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Learning from Community: A Participatory Action Research Study of Community Art for Social Reconstruction

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LEARNING FROM COMMUNITY:
A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY
OF COMMUNITY ART FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

By
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This dissertation is dedicated to the residents of the West End community.
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ABSTRACT

“What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?” was the major research question investigated in this study. The strong collective identities of oppressed communities served as the basis for development of the research question and the study itself. Oppressive situations have developed strong social capital, which has the potential to empower communities to participate in improving their neighborhoods. As poor and minority communities suffer from an emphasis on deficiencies, an overabundance of social services, and oppressive educational systems, the use of community art to expose inherent collective identities of minorities can provide a catalyst to change through local community development. The development of asset-based maps of community, in place of more typical needs-based maps, can be effective in changing the perceptions of the community, eliciting participation of local residents, and creating sustainable community improvement. To investigate these issues in light of the use of community art to contribute to social change, a study detailing how community art can reveal participants’ perceptions of community and create social change is of significance for art education and community development agendas.

Adult and youth participants from the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, were included in the study. A participatory action research study, in keeping with the notion of change, was implemented utilizing an ethnographic framework of interviews, observations, and document collection. Participants reported their perceptions of community in general and the West End neighborhood in particular through a drawing exercise and individual interviews. The interview transcripts and drawings were coded according to the prefigured foci. Emergent themes were identified through content analysis.

Results from the study indicated that youth perceived community as a safe, happy place that is clean with greenery. Data revealed that participants perceived the West End
as a place with strong social bonds that suffers from trash, violence, and drugs. Data also revealed that the community art curriculum contributed to social change by changing the participants’ perceptions of their ability to affect their environment.
The perceived demise of community in our society (Putnam, 2000) has prompted the response of many educators, activists and scholars alike in efforts to recreate, reform, and reconstruct the essence of community, which lies in social relationships (Green & Haines, 2002). As social mobility becomes increasingly more common (Putnam, 2000), the spirit of community or sense of community suffers (Keyes, 1973). Social relationships, whether within families, schools, or communities, have changed (Putnam, 2000). Children often travel to schools far from their neighborhood, return to empty houses, and move so often they have little chance of getting to know their neighbors (Putnam, 2000).

While this perceived loss of community affects middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, those within marginalized, minority, or low-income populations tend to experience a much stronger social identity and sense of community (Apple, 1995; Green & Haines, 2002). These communities tend to rely more heavily upon local social networks (Green & Haines, 2002) for survival (Sleeter & Grant, 2002). For instance, African-Americans have been found to have a stronger sense of community than Euro-Americans (Hillier, 2002), creating “collective identities” that have resulted from bonding features from issues such as oppression and racism (Apple, 1995). Schools, however, teaching competitive and bureaucratic individualism, often fail to meet the needs of marginalized youth who have learned to survive through these “collective identities” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Failing educational systems and weakened social structures then perpetuate systems of oppression (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

In an attempt to counter this trend, in a community art program in Cincinnati in 2001, we developed a theme of “unity in the community” following racial tensions and riots in Cincinnati (Bastos & Hutzel, 2004, p. 44). I asked a participant, Antonio, 17, what he thought of the theme, and he said unity was important “because every community has to be together. You can’t just live and hate each other. You got to care
about each other. If you don’t care about each other, then you probably won’t care about yourself” (Bastos & Hutzel, 2004, p. 44).

Antonio has addressed a core issue in this study: the connection of self to community. Writing from the perspective of community psychologists, who support the notion that identity is inextricably related to the community to which a person relates (Pretty, 2002), in this study I analyze participants’ sense of community through community art and art education toward social reconstruction. Primarily, I seek to examine participants’ sense of community through art education and community art in order to encourage social reconstruction. I argue that community art education that is sensitive to the culture(s), issues, and assets of the specific community foster the development of the community through its people and I seek to shed light on that idea throughout this study. I utilize social action methods of both art education (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Bastos, 1998; Duncum, 2001) and community art (Adejumo, 2000; Emme, 1998) in recognizing the role of local residents in the regeneration of their community in this process.

This study centers on the implementation of a proposed community art curriculum in the urban West End neighborhood of Cincinnati where I was living at the time of the study. In this study I describe my experience in and perceptions of the community, as well as the perceptions and sense of community of the participants. The West End is a primarily African-American, low-income neighborhood that has seen several large redevelopment initiatives in recent years. My experience in this community was unique due to my own characteristics as a highly educated white person who grew up in the suburbs of Cincinnati. My data gathering was focused on understanding the perceptions of the participants as well as describing my own perceptions and understandings.

In regenerating or redeveloping an African-American urban neighborhood, it is necessary to recognize the impact of oppression and racism on the residents over the years (Sleeter & Grant, 2002; Apple 1995). This collective experience of racism and oppression has created “a new kind of person… within minority communities. A new, and much more self-conscious, collective identity has been forged” (Apple, 1995, p. 22, emphasis in original). This collective identity is utilized as an asset in the proposed community art curriculum in order to encourage social reconstruction.
Several researchers have written about education within communities that have experienced a history of oppression or racism. Paulo Freire (1970/1994), for instance, advocated a “committed involvement” in working for change in a community that has experienced oppression. He suggested “the solution is not to ‘integrate’ those communities into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that the community members can become ‘beings for themselves’” (Freire, 1970/1994, p. 48). Additionally, bell hooks (1994) argued for a collective critical practice, in which there is more than one single voice of authority. She promotes the deconstruction of a privileged voice through collective critical practice, which re-emphasizes the role of social networks and group learning in a community context. Freire and hooks both described education for liberation with oppressed communities through a group process of understanding the perceptions and goals of the participants. This philosophy formed the foundation of this study.

Statement of the Problem

After an extensive review of the relevant literature, I found that the methods of community development, community psychology, community art, art education, and education for liberation have yet to extensively inform or build upon one another either theoretically or pragmatically, in the sense that agendas for social reconstruction through art and action are not often readily informed by those who are most affected, particularly oppressed people. In this context, I qualitatively examine the possibilities for social reconstruction and community-building by implementing a community art curriculum founded on art education methods combined with action-oriented methods for liberation. To assess this study I analyze African-American youth’s perceptions, adult participants’ perceptions and my own perceptions of our shared community through art, and as is appropriate for PAR, suggest a curriculum and strategies for future projects like this one and other like projects in the future.

Research Questions

The primary research question driving the focus of this study is: What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End
neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?

To investigate this question, six supporting questions have been addressed through the methodology:

1. What are the participants’ perceptions of community in general?
2. What are the participants’ perceptions of the West End community?
3. What do the participants see as assets in the West End?
4. What were the participants’ perceptions of the community art project?
5. How did service-learning components enhance the community art curriculum as implemented in the West End?
6. Is there evidence that the community art project created changes in the community?

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study framed as procedural steps were to:

1. Review and analyze thematically the salient literature toward the goal of constructing theoretical foundations and an inquiry structure for this study;
2. Frame and structure the problem, questions and objectives of the study;
3. Decide upon and justify a theoretical approach to answering the question;
4. Select the site, population, and instruments;
5. Conduct the study;
6. Describe, interpret, and evaluate the results and construct thematic implications for community activism through art education;
7. Suggest a curriculum and course of action for like projects in the future.

Rationale

Methods for community development and education need to change if we wish to provide equal opportunity for those living in low-income communities (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). In order to address the complex problems those living in oppressed areas face, efforts to improve a community must involve residents through educational activities (Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Barr, Hamilton & Purcell,
Alienation and loneliness result when there is a weak sense of community (Davidson & Cotter, 1986). However, instilling a strong sense of community can provide a catalyst for local action and participation “by affecting the perception of the environment, social relations and one’s perceived control and empowerment” (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Community development through “citizen participation in community organizations has been viewed as a major method for improving the quality of the physical environment, enhancing services, preventing crime, and improving social conditions” (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). And the sustainability of a community is dependent upon the participation of community residents (Green & Haines, 2002).

Participatory action research is an activist method focused on a single situation for the sake of improvement (LeCompte, 1995), which can be framed as communitarianism. Connecting people to their communities through action-oriented activities can instill in them a spirit of social reconstruction (James, 1995). What takes place can be an educational activity rich in democratic participation which empowers people to participate in improving their communities (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). The goal is to create an environment in which people are proud of their community and strive to improve their neighborhood for themselves and their neighbors. This education can take place in many settings: schools, community centers, or arts centers. It is the goal of this study to portray how the arts may provide a socially-based foundation for promoting social reconstruction and community regeneration. For instance, Jones (1988) found that a community artist can be the catalyst for community development. Based on a pilot project, Jones (1988) found community arts “are a vital part of the community development process” because in “bringing people together to work on common pursuits… people could become empowered through those activities while their sense of community was enhanced” (p. 39). This study seeks to examine this notion.

