably high expectations (SJ M 02-24). Several students made reference to

low standards in the community and how adolescents are misrepresented. Jack said, “My neighborhood is very important to me because it is my place in the community. My neighborhood is littered with garbage and graffiti. I keep my place clean, but my neighbor is dirty (SJ J 02-24).

Mary wrote “Nothing good ever happens in my neighborhood. Every day I wake up to the dogs barking. They bark all day and all night. No one lives on my block. Just us and the barking dogs. Nothing good ever happens in my neighborhood.” Students had the opportunity to voice their perceptions and know that they could trust and confide in each other. Working as a team was fun and interesting to them.

Self-confidence seemed to be linked to acceptance. The students needed the acceptance of their peers and the community along with the acceptance of self and the adults around them. I represented a model that they had not had previously. I was an artist and I had a lot of experience with mural painting and kids. I was a positive role model and they felt safe exploring their ideas with me about the community. I was interested in them, and I respected them. I made them feel like they mattered, they were important. Jack said, “I am painting the Riverfront. The TriTowers looks exactly like the real thing” (NS J 05-03). Mary said, “I have a vision of people building houses and taking care of the streets. Making friends too” (SJ M 3-27).

Mary asserted, “I was an important participant because I was there every day and I did the best I could. I helped others to finish their parts too (I M #2). She revealed that there were patterns emerging, like cars, trees, and houses. The same colors were used in teach. It makes you want to look at one shape after another. It unifies the composition (FN 189-191).

Safe zone.

The students seemed to transition from the classroom to the studio space. They spent most of the research period sitting or lying on top of the canvas to work. The activity provided a new way of learning, and everything they did was acceptable. Carl said “You didn’t say anything then I brought up all my wild ideas (NS C 5-08).

Providing a safe space to increase skills, explore creative options and gain recognition for their artwork helped to nurture the students and provide a landscape for learning about art, the community, and themselves.

Several of the students reported that painting had a calming effect on them. For the first time, they made art with their whole bodies without talking about the troubles of the world or in the community. They learned to live in the moment. Jack reported, “I felt calm and concentrated while painting. I think I did a good job and corrected my mistakes” (I J #5). Ella said, “the mural made me feel excited. I didn’t know it would turn out so beautiful when it was finished (I E2 #5).

Making a difference.

Many adolescents are unaware that they have opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their community. Only one student stated that he and his family were involved in community activism. “I do several stuff like recycling but I think the mural is it. It shows others that I am committed to the community to stand up and take voice” (I C #7). Ella said, “This is my neighborhood. Some things are beautiful and others need help. I can show others how important it is to be a part of a reviving community. I can help and so can you!

The mural project provided a lot of participatory time that might have been spent in the world of technology. Although they all had sophisticated phones, all but one student put them away. The other student just held it in her hand like something she just could not put away. Carl

said, “My bedroom carpet is purple, my X Box is black. I have a TV on my desk and my I-pone to play music (SJ 7572 3-26). Mary said, “I thought it was a pretty good idea to put the TV and the I-phone in the mural, spreading the news” (I M #4).

Adolescents live life in the fast lane. If there are more than two children in the family, there are many appointments, responsibilities, and tasks that fill their leisure time. Little time is left for meaningful contributions to the community. Many are unable to take the steps necessary to put programs in place. If a program is not brought to them there is little opportunity to be engaged.

Throughout the research period, the students looked for opportunities to matter, or to make a difference in their community. They shared the process of decision making and structuring group activity. Other opportunities included voicing their ideas and opinions and providing feedback on the mural. They were given many opportunities to make decisions about size, color, design, and themes. Mary said, “All the parts of the mural came together when you look at the carnival and see how the city is operating by the use of a smart phone. Others who look at the mural will come to understand that this is a magical place that will come true one day. I think the title of the mural should be “Wonderland” (SJ 5204 04-07).