Scope of the Study

This study is not a scientific examination of how individual identity development is affected by a community art experience, nor how identity development or community art quantitatively benefit a community development initiative. The study does, however, explore qualitatively the meaning and development of participants’ sense of community.
and their perceptions of the community through the arts activities. In addition, the study examines my own perceptions of the community and describes my personal experiences working with the participants on the community art project. My own learning and perceptions are important as I attempted to understand the participants’, adults and youth, sense of community. As such, the study is qualitative in nature looking into the individual meaning of experience rather than trying to uncover generalizable truth (Eisner, 1998).

**Limitations of the Study**

As this study provides an in-depth qualitative examination of a particular community, the intent is not to generalize the results. However, the curriculum developed for this study could be replicated in neighborhoods with characteristics similar to the West End. The purpose is to understand the perceptions of the community and the meaning of the community arts project as understood by the participants: in particular the youth and adults who participated, including me. The perceptions of others have been interpreted by me. I am the primary instrument, so another limitation, but also a guiding strength (Eisner, 1998), is the quality of my perceptions and sensibilities. The qualitative nature of this study better portrays potentially important subtleties than through quantitative means.

This study is a qualitative, participatory field-research inquiry that relies on my own perceptions and sensibilities as the primary instrument. As I made sense of the information, the results I present are interpreted by me through my thoughts and feelings. I have fully participated in this study and curricular implementation as I searched for meaning in relation to the questions I have asked. At the same time, I checked my own observations by asking other participants about their observations in relation to my questions. The results of this study presumably have implications for other similar communities and situations. However, generalization is not the intent. The study will, instead, provide a rich description of this community, the curriculum, and the participants. For this reason, the participants’ perceptions underscore the focus of the findings.
Research Design

This study examined participants’ perceptions of community and a community art project I developed with selected youth and adults. The goal was to build upon existing social capital in the community, in the form of social networks, as the connective tissue between potential personal and community success (Putnam, 2000). By implementing a community art curriculum in the urban neighborhood in which I lived, I attempted to answer the guiding research question: What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change? Based on ethnography as a socially-based cultural study (Agar, 1980), the study is also informed by phenomenology as a search for meaning, (Farber, 1966) and case study design as a framework for focusing on one particular site (Yin, 2003). I conducted this participatory action research study (Freire, 1997; Brydon-Miller, 2001) to determine participants’ perceptions of and meaning placed on their community and the community art piece, in the form of two community murals we developed from the proposed curriculum. In addition, I centered myself in this study and examined my own perceptions of my community (Glesne, 1999) and those who participated. As is the strength of PAR, I drew upon my own personal experiences in my community and with the community art curriculum to inform my research analysis. My informed point of view drove the outcome of this research (Eisner, 1998), which is presented in this study as an analysis of the participants’ sense of community, a deeper insight into my perceptions of this community and, simultaneously, underscores perceived racial components of my involvement in the neighborhood.

In order to understand the perceptions of participants, I utilized several methods, including observations, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise and documentation. The participants chose to create two murals and chose the concept of the murals through an examination of their perceptions of the community. From the data, I intended to obtain a better understanding of the participants’ perceptions of their community and this particular community art project in relation to the guiding question. From the information I gathered, I have developed and
demonstrated a method for engaging participants in accentuating assets in their community through the development of public, community art.

**Definition of Terms**

In this study the following terms are defined as follows:

1. **community arts** – “Community arts, variously known as local arts or participatory arts, is distinct from traditionally funded ‘high art’ in that the activity is more likely to have a purpose beyond its aesthetic value. It is not an art form in itself but involves arts created out of the imaginations and experiences of communities” (Clinton and Glen, 1994, p. 93).

2. **assets** – “gifts, skills and capacities” of “individuals, associations and institutions” within a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 25), which include physical, human, social, financial, and environmental (Green & Haines, 2002).

3. **social capital** – refers to connections among individuals, including social networks, and the reciprocity and trustworthiness that results (Putnam, 2000).

4. **community** – generally refers to a group of people with common interests, or a common history or situation; in this case I am referring to a community of place, which refers to people living in a common, particular area, as opposed to a general community of interest.

5. **sense of community** – “the perceptions of the environment, one’s social relations, and one’s perceived empowerment within the community” (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

6. **oppression** – when authority or power is unjustly used on a person or people.

7. **marginalized** – excluded from mainstream society or a group, not by choice.

8. **cognition** – the action or faculty of knowing, awareness, and comprehension (Benjafiefield, 1997).
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of community has been explored through various lenses throughout the years (Etzioni, 2003; Glynn, 1981; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Educators, activists and scholars alike have found common interest in efforts to recreate, reform, and reconstruct communities through the social relationships (Green & Haines, 2002). However, even thirty years ago increased social mobility resulted in decreased sense of community (Keyes, 1973). Social mobility has become increasingly more common (Putnam, 2000), causing the spirit of community or sense of community to suffer (Keyes, 1973). Changing social relationships in families, schools and communities have created a disconnect, as families move more often and children often travel to schools far from their neighborhoods (Putnam, 2000). Thus, having a positive sense of community, place, or identity is becoming more and more unusual (Putnam, 2000).

While this perceived loss of community infiltrates mainstream society, it is common for those within marginalized, minority, or low-income populations to experience a much stronger social identity (Apple, 1995; Green & Haines, 2002). Minority and poor communities rely more heavily upon local social networks than do middle- and upper-class communities (Green & Haines, 2002) for survival (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). African-Americans, for instance, are found to have a higher sense of community than Euro-Americans (Hillier, 2002). Bonding features have been described as a response to issues of oppression, racism, classism, and/or sexism, as struggles against such inequities create collective identities (Apple, 1995).

Schools, having a reputation for teaching competitive and bureaucratic individualism, often fail to meet the needs of marginalized youth who have learned to survive through such “collective identities” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) described the destruction of education for minority groups as a political product of the Reagan and Bush administrations’ school reform. “Politically, the Reagan/Bush attack on public schools manifested itself in further reproducing a two-tier
system of schooling designed to privilege upper middle-class whites, on the one hand, while containing the working class, the poor, and students of color, on the other” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 1).

Similarly, neighborhoods where marginalized, minority, or low-income children live are often targeted for redevelopment initiatives by city governments (Green & Haines, 2002). Such neighborhoods are often considered through deficiency-oriented policies and programs, which focus on the needs of the neighborhood (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990). Even though the social structures and collective identities within these communities are presumably quite strong, those with decision-making power often overlook these strong social structures, instead focusing on deteriorating buildings (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990). Residents of low-income neighborhoods come to believe in themselves merely as clients in an environment of service (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). And service institutions actually “create a wall between lower income communities and the rest of society—a wall of needs which, ironically enough, is built not on hatred but (at least partly) on the desire to ‘help’” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 2).

Systems of oppression are perpetuated by weakened social structures and failing educational systems (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Although there are no clear-cut answers to issues of oppression, there are many individuals and groups who work tirelessly to improve social conditions for those who have been marginalized. In an attempt to enlighten these efforts, I consider theoretical discussions of education and art in light of social actions for liberation and community building within a pragmatic framework of social reconstruction and instrumental communitarianism, particularly in relationship to an urban, African-American community in Cincinnati, Ohio. For this reason, I have incorporated literature pertaining specifically to the African-American experience of racism, oppression, and resistance through art.
Theoretical Framework: Situating Pragmatism within Social Reconstructionism and Instrumental Communitarianism

Pragmatic Truth

Educators, activists, and scholars respond to problems of oppression, loss of community, or failing educational systems often in isolation from one another. Whereas scholars respond through research, writing, and theory, activists and educators respond through social action and education. Coalescing theory and practice, pragmatism provides a method which serves “to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences” (W. James, 1907, p. 45). Although many “philosophers must leave that which they analyze unchanged” (Stanley & Benne, 1995, p. 140), pragmatism considers truth, philosophically, as the success of practical application in the world (Peirce, 1997; W. James, 1907). Scholar, philosopher, and activist Cornel West (1989) has connected pragmatism to contemporary life, situating it as a “theology of the streets” (Wood, 2000).

Search for “truth”. A pragmatic search for truth is a vital quest for democratically reacting to issues of oppression (Dewey, 1926). Pragmatism considers an instrumental view of truth, in which “truth in our ideas means their power to ‘work’” (W. James, 1907, p. 58). Accordingly, “an idea is ‘true’ so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives” (W. James, 1907, p. 75). The search for “truth” from the perspective of marginalized groups of people has great philosophical ramifications for enlightening our understanding of knowledge. Truths are not stagnant; they come into being from ideas and are made by events (W. James, 1907). Personal experiences create the events upon which ideas and truths are founded, as “Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses and to count the humblest and most personal experiences” (W. James, 1907, p. 80). And, personal human experiences of oppressed people have the ability to inform our ideas and notions of truth (LeCompte, 1995).

The pragmatic search for truth is based on a humanist position of common sense, a totality of personal experiences, and practical application (W. James, 1907). According to W. James (1907), pragmatists believe, “ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience…” (p. 58, emphasis in original). To simplify, “Truth is made… in the course of experience” (W. James, 1907, p. 218). Hence, as illustrated in
postmodernism, it is through the experience of the oppressed that a truth of oppression may be revealed (LeCompte, 1995).

My point here is that social reconstructionism and instrumental communitarianism can serve to inform a pragmatic approach in which community action, education for liberation, and art education can come together to create change. The foundation of this change, I present in this study, should be built upon existing assets and experiential knowledge in oppressed communities. Building upon pragmatism as the philosophical foundation for seeking truth of oppression, social reconstruction can serve as an educational application for changing systems of oppression through community action and art.

**Social Reconstructionism as Education**

Social reconstructionism as a movement was initiated in the 1930s to build educational support for economic planning that would benefit all people (M. James, 1995) and has been described as the “nexus of education, community, and the individual” (M. James, 1995, p. xv). Democratic participation has been at the root of the movement, while education has been the vehicle for creating opportunities for involvement and conscious awareness of social issues plaguing the nation. The agenda early on was: schools and teachers… would participate equally in a cultural redefinition of America: a collective society dependent less on the wealth of the few and more on the planning of the many… The social reconstructionist agenda cut at the very nature of how America thinks about culture and order, and threatened the very definition of power and who governs (M. James, 1995, p. 114).

Raising questions about power, democracy and culture provided an initial step toward redefining America. Education that seeks to change the status quo, as opposed to reinforce it (Freire, 1993), became the underlying philosophy of social reconstructionism.

In the prologue to M. James’ (1995) edited book on social reconstructionism, Benne (1995) described the social reconstructionist agenda in education as a means toward “deepening an extension of democratic values into the economic and social (ethnic, racial, and social class) relationships through participative planning” (p. xxiii). Additionally, through education, social reconstruction can “prepare future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people and
especially those who are of color, poor, female, gay, lesbian, transsexual, disabled, or any combination of these” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 189).

**Participatory Democracy.** The idea of a participatory democracy is a shared vision by most social reconstructionists. The question then becomes, Who has a right to participate? Gintis (1980) approached this question by differentiating between property rights and person rights, with property rights historically dominating and defined as the power to enter into decision-making social programs on the basis of property ownership. Social reconstructionists typically would support a paradigm shift that would place the significance of person rights before property rights. “Person rights involve equal treatment of citizens, freedom of expression and movement, equal access to participation in decision-making in social institutions, and reciprocity in relations of power and authority” (Gintis, 1980, p. 193). This idea is pragmatically exemplified in governmental social service programs such as health, welfare, affirmative action, and social security. It is probably not surprising, then, that dominant groups tend to prefer the rights of property ownership while marginalized groups tend to prefer the “prerogatives of persons” (Gintis, 1980, p. 194).

**Action for Change.** Social reconstruction applies social action to education in order to instigate a paradigm shift in which participation in decision-making and planning is based on these person rights and not the rights of property ownership (Gintis, 1980). Freire (1993), a Brazilian educator who taught adults to read through experiential, liberating education, responded to the question of participation with “cultural synthesis” and shared dialogue as means toward social reconstruction and revolution.

‘Cultural revolution’ takes the total society to be reconstructed, including all human activities, as the object of its remolding action. Society cannot be reconstructed in a mechanistic fashion; the culture which is culturally recreated through revolution is the fundamental instrument for this reconstruction. ‘Cultural revolution’ is the revolutionary regime’s maximum effort at conscientização—it should reach everyone, regardless of their personal path. (Freire, 1993, p. 158-159)

Educational activities and social action agendas can either reinforce the status quo through dominating methods or attempt to change it through liberating education and
equal participation (Freire, 1993). Learning to question society, referred to by Freire (1993) as critical consciousness or conscientização, is necessary for social change and liberation from domination, as cultural action has “the objective of preserving [the social] structure or of transforming it” (Freire, 1993, p. 179). Freire similarly regarded education as “a political process that either reinforces an inequitable status quo through control of consciousness or seeks to change it through critical reflection” (Bastos, 1998, p. 18). It is through critical reflection that social action may be initiated.

Sleeter and Grant (1999) illuminated a social action agenda through multicultural education that is social reconstructionist, which serves to create democratic participation. Sleeter and Grant (1999) proposed five approaches to education that is multicultural: teaching the exceptional and the culturally different; human relations; single-group studies; multicultural education; and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. They recommended the last approach, education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist, claiming the approach “calls attention to social justice and empowering young people to make social changes” (p. viii). Additionally, they provided several applicable practices for teaching social reconstruction, including: practicing democracy; analyzing the circumstances of one’s own life; developing social action skills; and coalescing. These recommendations point toward an action-oriented educational agenda which centralizes the lives and experiences of the students. These components of Sleeter and Grant’s (1999) typology have the potential to enlighten several characteristics of art education. For example, an educational agenda which engages students in critically and collaboratively examining assets and the cultural composition of their own community in order to react through visual representations can be an example of a multicultural and social reconstructionist art education.

Social Reconstructionism for African-Americans. During the birth of the movement in the 1930s, several African-American educators saw the liberating potential of social reconstructionism (M. James, 1995). “During the 1930s, reconstructionism was… seized by African-American educators as a potentially powerful democratic tool that might help buttress the African-American community against the ravages of segregation and racism” (M. James, 1995, p. xviii). African-American educators supporting social reconstructionism proposed several topics for use in African-American
schools, including African-American history and music, home life, studies of black poetry, religion and folk life, and readings on village life in Africa (M. James, 1995). These topics all pointed toward several underlying goals of African-American educators: “increased emphasis on solidarity, knowledge of their African heritage, and an awareness of education in the white community of the rights of African-Americans in a democracy” (M. James, 1995, p. xviii).

Although social reconstructionism in education first arose more than seventy years ago, issues of inequality and oppression are important to this day because racial oppression in America is still existent (Blauner, 2002). For example, I recently took a graduate level education class in which, on the first day, we discussed Black History Month. One white, adult student in the class stated, “My school doesn’t need Black History Month. We don’t have any black students.” Sadly, this student did not return to the class after others challenged her statement, an example that speaks to the need for a continued social reconstructionist agenda in education.

Instrumental Communitarianism as Social Action

Instrumental communitarianism reinforces the pragmatic notion of social reconstruction by focusing education for liberation on social action (Peirce, 1997). It is through social bonding and collective action that communitarianism may affect change and out of which knowledge is generated (Peirce, 1997). An old Buddhist teaching instructs us to start where we are (hooks, 2002). When starting where we are, we often start with ourselves (hooks, 2002). However, “We become individuals in and through being socialized into shared forms of life… We become who we are by growing into a network of social relations” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 120). Our social relations attribute to our personal development, and having an empowered perception of our ability to affect change is developed socially (Etzioni, 2003). In order to start with ourselves, we should start with our community, for one equally influences the other. That is a premise for this study.

Local Action. Instrumental communitarianism embraces the pragmatic notion that truth is reflected in experience and determined through usefulness (Dewey, 1926). Dewey (1926) emphasized community and communication as the means for change. For youth to learn to change their own situation, their own community, their own school
through local action reinforces a democratic philosophy of communitarianism (Dewey, 1926). In addition, instrumental communitarianism reflects the social reconstructionist agenda for social action to create liberation from oppression and domination, particularly with respect to local collective action (Freire, 1993). Speaking specifically about the binding factors of race and location, Sleeter (1996) claimed, “Successful liberation movements come about because a group has pressed collectively for change, and constituents have forged a sufficiently shared identity to stand together” (p. 107). Communitarianism represents the shared identity necessary for successful liberation movements.