It has been suggested that public recognition for community-based art projects is critical to the success of the project. Adolescents were recognized in a number of ways:

- The mural was exhibited at the Subtle Creations Gallery
- A public event was planned to honor the students
- Students were recognized through a local newspaper article describing the students’ accomplishments.

Several forms of recognition seemed to contribute to feelings of self and group-work. The students had a strong desire to be recognized in the community and to leave their mark in some concrete way.

Summary

Participants in the research project responded positively to all areas of the research activity. The results of my analysis indicate that this type of community arts project does indeed address my initial question, providing both personal and community impact on the participants. They developed social connections to me and to the other members. Additionally, they may have accounted for their readiness to make changes in behavior and attitude toward issues of social change. The project provided opportunities to make a lasting artwork out of their collective voices. Figure 7 presents the completed mural.



Figure 7: Completed mural

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this research was to study adolescent participation in the development of a neighborhood mural as an art-based community project. I examined perceptions of adolescents regarding their awareness of their community and neighborhoods. Additionally, I explored adolescents' perceptions of their own development in terms of building their self-confidence. To accomplish this, I facilitated the design and creation of a mural that depicted their perceptions of their neighborhoods, using art as a modality for expression. This chapter presents a discussion of the highlights of my research on an art-based community program.

The seventh grade students at one parochial school in their neighborhood participated in an orientation for the mural painting. The processes for making a mural and their responsibilities in participation were explained to them. The students had positive attitudes and were willing to work with me throughout the study. This discussion reflects the students' behavior and their eagerness to participate in the art-based community program.

The students provided suggestions and recommendations on the content that should be included on the mural. After making a group decision on the items that should be included, students began sketching their ideas. They became more relaxed and less sensitive about their amateurish drawing skills. They sought comments from their peers about revising and refining their sketches. This collaboration may have contributed to their eagerness to explore community connectivity. The community-based art project invited adolescents to become more aware of their place in the community and to become social-responsible members.

The students indicated that their participation was meaningful, as, for example this statement by Ella reflects: “We all began to paint the areas we designed ourselves. We checked first about the colors we chose, but later we could figure it out ourselves.” The students found opportunities to determine the essence and quality of their artwork. An entry in one of the student’s journals reflected that all pieces of the mural fit together like a puzzle. They showed the great culture of a great city (SJ 2015, 05-03). They found that they could use traditional art forms and juxtapose them with abstract creative forms. Carl’s response to interview question 2 stated: “I gave ideas, I drew designs, I drew the steeple of the church, the ferris wheel, the fair, and I traced and painted them.” They were able to critique their collective work and other aspects of mural making. This process gave them opportunities to create a lasting work of art that reflected their thoughts and feelings. Their creative effort in a public forum contributed to their belief in themselves and in their futures.

The art-based community mural started January 16, 2014 and concluded May 1, 2014. Fourteen students participated in painting the mural, with the five who had attended all sessions selected to be interviewed by me. To investigate the relationship between the participants and community activism, a case study design was used as the framework for the study. I participated in both fieldwork and analysis as the researcher/observer. The relationships that I developed with the students allowed me to conduct semi-structured interviews in a manner that insured their safety and permitted them to say anything, without concern of being criticized. This method of qualitative inquiry was appropriate for investigating how students perceived their neighborhoods.

The data consisted of face-to-face interviews with the five students selected for the study, student journals, my research notes, daily observation notes, and narrative statements. The interviews were conducted after the completion of the mural, with students allowed to verbalize

their feelings about participation in the project and the completed mural, as well as their attachment to their community. The students also wrote of their experiences in their journals that were updated at the end of each session. I provided journal prompts to help students who were having difficulty in writing their thoughts about the sessions. The students also completed a short pretest-posttest survey to measure changes in their self-confidence from beginning to completion of the project. The journal prompts and semi-structured interviews reflected postmodern education theory.