**Education for Communion.** Action-oriented educational practices serve to create communion for liberation (Freire, 1993). Whether we use the term democratic education, multicultural education, emancipatory education, or progressive education, the common pragmatic goal is rooted in collective action for liberation and freedom. Dewey (1938), for instance, described democratic education as a way for citizens to critically examine their society and participate collectively in social action. According to hooks (2003), “Progressive education, education as the practice of freedom, enables us to confront feelings of loss and restore our sense of connection. It teaches us how to create community” (p. xv). Community creation can be reflected in the social reconstruction of a community through education, art, social action, as well as a common experience, such as racial oppression or unwanted local development. Hooks’ (2003) book, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, as a response to Freire’s (1994) *Pedagogy of Hope*, addressed the weakened sense of community in America in relationship to education. “One of the dangers we face in our educational systems is the loss of a feeling of community, not just the loss of closeness among those with whom we work and with our students, but also the loss of a feeling of connection and closeness with the world beyond the academy” (p. xv). Hooks (2003) suggested the teaching of community, and this study proposes initially the goal of learning from community, in which one learns from and with one’s community through asset-based social action.

**Service-Learning.** Service-learning has its theoretical roots in aspects of Dewey’s experiential and democratic educational objectives (Giles & Elyer, 1994), specifically Dewey’s writings linking education to experience in the community, social
According to Deans (1999), the ideological educational theories of both Dewey and Freire contribute much to the education and philosophy of service-learning. While Dewey’s pragmatism dealt with the relationship of action to reflection, Freire’s critical pedagogy connected the individual to society through critical reflection on race, class, and power (Deans, 1999). Taylor (2002) highlighted the work of both Dewey and Freire, claiming Freire’s notion of committed involvement “is essential to successful and meaningful service-learning programs” (p. 128).

Definitions and best practices of service-learning are varied and multifaceted. Sigmon (1979) defined service-learning as an experiential education approach that is based on “reciprocal learning,” implying a learning arrangement that benefits both those who provide the service and those who receive it. According to Sigmon (1979), service-learning occurs when the goals of both learning and service are balanced. The National Society for Experiential Education defined service-learning as “any carefully monitored service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience” (1994). The Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (1994) compiled a set of common characteristics of service-learning, which was a precursor to the development of several versions of best practices and components of service-learning. For instance, Duckenfield and Wright’s (2001) Pocket Guide to Service-Learning, released by the National Dropout Prevention Center, outlines components of service-learning, including the basic components of preparation, action, reflection and celebration or recognition.

Service-learning is beginning to be recognized, utilized and studied by art educators. For instance, Taylor (2002) proposed a postmodern service-learning art pedagogy “as a transformative and socially reconstructive practice” (p. 124). She described a service-learning project with art education students at Radford University, called The Beans and Rice Art Project, which developed community partnerships for reciprocal learning. Taylor (2004) also described a university service-learning program that intended to develop for university students a sense of place in their community. She proposed utilizing service-learning in higher education to create understanding, awareness, connection, and contribution for university students in their college
neighborhoods in order to create hope and caring. “And through such hope comes the knowledge and empowerment to work together toward making a beneficial difference in the future of the community” (Taylor, 2004, p. 38). Taylor (2004) proposed art education through service-learning to better prepare future art teachers and to recognize the postmodern use of art for social change and sociopolitical awareness. Through a service-learning approach, art education and community art can provide a means for people to build upon collective identities for social action and liberation in an effort to learn from community.

Reconstruction of Community

Art as Community-Constructor

The arts as a community-constructor can be best exemplified by the placement of the arts of indigenous societies’ as the cultural center of their community life (T. Anderson, 2003). Traditional uses of the arts are inherently cultural, imbedded in the everyday lives of communities through ritual and celebration (Dissanayake, 1988). T. Anderson (2003) has examined the role of the arts through traditionalism, modernism and postmodernism, applying a combined approach to his vision of “art for life.” He suggested that postmodern artists and philosophers who have deconstructed the individualistic notions of modernism have been informed by traditional views of indigenous societies (T. Anderson, 2003). He argued that art should be a search for meaning, stating, “the premise of art should be about something beyond itself” (p. 59). He provided social reconstruction as a philosophical response to anti-philosophical and anti-educational attempts of deconstruction, which lack philosophies for change or action. In addition, he suggested that many social reconstructionists, informed by traditions of indigenous societies, “have recentered art as an artifact or performance that reflects and facilitates the cultural life of a community” (T. Anderson, 2003, p. 62).

Art for Social Bonding. Art has been described not only as a symbol of social relations (Dissanayake, 1988) but also as a function which strengthens social bonds (Dewey, 1934) and helps us deal with unfamiliar experiences. Whether we experience something unfamiliar or culturally imbedded, art can introduce cross-cultural significances or enlighten our inherent personal and social understandings. Shared stories
and meanings, as imbedded in the arts, create a sense of unity by expressing “the life of the community” (Dewey, 1934, p. 328). “If social customs are more than uniform external modes of action, it is because they are saturated with story and transmitted meaning” (Dewey, 1934, p. 326). And through the shared aesthetic of a community there exists a collective individuality and social bonds (Dewey, 1934). Anthropologists often rely upon the arts of traditional societies to understand the social life of communities, a practice that is now proposed as an approach to cross-cultural and multicultural understanding through visual culture studies (Duncum, 2001).

**Visual Culture for Understanding.** Recently, the field of visual culture has emerged as a multidisciplinary umbrella over such disciplines as aesthetics, anthropology, art criticism, art history, black studies, critical theory, cultural studies, phenomenology, philosophy, and sociology (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Several academic art history departments, in an attempt to better represent their actual teachings, have changed their department titles from art history to visual culture. For, as Walker and Chaplin (1997) suggested, “Today, lecturers and students are as likely to discuss and research advertisements, computer graphics, designed goods, fashion, films, graffiti, photography, rock/pop performances, television and virtual reality as they are the traditional arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture” (p. 5). While some would question the inclusion of mass culture for fear of diminishing the “specialness of art” (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 5), the arts have expanded, and many contend the terminology too should expand to represent the new vastness of visual imagery.

In general, cultural studies have typically been pursued by sociologists and anthropologists. Sociologists have defined culture as being about meaning and dependent upon symbolism, which is shared, learned and transmitted (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Anthropologists, similarly, have defined culture as a way of life of a tribe, community or nation (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Studies of culture for both disciplines would include an examination of habits, customs, rituals, and clothing, tools, carvings and shelters (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Visually, cultural studies entail exploring perceptions through our strongest sense: sight. Hence, images and visuals provide essential and primary clues into our own and others’ cultures. “Images are viewed in the broad context of social processes and pressures, and, this being so, the lines are seriously blurred between the study of
images and sociology” (Duncum, 2001, p. 104). Blandy and Bolin (2003) argued, however, that visual culture is as limiting as visual art and offer “material culture” as an even broader consideration. They contended that art experiences are becoming more and more multi-sensory, especially considering art pieces that have involved sound, touch, and smell. The relevance of visual culture for this study is in the critical nature of visual culture in efforts to expand our social understanding of art and of culture.

Unity and Social Survival. Many of us may inherently believe in the arts as a cultural connector or communicator, however many others often go unconvinced. While Dissanayake (1988) argued for the necessity of art for social survival, R. Anderson (1990) believed that our well-being “depends upon artistic activity” (p. 232). Specifically, he linked art with human health, physical well-being, an involvement with social goodness, and as a manifestation of truth (R. Anderson, 1990). “Art seems to have been called upon, perhaps as a last resort, in an effort to survive difficult circumstances” (R. Anderson, 1990, p. 233).