I maintained a record of the daily sessions in my research notes. I wrote down student interactions, comments, and responses to questions at the end of each session. The research notes were reviewed by a peer who was an art teacher on a weekly basis. Photographs of the mural in progress were taken to provide a pictorial account of the mural from start to finish. The entire study was designed around postmodern theory and practice. I observed activities and behaviors, interactions, and engagement that supported my observations and analysis.

Collaboration, engagement, relationship to the community, growth and change, as well as self-confidence emerged as major themes in the study. Each of these themes served as a motivation for change among the adolescents. As a result, they saw themselves as active members of the community. The students suggested that they could participate in the community by picking up the trash. After working on the mural, they thought that they could have a greater influence by discussing and describing the positive elements on the mural. The following section outlines the empirical and theoretical findings of this study.

Findings of the Research Questions

As stated previously, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are students' perceptions of themselves as they have participated in an art-based community project?
2. Does participation in an art-based community project by Hispanic adolescents aid in the development of self-confidence?
3. Does participation in an art-based community project encourage interaction among Hispanic adolescents and increase their awareness of community-based problems, such as socioeconomic stressors, adolescent risky behavior, education, and career planning?

Research Question 1: Perceptions

For the purpose of this study, student perceptions are defined as an adolescent's image of his/her involvement in the process of art making. Adolescents' perceptions of themselves and the community were evidenced in student narratives, respect for other participants, and their ability to collaborate to create their artistic statement. Students had the perception that they could build positive relationships with their peer and with the community. My participation as an observer of student art making revealed that their behaviors and perceptions were intentional. Students' responses to semi-structure interview questions and journal prompts revealed the feelings of hope for the community.

Research Question 2: Self-confidence

Literature supports the concept that group participation in the arts tends to improve self-confidence and self-identity (Kay, 2000). Additionally, the interaction between group members

can increase social development within the community. Art should be seen as a symbol of empowerment that is owned by the creators and viewers.

Self-confidence factors are linked to participant performance (Klistman & Slankoo, 2007). Students may feel high self-esteem, but self-confidence is different. Two elements define self-confidence. The first element refers to skills that are developed by repeated patterns of activity. The second element involves the conjunction of various skill sets that apply to art engagement.

One student, Carl, talked of how the students were connected to the community. Carl said, "It is more important to talk about what you are doing rather than what you have done. Being involved in projects like this distracts you from bad behaviors and bad decisions. Plus it makes you feel good" (NS C 04-09). Another way that the art-based community project revealed the students self-confidence was the degrees of responsibility that they demonstrated through their participation. The students successfully fulfilled program expectations and commitments, placing a fair degree of ownership in the art engagement. The act of creating, the support of their peers, and the change to interact with the community gave the students the message that they are valued and appreciated, as well as their future is important.

This study reflected the self-confidence of the students who participated in the art engagement. Using postmodern theory, the art was designed to meet the students' social and educational needs (Eisner, 2001). The community-based art program had a positive influence on learning and self-esteem, along with an important effect on the lives of the students who participated (Dewey, 1938/1963).

Question 3: Interaction with and Awareness of Community

The third question was aimed at exploring adolescents' interaction with and awareness to their community. From the start of the project, the students expressed the need to connect to the community. They sought to develop their vision of a diverse community that incorporated landmarks, neighborhoods, and diversity. Ella said, "This is my neighborhood. Some things are beautiful and some things need help. I can show others how important it is to be part of a reviving community. I can help and so can you" (I EI #2).

People who work or live in run down, socially, and economically depressed areas must seek help by gathering like-minded citizens together to plan, develop, and construct their future. Art is one developmental strategy that has supported social and economic regeneration in communities (Kay, 2000). Additionally, participation in the project resulted in students becoming more aware of their need to be committed to helping their community (Wood, Larsen, & Brown, 2009).

Another way the project gained support was through the students' outreach into the community. Carl said, "I do several stuff in my community, like recycling and cleaning up junk, but I think the mural is it. It shows others that I am committed to the community to stand up and take voice!" (I C #7).

Growth and change.

Public works of art can be considered a cultural landmark. Student participants who designed and created the mural did so with a sense of belonging to their community. By characterizing life in their community, students recognized the importance of their neighborhoods, as well as the larger metropolitan area that they depicted in their work on the art project.

Postmodern art making methodology includes art-making, ceremony, performance, journal writing, poetry, narrative, interviews, and collaboration (Taylor, 2002). The postmodern theory extends beyond the artists themselves (Efland, 1996) and includes the viewer as an active participant in the event. Experience is connective. Observation knowledge and judgment are part of Dewey's (1938/1963) instrumentalism.

Social change was evident by the dialogue, writing, and art making by the students during the art project. Ellen said, "What we could do and what we couldn't do determined how we were broken up into groups to work. The choices came from our individual sketches" (I E1 #3).

Students demonstrated what they learned when writing in journal entries. "When I look at the mural, I see a colorful city, an imaginary place. The parts of the painting I like best is the lady with the floating face and the leaping pink dog with green spots on the left side" (SJ 5204 4-07). The study was designed as an asset-based approach to art making with adolescents and to explore activist themes and collective problem solving. The students felt strongly and worked hard to create a positive work of art. They talked about important issues in the mural, including "No Graffiti" (NS J 05-12). Ella said "A lot of improvements took place during the construction [of the mural]. Everyone had a say. It was up to us to figure it out. I solved a lot of problems" (I E2 #4). Her responses confirmed that adolescents in the mural program considered art making as a viable method to make changes.

Collaboration.

Art making is important to adolescent development. The experiences associated with art making combine thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world as characterized by adolescents (Lowenfeld, 1947) How art making is valued is central to understanding the ways in which adolescents develop aesthetically (Parsons, 1958). Cultural experiences like art making nurture

mental experiences. The unique contributions of students in a group activity can depict a positive functioning neighborhood in the eyes of the artist (Green, 2000). Student responses revealed that they began to challenge their own strengths and abilities while working on the mural.

The students in the program began to talk more openly about social, environmental, and cultural importance. They also discussed ways that their art could educate the public. “What stands out for me are the boxes I painted to fill with food for the needy” (SJ 2501 3-27). “I want the community to know that I picked out all the colors on purpose so it would look cheerful and bright” (NS E1 05-21). Carl said: “He would like the mural carried in a parade around the city to show the community awareness” (NS C 05-21).

Collaborative learning promotes the contributions of each member. Real life problem solving is promoted and students have a lasting memory of their collaboration (Hutzel, 2007). During the entire project, I was surprised with the adolescents’ commitment and work habits. Their collaborative energy was described by Jack who said, “We work well as a team. We know each other and how we operate in a group setting. We have respect for each other and we have the same goals. We want to who everyone that we live in a beautiful city” (SJ 3940 05-12).

Engagement.

The size of the canvas on which the mural was going to be painted was the first and most decisive challenge for the students. They found that planning and transferring their designs from paper to the mural the most difficult. Journaling also was a task they found daunting. In her interview, Ella stated: “The thing I liked least about painting the mural was the mistakes we made and the repairing we had to do. Sometimes we made a mess and didn’t know what to do” (I E2 #1).

Working collaboratively on the mural supported the idea that all of the elements must be balanced. All parts must be equally important. It was designed to be viewed by a large audience simultaneously. The mural was more than a picture, it was a vehicle of communication that tells a story or makes a statement (Lowenfeld, 1956).

Group art making has a distinct social value. Every student subordinates his or her own participation to make the group creation. Several incidences of discovery learning appeared in the data. For example, Mary stated that she did not like the cars and the hard work that had to be done to complete the design. She felt that the cars appear to be symbols rather than real images. She pointed out that the cars seemed to be stepping stones or a bridge that connected two more important images (I M #1). “The mural design was very thought out and created. I think I would call the mural, ‘City of Ethnicity’” (SJ 2501 04-17). Another participant stated:

“All the parts of the mural come together when you look at the carnival and see how the city is operating by the use of a smart phone. Others who look at the mural will come to understand that this is a magical place that will come true one day. I think the title of the mural should be ‘Wonderland’” (SJ 5204 4-17).