Dewey (1934), who suggested that art provides a universal language that connects the experiences of a community, provided a theoretical response to the aforementioned questions:

Just because art, speaking from the standpoint of the influence of collective culture upon creation and enjoyment of works of art, is expressive of a deep-seated attitude of adjustment, of an underlying idea and ideal of generic human attitude, the art characteristic of a civilization is the means for entering sympathetically into the deepest elements in the experience of remote and foreign civilizations. (p. 332)

To that end, it is inherent in the ability of the arts to provide connections to and understandings of not only other cultures and communities, but also our own. Dewey (1934) believed, in our own communities for instance, that art is liberating and uniting based on a shared imaginative experience. “Every culture has its own collective individuality… Like the individuality of the person from whom a work of art issues, this collective individuality leaves its indelible imprint upon the art that is produced” (Dewey, 1934, p. 330). Art responds to and represents the collective individualities of various cultures and communities.
Western Aesthetics and Pragmatic Art. Despite the notion that “the arts by which primitive folk commemorated and transmitted their customs and institutions, arts that were communal, are the sources out of which all fine arts have developed” (Dewey, 1934, p. 327), in Western aesthetics, socially-based arts are often categorized as separate from traditional fine arts. “Art in the modern Western sense contributes to species’ sociality only in the most tangential ways, having become increasingly private and elitist” (Dissanayake, 1988, p. 71). For instance, R. Anderson (1990) connected a separate pragmatic theory of art primarily to Western aesthetics. A pragmatic theory of art is “based on the assumption that art should do something worthwhile for the members of the community that produces the art. Specifically, art should pave the way to a world that is socially, politically, or (most frequently) spiritually better” (R. Anderson, 1990, p. 208). The application of art for social betterment is confined within a sub-category of pragmatic art in Western aesthetics. For instance, R. Anderson (1990) provided art therapy and religious art as examples of pragmatic art that go beyond art for art’s sake.

Cultural and Community Development. Despite these categorized differentiations, the arts have still been universally described by Lippard (1997) as inherently cultural, as she provided the challenge to make art more inclusive and participatory. Lippard (1997) has credited storytelling, visual art, theater, and performance as providing the “most innovative developments in community culture” (p. 282). She continued:

All art is a framing device for visual and/or social experience, it is difficult for an artform to dispense altogether with the frame, or to change frames on the spot, offering multiple views of the ways in which a space or place can be and is used. The challenge is to establish more bonds radiating out from the art “community”—to marginalized artists, to participant communities and audiences, allowing the art idea to become, finally, part of the social multicenter rather than an elite enclave, sheltered and hidden from public view or illegibly representing privileged tastes in public view. (p. 286)

From the pragmatic viewpoint and language of community developers, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) considered artists to be important within community development processes, suggesting artists bring several specific assets to the community
development process, including tradition, culture, skills, vision and creativity, productivity, and self-expression and self-esteem. They suggested that artists keep alive the many and varying traditions and cultures within a community.

Artists are ‘weavers’ whose skills help to keep this communal fabric intact. They also have the ability to create new patterns within it in response to current community needs and demands…. An artist’s vision can even create new possibilities for community growth and further development…. Artists take pride in their work. This pride grows in proportion to the acceptance of their work within the community. Acceptance of this kind contributes not only to the artist’s sense of self-esteem but also to the community’s positive recognition of its own unique character and value. (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 95-96)

Community regeneration provides a localized effort of social reconstruction, and is dependent upon the social identity and bonding of a particular community. Often referred to as social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993), the social networks and identities in a community constitute valuable assets to build upon in regenerating a community. Green and Haines (2002) described the building of social capital through developing “social relationships and networks that will serve as assets in the community development process in the future” (p. 101). Youth and artists, according to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), represent examples of human assets in a community that provide important gifts to capitalize upon in efforts of community regeneration.

Determining a community’s social capital relies heavily upon understanding the sense of community of the residents (Perkins & Long, 2002). Community psychologists often refer to sense of community or psychological sense of community as individuals’ and communities’ psychological perceptions of the community. A person’s sense of community also indicates one’s degree of social identification (Davidson & Cotter, 1986) and willingness to participate in community activities (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990), and has been found to be stronger in poorer and primarily African-American neighborhoods (Hillier, 2002). This phenomenon is most likely attributed to new collective racial identities that formed during the 1950s and 60s as an “enduring legacy of the racial minority movements” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 165). The significance of a person’s sense of community can be summarized as having a “positive influence on one’s
perception of the environment, social relations, and the perceived control the person has over the immediate environment” (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990, p. 67).

However, many community development initiatives fail to connect people to the process of development and regeneration (Green & Haines, 2002). For example, according to Green and Haines (2002), community development addresses “structural changes in the community, especially in how resources are used, the functioning of institutions and the distribution of resources in the community” (p. 5). This definition appears to focus on the formal systems of a community, as opposed to the social networks. With that said, Green and Haines (2002) define community as being comprised of (a) a territory of place; (b) social organizations or institutions that provide regular interaction among residents; and (c) social interaction on matters concerning a common interest. While their definition of community serves to portray the significance of social interactions in a community, their description of community development fails to recognize social capital as a means to develop a community. However, when the architects, urban planners, building crews, and consultants have moved on to their next project, the ongoing success of a community is dependent upon those who live and work in that particular neighborhood. How they perceive themselves as a component of their community, according to community psychologists, just may determine their involvement in ongoing community success.

In a process-based approach to community development, participation is crucial and often determined by a community’s social capital (Green & Haines, 2002). In a similar approach, de Tocqueville (1969) researched associational life by studying two small towns in the 1830s (Warren, 2001). De Tocqueville discovered that associational life developed in people a “habit of participation” and a sense of “self-interest rightly understood, that is, an understanding that an individual’s well-being was intimately connected to the health of the whole community” (Warren, 2001, p. 17). However, recent affects of globalization and social mobility have minimized the need or ability for local community connections, particularly in middle-class communities (Green & Haines, 2002). Despite this change among the middle-class, poor and minority communities “are more likely to rely on neighbors and kin to meet their material and emotional needs” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 226). And therefore the social capital and sense of community
in poor and minority communities are more crucial to the success and sustainability of the community.

In addition to public participation, Green and Haines (2002) suggested community organizing and community visioning are essential to successful development approaches. Community art can be situated within community organizing and community visioning as the potential to negotiate for a pragmatic social reconstructionist agenda in art education. As an example, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston, Massachusetts, was a successful and ongoing campaign for community development in which the social capital provided the most significant assets for participation, organizing and visioning that were utilized in improving the community (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). This case study described a successful community mobilization effort to revitalize an urban, blighted neighborhood in south Boston. A community mural was an important asset of this initiative, which encouraged teenagers to enter into the community development process.

**Making Special, Making Better.** The arts are described by Dissanayake (1988) as “making special” that which a culture values. “In both art and ritual ceremony, ‘another world,’ different from the everyday, is invoked” (Dissanayake, 1988, p. 89). Additionally, the arts provide a forum for displaying what is considered socially important (Dewey, 1934). Traditionally, survival and social necessities have been displayed through art. While this making special of the arts highlighted what was considered to be important to a culture, more recent and radical applications of the arts were intended to improve such problems as inequalities and oppression.

Social reconstructionists envision a better world, especially for marginalized groups of people. Art can provide the means toward approaching a social reconstructionist agenda for a more equal and equitable society. As Beardsley (1981/1958) suggested, “Art fosters mutual sympathy and understanding and offers an ideal for human life” (p. 574-575). As Dewey (1934) described, “Esthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also the ultimate judgment upon the quality of a civilization” (p. 326). Art, as it serves as an ideal and represents the quality of a community, becomes necessary to improvement.
African-American Arts. What perhaps began as a need for communication for African slaves speaking different languages and dialects, the history of African-American arts has its roots in collective identity, solidarity, resistance and survival (Lewis, 1990). In the early days of slavery, talking while working in the fields was strictly forbidden, so “music, pantomime, dance, and cryptic signs became the established means of communication within many slave groups” (Lewis, 1990, p. 8). The arts of African slaves developed within the slave groups through cultural traditions, despite differences of dialect and customs (Lewis, 1990). Additionally, slaveholders began to utilize their slaves as artisans, having them work as “carpenters, metal workers, potters, sculptors, weavers and designers” (Lewis, 1990, p. 9). It was not long before several African-American professional artists emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In an effort to recast African-American identity in the early 1900s, a collective attempt was made to replace old images of slaves with more current images based on everyday African-American life and folklore (LeFalle-Collins & Goldman, 1996). This new identity for blacks, referred to as the New Negro, “was an ideal, an image meant to replace the Jim Crow stereotypes of the nineteenth century and to restructure the ways blacks regarded themselves” (LeFalle-Collins & Goldman, 1996, p. 14). The New Negro movement spurred African-American artists to action and cultural redefinition, developing into the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance. “For visual artists, what emerged was an ideology that stressed the relationship between images and ethnic and class struggle” (LeFalle-Collins & Goldman, 1996, p. 26).

The 1920s Harlem Renaissance marked a time of great change, cultural redefinition, and artistic exploration for African-Americans (Lewis, 1990). Artists of the Harlem Renaissance “began to assert themselves and, in doing so, developed self-reliance, self-respect, and self pride. As they began to strive for social and cultural independence, their attitudes toward themselves changed, and, to some extent, other segments of American society began to change their attitudes toward them” (Lewis, 1990, p. 59). The Harlem Renaissance represents a social movement spurred by the arts for social change and reconstruction. Although it took place within the city of New York, it had international ramifications not only for the African-American community, but the entire national and international community (Lewis, 1990). This movement redefined
what it meant to be black in America and opened the door for others to witness and experience the developing culture of African-Americans (Lewis, 1990).