Theoretical Findings

Adolescents today have more challenges than ever. Youth need to be educated to compete in a world with limited options for them. They must have the skills and knowledge to understand and appreciate other cultures. Research suggested that adolescents need both individual learning and community recognition to compete in the adult world (Gardner, 1994). The mural project created a safe environment for adolescents to express their sense of community and their individual identity within the group (Gardner, 1994).

The purpose of the art project was to engage the adolescents in a cognitive, emotional, kinesthetic, and social relationship to their community (Taylor, 2002). The project provided an opportunity for seventh grade students to learn about and be inspired toward community engagement.

Postmodern community basic art education practices challenge the position that adolescents are unaware and unconcerned about their communities (Jeffers, 2005). They need opportunities to see themselves as members of a collective community. The approach to community-based arts education considers cultural, social, and environmental concerns (Gablek, 1991).

The present study forms a relationship between community-based art and theories of postmodern education. It included those who might not be included in arts projects. It also introduced social responsibility, and cultural traditions (Congdon, 2001) so participants could share in the exchange of experience and knowledge. Adolescents in the research project became deeply involved in their community by participating in a shaping role (Gardner, 1994) that linked the learner with the community. As Stankiewicz (2004) wrote, Contemporary youth need more opportunities for social practices that focus on the needs of the community

The participants in this research might represent the realities and experiences of adolescents everywhere. The data suggested that these young people feel they are a cross-section of the youth in the metropolitan area. The data supported the fact that adolescents want to make positive contributions to their communities (deAnda, Franke, & Becerra, 2009). Many adolescents show creative ways to portray a simple, more respectful life (Gardner, 1994).

The thematic findings suggested the likelihood for adolescents' community engagement and social change. These findings include:

- Adolescents need to form social bonds with peers and the community
- Adolescents need people who have similar interests and goals
- Adolescents need real world problems to solve with the help of mentors
- Adolescents need to interact with diverse populations as shown by the elements included on the mural that depicted the greater metropolitan area instead of their individual neighborhoods
- Adolescents need education on critical issues that affect them
- Adolescents need to be encouraged to discuss important issues that affect the community
- Adolescents need opportunities to restructure public places
- Adolescents need to feel safe
- Adolescents need to feel valued for their efforts

Community-based art programs provide asset-based action oriented learning (Farnum, 1997) that recognizes young people's accomplishments and their ability to create social change (Giroux, 1997).

Implications for Practitioners

An important finding of this study was the view of the participants concerning their neighborhoods. Although the students all lived in a small enclave of a large metropolitan area, they were told that the mural was to depict their particular neighborhoods. Instead, they chose to bring in elements from throughout the city and suburbs. No specific instructions were given when the mural project was introduced to the students, except that they could examine their neighborhoods and the places that people lived. By allowing the students to design and create the

mural, it became evident that students perceived they were part of the larger community and not isolated in their particular neighborhoods.

Community-based programs involving adolescents is important to provide youth with positive experiences that can help them become more aware of their neighborhoods and communities. These programs should not be limited to art, but could involve adolescents in all forms of community activism. Adolescents could choose to participate in live theater, work with senior citizens or young children, clean up a park, or perform in civic events. The purpose of these activities would be to get adolescents involved in a positive process that can help them evolve into community activists as adults. Adolescents who are involved in community programs are more likely to continue their involvement as adults. Community planners, parents, and educators need to work collaboratively to plan activities that interest adolescents in and out of school.

Further Research

Community-based art education programs are in many schools, community centers, churches, and craft stores. As Ulbricht (2005) noted, “today with our pluralistic postmodern perspectives, art educators often design new community-based programs specifically for local citizens and special groups, including at-risk youth, homeless individuals, the incarcerated and others not always included in the main stream” (p. 8).