Mexican muralists provided the strongest inspiration toward a spirit of resistance for African-American artists (LeFalle-Collins & Goldman, 1996). LeFalle-Collins and Goldman (1996) described the impact of Mexican muralists on African-American artists:

[Mexican muralists] were all inspired by the same revolutionary social process… regarding the problems of their time. They sought to deploy their images and words to oppose dictatorships, discriminations, racisms, exploitations; the poor, the scorned, the oppressed, the pursued all awakened their sympathy and solidarity. These views were understood by many African-American artists. (p. 9)

Such inspired African-American artists were intrigued by such socially-driven artwork that attempted to reform society, and applied this approach to their own continued reconstruction of racial identity.

African-American muralists looked to their roots of Africa for further inspiration, discovering “the exterior walls of buildings that surround many villages and compounds in Africa today display a variety of decorative patterns and symbols that have cultural significance for their communities” (Lewis, 1990, p. 115). However, “barriers caused by difference in age, economic standing, and sociopolitical conviction gave way to a new group feeling. With this new unity and dedication, the role of African American art was transformed from fulfilling the needs of the traditional African community to fulfilling the needs of the contemporary African American community” (Lewis, 1990, p. 143).

The needs of the African-American community are still great, and African-American artists remain a strong cultural and community resource held in the highest regard in their community (Lewis, 1990). The continued sense of community and collective identity of African-Americans permeates the art of the black community as an art for social and community reconstruction. When considering art education of African-Americans, it is important to recognize and utilize these assets, as they can inform instructional methods and topic choices. This study utilized the collective identity of African-Americans through the art and social networks existent in an urban neighborhood by building upon their collective identity and sense of community, as is portrayed in the proposed community art curriculum in chapter three.
Art Education as Community-Constructor

The use of art education as a community-constructor and for social action has been consistently applied by practitioners and occasionally considered by theoreticians (Adejumo, 2000; Emme, 1998; Bastos, 1998). However, while arts administrators grapple with “audience development” (Diggle, 1994; Kolb, 2002) and art educators debate over the latest art education approach (Duncum, 2001; Smith 2003), many communities continue to utilize the arts as an educational, social service tool. An examination of art education practices and methods which potentially serve to inform community art education, including visual culture art education (VCAE), community-based art education (CBAE), and art for life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005), is important in order to understand efforts to connect art education to community and cultural education. The goal is to build upon and apply these varying approaches in art education to a community art curriculum applied in an urban setting, and consider cross-field implications for both art education and community art.

Visual Culture Art Education. As the field of art education faces another paradigm shift from that of discipline-based art education (DBAE) of the 1980s to visual culture art education (VCAE) (Duncum, 2001; Smith, 2003), the opportunity is ripe to reconsider approaches to art education. Duncum (2001) compared the current VCAE paradigm shift to that of the DBAE shift of the 1980s: “The shift from art to visual culture appears to represent a fundamental change in the orientation of our field as the shift from self-expression to a discipline base in the 1980s” (Duncum, 2001, p. 101). However, he recognized an underlying difference between the 1980s paradigm shift to DBAE and the recent shift to VCAE, as VCAE provides a change of subject matter while DBAE provided a change of approach (Duncum, 2001). VCAE offers a more inclusive set of artifacts to study, broadening the scope from “beyond the art institution” to visual artifacts “associated with a particular human activity and historical period” (Duncum, 2001, p. 102). In essence, “visual culture is generally informed by the view that artifacts and their perception are alike in being context bound, that is, they are historically, socially, and politically determined and cannot be studied in isolation from these factors” (Duncum, 2001, p. 105).
It seems the difference between DBAE practices versus VCAE practices is in whether art education practice should question certain societal inequities through visual imagery. For instance, “social activist art educators” and “multiculturalist art educators” criticized DBAE as elitist and undemocratic and rather viewed art as a means to social reconstruction and an effort to reform society (Smith, 2003). While DBAE could be considered as reinforcing the status quo, VCAE approaches have the potential to examine society through a critical lens and a “conflictive view” (Duncum, 2003). “A conflictive view involves an understanding of images in terms of power and struggles between competing groups, whereas a functionalist view of society treats images as expressions of an unproblematic humanity” (Duncum, 2003, p. 24). Current conversations about VCAE can inform a community-based approach, as Katter suggested, “visual begins, and possibly ends, at home and with community” (Katter, 2002, p. 4). As Duncum (2003) suggested that the VCAE paradigm shift has been a broadening of subject matter, as opposed to a shift in approach, it is necessary to consider approaches to utilize in response to a more inclusive field of art education. Revisiting community-based art education can provide an approach to fill this void.

**Community-Based Art Education.** Community-based art education (CBAE) provides an approach to connecting classrooms to the local community and seems to have existed for many years behind the scenes, so to speak, in order to inform rather than lead the practice of art education. Katter (2002), after much classroom observation of art teachers, reflected on the absence of community connections in schools:

> As I look back over my years of teaching and my observations of the teaching of others, I sense a neglect of really connecting with community. So often the teaching of art ignores the culture of the community, as though art existed somewhere else, outside of the local community, or apart from the lives of the students. (p. 5)

However, in light of the new emphasis on VCAE, it is important and necessary to continue searching and offering suggestions for instructional implementation of VCAE. Accordingly, we stand to learn a great deal by considering both VCAE and CBAE together.
CBAE practices have received scattered attention from various art educators over the years. For example, London (1994) offered “stepping outside the classroom” as a CBAE approach to teaching community awareness. His methods provided a starting point for community practices in art education, but come far from approaching social activism as a tool. The underlying premise of his CBAE approach was gaining an understanding and appreciation for one’s community through studio art projects. Additionally, Marché (1998) identified and provided three approaches to CBAE: taking from, learning about, and acting upon the local environment. Bastos (1998) comprehensively assessed Marché’s CBAE practices in light of Sleeter and Grant’s (1999) typology of multicultural education. Bastos (1998) compared Marché’s last approach of CBAE, acting upon the local environment, to the last approach of multicultural education proposed by Sleeter and Grant (1999), the social reconstruction approach.

Expanding upon Bastos’ (1998) typology, while both Marché (1998) and Sleeter and Grant (1999) referred to the components of their educational strategies as approaches, I would like to refer to them as levels of consciousness, or conscientização, as proposed by Freire (1993). In accordance, “acting upon” is the highest level of consciousness to be reached in Marché’s model of CBAE practices while social reconstruction is the highest level of consciousness in Sleeter and Grant’s (1999) approaches. However, even this level does not extend fully toward social action for liberation, as Bastos (1998) recognized in her analysis as well.

Bastos (1998) identified the missing component of Marché’s approach as “an emphasis on affecting change within the school and community” (p. 57). She suggested incorporating Freire’s vision for promoting social change through education into CBAE practices. “A CBAE project attentive to Freire’s ideas has the potential to bring to light the context of art production through study of local art: dynamics of social interaction in a given community, as well as power struggles, cultural influences, and history” (Bastos, 1998, p. 58). Her vision of CBAE practices takes into account the need for change, as students who are newly afforded “knowledge of immediate reality can incite a need for changing that reality” (Bastos, 1998, p. 58).

Community art or locally-produced art literacy may be the focus of CBAE projects that, inspired by social reconstruction ideas, aim at acting upon
communities to affect changes in society. A community-based orientation to art education can be viewed as a strength within a social vision of local community empowerment. (Bastos, 1998, p. 59)

This vision, in connection with Anderson and Milbrandt’s (2005) model of art for life and Duncum’s (2001; 2003) proposed visual culture art education, is the foundation upon which this study of the proposed project-based community art curriculum and research was based.

**Art for Life.** Advocating a method of art education as a search for meaning, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) proposed a model of art for life. With the bombings of New York, Washington, D.C., and Iraq as a reminder, T. Anderson (2003) suggested the goal of art for life as helping students gain an understanding about themselves and others through art as a means toward a global community. T. Anderson (2003) argued that art is a means to survival and “the key to survival and success is communal understandings and collective/cooperative efforts toward integrating those understandings for the common good” (p. 63). While he argued, “the survival value of art lies in its community-making function” (T. Anderson, 2003, p. 63), he proposed a global, rather than tribal, community. “This entails embracing our own cultures for their particular values and strengths, but also recognizing that our own cultural ways are not the only good and correct ways of engaging the world” (T. Anderson, 2003, p. 63). Anderson’s (2003) approach seems to be, at minimum, a coalescing of methods of CBAE and VCAE, starting with the local and extending toward a global agenda.