Although the scholarly literature supported the numerous community-based art education programs in the country, there is a need for continued research: A need exists for longitudinal studies that track both short term and long-term efforts in community art projects for adolescents to affect the power of change (reference). Additional research studies could use pre- and posttest measures to collect data on community members’ perceptions of adolescents, youth’s

understanding of social change or youth's engagement in the community. Quasi-experimental designs could compare adolescents who do not participate in the research with adolescents who participated in regard to self-concept, importance of community involvement, and attitudes toward their communities.

A longitudinal qualitative research study could be used to follow adolescents who participated in an art-based community project. These youth could be interviewed at different intervals during adolescence and emerging adulthood to measure growth and change in their attitudes regarding the importance of community involvement. The data collected from these interviews could provide information for educators, community planners, and parents on ways to keep adolescents involved in community programs.

Summary

This study was designed to institute a broader practice by learning from adolescents using a theoretical and pedagogical model. A community-based art approach was used to help adolescents learn to express issues that confronted them in their neighborhoods. The adolescents engaged in active participation of art making that they reflected in their community. Through their participation in this project, they grew in self-confidence, became more aware of the importance of collaboration to complete a mural, and became more involved in their communities.

APPENDIX A**STUDENT JOURNAL PROMPTS**

At each session, the students were asked to write in their journals. I put a prompt on the board to provide ideas for them. The prompts included:

1. How does an artist make a neighborhood look important?
2. Tell us about your personal history.
3. Can art make a difference in the world? What would it look like to you?
4. Tells about your neighborhood.
5. Describe your bedroom? What does it look like?
6. If you could design your neighborhood, what would it look like?
7. Is there anyone you really like to work with?
8. What do you see when you look at the mural that you have painted?
9. What would you name the mural?
10. What were the best ideas for color and design?
11. Where do you think the mural should be placed?

APPENDIX B**SURVEYS**

ID Number _____ (last four digits of telephone number)

Age

Gender

Male

Female

Ethnicity

African American

Asian/Pacific Islander

Caucasian

Hispanic

Middle Eastern

Other _____

Grade in School

Sixth

Seventh

Eighth

Background in Art

Completed art classes in elementary school? Yes No

If yes, in how many years did you participate in art classes? _____

Have you ever gone to the Detroit Institute of Arts? Yes No

Have you seen the murals in your neighborhood? Yes No

APPENDIX C

PRE AND POST SELF-CONFIDENCE SURVEY

Please rate the following statements as they apply to you. There are no right or wrong answers, so be as truthful as possible. **Circle** your agreement with each statement.

- | | | | |
|--|-------|---------|----------|
| 1. How confident are you that you can create a mural? | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 2. Everyone should play a role in making a community mural. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 3. It is important that my ideas should be considered in the mural's design. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 4. A collaborative mural might reflect a world in which I want to live. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 5. Murals can bring students, parents, and community members closer together. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 6. Working on the mural can inspire me to become more active in my community. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 7. Making a mural can build my skills and confidence to take on other community projects. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 8. I can learn new things by working together with other students. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 9. Mural making can give me a voice in the community. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 10. Mural making provides me with a way to illustrate my thoughts about my neighborhood. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| 11. Keeping a personal journal during this project let me think about how this project made me feel. | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |

APPENDIX D**INTERVIEW QUESTION**

1. What did you like least about working on the mural?
2. Did you feel that you were an important participant in constructing the mural? Why or why not?
3. Were you satisfied with the effort you put into the design of the mural? Why or why not?
4. How did the different parts of the mural make you feel?
5. What might be done to make the mural look better?
6. How did you feel about working with other students on the mural?
7. Has your involvement in the project influenced your view of community issues? Why or why not?
8. How do you see yourself being involved in your neighborhood and community?

APPENDIX E

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



IRB Administration Office
87 East Canfield, Second Floor
Detroit, Michigan 48201
Phone: (313) 577-1628
FAX: (313) 993-7122
<http://irb.wayne.edu>

NOTICE OF EXPEDITED APPROVAL

To: Eileen Finnegan
College of Education

From: Dr. Deborah Ellis or designee A. Naham/BB
for Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

Date: February 07, 2014

RE: IRB #: 125713B3E
Protocol Title: Adolescents' Characterization of their Neighborhood through an Art-Based Community Project
Funding Source:
Protocol #: 1401012694

Expiration Date: February 06, 2015

Risk Level / Category: 45 CFR 46.404 - Research not involving greater than minimal risk

The above-referenced protocol and items listed below (if applicable) were **APPROVED** following *Expedited Review* Category (#7)* by the Chairperson/designee for the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board (B3) for the period of 02/07/2014 through 02/06/2015. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

- Revised Protocol Summary Form (received in the IRB Office 2/5/2014)
- Protocol (received in the IRB Office 12/24/2013)
- A waiver of requirement for written documentation of informed consent has been granted according to 45 CFR 46 116(d). This waiver satisfies: 1) the research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants. No greater than everyday life; 2) the research involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. After school program completing a mural; 3) the consent process is appropriate and 4) an information sheet disclosing the required and appropriate additional elements of consent disclosure will be provided to participants.
- Shorter Parental Permission (dated 1/30/2014)
- Behavioral Documentation of Adolescent Assent Form ages 13-17 (dated 1/30/2014)
- Recruitment Letter (dated 2/6/2014)
- Data Collection Tools: Demographic Survey, Pre and Post Self-Confidence Survey, and Interview Questions

- * Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. You may receive a "Continuation Renewal Reminder" approximately two months prior to the expiration date; however, it is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval **before** the expiration date. Data collected during a period of lapsed approval is unapproved research and can never be reported or published as research data.
- * All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the IRB **BEFORE** implementation.
- * Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the IRB Administration Office Policy (<http://www.irb.wayne.edu/policies-human-research.php>).

NOTE:

1. Upon notification of an impending regulatory site visit, hold notification, and/or external audit the IRB Administration Office must be contacted immediately.
2. Forms should be downloaded from the IRB website at each use.

*Based on the Expedited Review List, revised November 1998

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ABSTRACT**ADOLESCENTS' CHARACTERIZATION OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD
THROUGH AN ART-BASED COMMUNITY PROJECT**

by

EILEEN FINNEGAN**May 2015****Advisor:** Dr. Holly Feen-Callagan**Major:** Curriculum and Instruction**Degree:** Doctor of Education

The purpose of this research was to study adolescent participation in the development of a neighborhood mural as an art-based community project. I examined perceptions of the adolescents regarding the awareness of their community and neighborhoods. Additionally, I explored adolescents' perceptions of their own development in terms of building their self-confidence. To accomplish this, I facilitated the creation and design of a mural that depicts their perceptions of their neighborhoods, using art as a modality for expression.

Fourteen seventh grade students attending a parochial school in a low socioeconomic area of a large metropolitan city participated in the study. They worked collaboratively in designing and painting a mural that depicted their perceptions of their neighborhood. The students also completed a short demographic survey and a self-confidence survey at the beginning of the study and again after completing the mural. The students worked on the mural for 90 minutes, three days a week for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, the mural was completed and all of the students were satisfied with their work.

The five students who had attended all of the sessions were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews to obtain information regarding their participation in the study. They also

wrote journal entries to reflect on their participations throughout the program. I also maintained field notes to provide additional explanation on the interactions among and within the students.

The results of the study produced a mural that reflected the metropolitan area (People Mover, Ambassador Bridge, Renaissance Center, Comerica Park, and the Detroit Zoo). While the study was intended to be limited to the students' neighborhoods, the students wanted to go beyond the neighborhood. The comparison of the pretest and posttest self-confidence surveys provided support that participating in this collaborative project improved self-confidence. The students also became more interested in their community and wanted to be more involved. Communities should use the results of this study to provide opportunities for adolescents to become active participants in community-wide projects.

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