**Community Art as Community-Constructor**

The arts presented up to this point—pragmatic art, visual culture art education, community-based art education, art for life—coalesce now within the realm of community art, in which the arts play a central role in efforts of local community reconstruction. My goal is to combine theoretical efforts of art education and a practical, pragmatic agenda of community art projects and programs. The goal is to enhance the curriculum of community art projects with theories of art education which will additionally provide strategies for implementing community art projects in standards-based schools. Community art projects and programs provide much experience from which art educators can learn.
Similar to the notion of community art, Adejumo (2000), referring to “community-based art,” suggested implementing this community approach into the art curriculum in order to instill a sense of responsibility through pride, unity, and developing youth both socially and culturally. He referred to community-based art as “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” (Adejumo, 2000, p. 13). Through social action in the arts, like murals and installations, “local activism is the result of specific people responding to injustice, need, or unrecognized accomplishment in their own community” (Emme, 1998, p. 6). In a social reconstructionist fashion, activist art “draw[s] on the past and work[s] in the present to build or rebuild our society for the future” (Emme, 1998, p. 6).

**Theoretical Frameworks of Community Art.** Similar to Dissanayake’s (1988) claim that the arts speak socially and ritually, Lowe (2000) described the community art process as a “ritualistic setting for social interaction… [and] the construction of neighborhood community” (p. 358). Lowe (2000) defined community art as a “form of public art that is characterized by its experiential and inclusive nature” (p. 364). While art, in general, has been described as providing solidarity, collective identity, and social benefits, community art in a neighborhood provides solidarity and identity through a process of social interaction, sharing a common goal, and setting a positive mood, which occurs in the participatory process of art making (Lowe, 2000). Specifically, individual identity and collective identity are created simultaneously through participatory art making.

Identity development is the emergence or growth of feelings and ideas about oneself or one’s group… Collective identity is an expression of the nature of group cohesiveness and the commonality shared among individuals within a group. Given that the individual and the collective are influenced by and influence each other, it is relevant to examine both individual and collective identities as they relate to community development. (Lowe, 2000, p. 374)

The experiential and social process of creating a community art piece is the underlying foundation for solidarity and identity to develop in a community.
Community art projects have the ability to strengthen the social structure of a community by providing an asset-based approach to community development that portrays and involves the local culture through community art created by and for the community in which it is housed or takes place (Lowe, 2000). In 1999, the Scottish Arts Council stated, “art plays a critical part in empowering communities, providing jobs, skills and training, regenerating urban and rural areas and promoting health and well-being” (Kay, 2000, p. 417). Kay (2000) continued this argument, suggesting, “Arts projects located in communities have a valuable role to play in social and economic development. Evidence indicates they can contribute to the overall regeneration of an area using predominately people-centered strategies within a community development framework” (p. 417).

Similarly, the Center for the Study of Art and Community Development in Minneapolis has supported connections between art and community development. The director of this center, Cleveland (2001), identified the emergence of a new field, which he entitled “arts-based community development.” In describing this phenomenon, he suggested, “This realm of cultural practice regards public participation and artistic creation as mutually interdependent—joined at the hip. It also asserts that there are significant and tangible community benefits, beyond aesthetic, that naturally accrue from certain kinds of community art endeavors” (Cleveland, 2001, p. 21).

**Examples of Community Art Projects/Programs.** Interestingly, most of the research I found on community art literature were short articles on case studies from *School Arts*. Academic journals, while offering some literature on community art, did not much address the topic at a deeper theoretical level. It is my hope to participate in this existing and enlightening conversation about community art while making theoretical connections to scholarly conversations taking place in the field of art education. I am not assuming this conversation does not exist; only that it has not existed consistently enough to strengthen the connection of community art to art education. The Caucus on Social Theory in Art Education, however, offered a theme-based issue of *School Arts* entitled “borders and boundaries,” which called for a crossing from theory into action in the form of art (Katter, 1998).
Many social topics have been covered in community art projects: homelessness (Sommer, 1998), drunk driving (Grauer, 1998), hunger (Grauer, 1998), environment (Hutzel & Cerulean, 2003), and community histories (Huntington, 1997; Smith, 1997). Hutzel and Cerulean (2003) presented a case study of a community art event as an example of taking art education to the streets in order to promote environmental awareness. This event, The Procession of the Species, annually involves nearly a quarter of the population in Olympia, Washington, and “is an artistic and environmental celebration of the natural world created by and for the community” (Hutzel & Cerulean, 2003, p. 36). Those involved, school groups, social service groups, individuals, artists, community groups, and churches, participate in a multitude of ways. Some create costumes and instruments and walk in the celebratory parade. Some teach arts workshops to assist others in these creations. Some watch the parade from the side of the road. However, all are engaged “in a personal yet public experience of where they are, where they came from and where they may be headed” (Hutzel & Cerulean, 2003, p. 39). Community solidarity, community identity and environmental responsibility are key outcomes of the community art event.

Additionally, oral histories and public murals have been common methods for engaging students in community art, whether in a k-12 setting, a college, or a community center. For instance, in Queens, New York, a college mural class conducted historical research and contemporary oral histories on the neighborhood by interviewing diverse groups of immigrants (Asher, Gerwin, & Osborn, 2002). Through sketches, drawings and designs, a final full-scale rendering of the research was developed. According to the authors, “the project offered the community a deeper understanding of the generations who came before us” (Asher et al, 2002, p. 49). Several of the college students in the class subsequently utilized this mural experience when they became teachers in their own classrooms. For instance, there is an after-school mural club in one elementary school and one local high school used “murals as a framework for understanding the community through art and local history” (Asher et al, 2002, p. 50). Garber and Pearson (1998) similarly described a community, public mural project in Tucson, Arizona. High school students, paired with pre-service teachers, involved the community in developing and installing a ceramic tile mural on an “eyesore” in the community, a wall that “separates
the school property from the surrounding neighborhood” (Garber & Pearson, 1998, p. 22). The project brought together such community stakeholders as high school and college students, college faculty, businesses, and a community artist. The underlying foundation of the project was its relevance to and involvement of the community.

Stickler-Voigt (2003) suggested that community art programs develop important mentoring relationships between adults and youth. By examining a community art program in Tallahassee, Florida—Florida Arts and Community Enrichment (FACE)—Stickler-Voigt (2003) described the impact a seventy year old self-taught artist, O.L. Samuels, had on youth in the program. Students in the FACE program participated in activities such as dance lessons, mural painting, a community garden, and a steel drum band. One of Samuels’ projects with the youth was a walking stick exercise, in which the youth scavenged the neighborhood for possible sticks to use, carved the sticks, and painted and decorated them (Stickler-Voigt, 2003). The youth learned from Samuels’ example of “paying more attention to the environment,” “becoming more patient,” “using art to soothe the soul,” and “developing positive relationships” (Stickler-Voigt, 2003, p. 64).

In Cleveland, Ohio, the North East Coalition for the Homeless organized a community art project around the theme of homelessness (Sommer, 1998). This project, entitled “Homeless Still: A Second View of the Streets,” was “a juried multi-media exhibit shown at seven galleries across the city” meant to “educate the public on homelessness and the complex issues surrounding it, through the eyes of area artists, students and those experiencing homelessness” (Sommer, 1998, p. 32). Students of all ages were involved in creating several large paintings on canvas, “ugly” sleeping bags to give to homeless individuals, and a long scroll with needs of the homeless on it.

Community quilts are another common community art project. Huntington (1997) described a community quilt project she developed in her sixth grade classroom in Rhode Island entitled “The Broad Street Community Quilt” project. Huntington (1997) had her students explore the neighborhood, interview local residents, and take photos. Based on a lesson about Faith Ringgold, the students developed a quilt that portrayed an “upbeat view” of the character of the community (Huntington, 1997).
Community art has also been used to address racial tensions in Cincinnati, Ohio (Bastos & Hutzel, 2004). *Art in the Market*, a year-round program at the University of Cincinnati, employed teenagers to work collaboratively with university art students to develop public, community artwork in an inner-city neighborhood known as Over-the-Rhine. Bastos and Hutzel (2004) described the project in light of racial civil unrest and tensions that took place in Over-the-Rhine, which illuminated the contrast of perceptions between the white university students and the African-American high school students. While the participants of the *Art in the Market* program developed four public, community art projects each year, this particular year provided the opportunity to develop immediate, temporary murals on wood panels used to cover the broken windows resulting from the civil unrest (Bastos & Hutzel, 2004). Themes such as “Unity in the Community” developed as a result of dialogue, sketching, and painting by the university and high school students.

**Connecting Community Art to Art Education.** Community art has been discussed, primarily, as an agent outside typical classroom schooling. However, art education practices can inform the use of community art when applied to settings such as community centers and arts organizations and vice versa. Art education methods, particularly CBAE, VCAE and art for life, can be enhanced by the use of community art for community development through the implementation of an action-oriented social agenda. By taking into account notions of social reconstruction and instrumental communitarianism, community art projects, whether utilized in an informal or formal school setting, are better able to educate youth and create community improvement for all residents. In essence, social reconstruction through instrumental communitarianism can be achieved with art. In this study, a community art curriculum is proposed, implemented and tested in order to consider this approach in an urban community setting.

**Conceptualizing Community**

The collective process of social reconstruction through instrumental communitarianism should start with a personal conceptualization of one’s community. Specifically, “conceptualizing community” consists of a non-linear cognitive process of structuring one’s lifeworld. A lifeworld “embraces the learner’s view of the world as a
whole” (Efland, 2002, p. 121). Beginning with the connection of art to cognition, cognitive mapping becomes the means for assessing students’ perceptions of their community, as producing an image of a child’s lifeworld serves to assess his or her “commonsense knowledge” (Efland, 2002).

Cognitive mapping provides a way to assess a student’s cognitive knowledge base or lifeworld, for cognitive mapping “is concerned with the integration of knowledge into the lifeworld of the learner” (Efland, 2002, p. 120). Additionally, by producing a cognitive map of their lifeworld, youth will “use their existing lifeworld orientation as a reality check on what they are being taught, while understanding that the knowledge they have acquired is experienced as the integration of the new knowledge into their world picture” (Efland, 2002, p. 122).

The community art curriculum proposed in this study utilized Efland’s (2002) example of cognitive mapping to understand a person’s lifeworld by connecting it to an asset-based mapping approach. In this regard, the cognitive mapping exercise involved examining the youth’s lifeworlds within their community through an asset-based approach. By having the youth in groups create cognitive maps of the assets in the neighborhood, I attempted to assess their knowledge about the community, which they may have integrated into their lifeworlds.

**Asset-Based Cognitive Mapping**

Cognitive maps provide mental representations constructed by people about their world and are built from experience. As needs-based maps have primarily been the only guide to lower-income communities, “residents themselves begin to accept that map as the only guide to the reality of their lives” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 4). However, “the key to neighborhood regeneration, then, is to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 5). Instead of focusing on the perceived deficiencies of a neighborhood, an asset-based map of the community provides an “internally-focused,” “relationship-driven” process of community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). A localized effort of social reconstruction and community regeneration can be achieved through the process of having local
residents create asset-based cognitive maps of their community, which can contribute to the growth and understanding of a specific community.

Lynch (1960) described cognitive mapping in *The Image of the City*, in which he presented a physical process of locating oneself geographically. This exercise is a method that has been utilized to identify residents’ perceptions of their communities. Specifically, the process attempted to assess how individuals orient themselves within their community environment in order to enable planners to design cities that would work in better accordance with people’s actual perceptions of their environments (Lynch, 1960). He presented five elements of the maps that ensued: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Paths represent ways the person moves through the environment, such as roads, walkways, and bus lines. Edges represent the boundaries of the environment, such as ocean or rivers, railroads, or walls. Districts represent medium-to-large sections of the city in which a person can mentally enter into. Nodes are important spots to the person, which, too, can be entered into, such as squares, parks, or street corners. Finally, landmarks are points of reference that cannot necessarily be entered, such as buildings, stores, or public artworks. While the introduction of such a process of cognitive mapping has provided many fields with new ways to consider communities and environments, Lynch’s (1960) methods and five elements have been criticized (Jameson, 1999). Jameson (1999) argued that Lynch’s method was too focused on the physical, again leaving out the important social networks that exist within communities as important elements to consider in understanding the workings of a neighborhood.

Jameson (1999), however, built upon Lynch’s physical cognitive mapping, but in a more ideological process of locating one’s relationship with his or her existence. In response to Lynch’s work, Jameson (1999) argued, “the incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience” (p. 163). Jameson’s cognitive mapping ideology fits more readily into an asset-based community development framework, as often the greatest assets in a community are human and social.

McKnight and Kretzmann (1990) assessed cognitive mapping in light of an asset-based community development process. They are critical of needs-based approaches of community development that tend to create “environments of service where behaviors are
affected because residents come to believe that their well-being depends upon being a client” (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990, p. 1). They provided a capacity-oriented alternative to such a needs-based approach, for “the process of identifying capacities and assets, both individual and organizational, is the first step on the path toward community regeneration” (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990, p. 3). They suggested “evidence indicates that significant community development only takes place when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort” (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990, p. 2) and that “in neighborhoods where there are effective community development efforts, there is also a map of the community’s assets, capacities, and abilities” (p. 3).

McKnight and Kretzmann (1990) divided the mapping of community assets into three categories: those assets that are located in and controlled by the neighborhood, those assets that are located in the neighborhood but controlled elsewhere, and those assets that are located and controlled outside the neighborhood. The first asset category becomes the primary agent for regeneration, and includes individual capacities, such as personal income, gifts of labeled peoples, and individual local businesses, and organizational capacities, such as citizen associations, businesses, financial institutions, cultural organizations, and religious organizations. The second asset category includes private and non-profit organizations, such as colleges and universities, hospitals, and social service agencies, public institutions, such as public schools, police, fire departments, and libraries, and physical resources, such as vacant land and buildings and energy and waste resources. The third asset category includes welfare expenditures, public capital improvement expenditures, and public information. The mapping of such resources, capacities, and assets would be difficult to do in Lynch’s (1960) physical geography method. Jameson’s (1999) more socially based approach better serves the creation of an asset-based map due to his more organic emphasis on social location in a community.

**Conclusion**

Despite a general weakened sense of community in middle class America (Putnam, 2000), the collective identities of poor and minority communities (Apple, 1995;
Green & Haines, 2002) have the potential to provide sustainability to community development initiatives (Green & Haines, 2002). Poor and minority communities suffer from an emphasis on deficiencies, an overabundance of social services (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), and oppressive educational systems (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993). At the same time, these oppressive situations have developed strong social networks or social capital which, if utilized effectively, could empower communities to participate in improving their neighborhoods (Green & Haines, 2002). Developing asset-based, capacity-oriented maps of a community, in place of more typical needs-based maps, can be effective in changing the perceptions of the community, eliciting participation of local residents, and creating sustainable community improvement (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990).

At the same time, as current educational systems are failing to educate America’s poor and minority youth (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1999), education should be for democracy, for change, and for social reconstruction (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1993; hooks, 2003). Given that the arts speak culturally, ritually, and socially (Dissanayake, 1988), the use of community art to expose inherent collective identities of minorities (Lowe, 2000) can provide a catalyst to change through local community development (Jones, 1988) and regeneration (Kay, 2000). Given the current trend in art education toward a more inclusive visual culture art education from an elitist discipline-based art education (Duncum, 2001; Smith, 2003), the time is ripe to reconsider art education in light of social responsibility and action and to revisit community-based art education as a social activist approach (Bastos, 1996) which can address a community’s needs through recognizing the social capital in the community. T. Anderson (2003) summarized the significance of the underlying connection between art and sustainable community regeneration, stating, “the survival value of art lies in its community-making function” (p. 63).
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

Chapter two reviewed relevant literature as the foundation for this study. This chapter defines and outlines the qualitative participatory action research methodologies applied in this study by detailing the research techniques and proposed community art curriculum and addressing the research questions. The purpose of the study was to examine participants’ perceptions of community and the social changes that occurred as a result of the implementation of the proposed community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. Participatory action research and service-learning through visual culture art education, community-based art education and art for life provided the foundation for an activist approach to addressing oppressive systems of education through a proposed asset-based community art curriculum.

Research Questions

By conducting an examination of participants’ perceptions of community through a social action agenda of a community art curriculum, I attempted to answer the guiding research question: What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?

In order to answer the guiding research question, six supporting questions were asked. The supporting questions included:

1. What are the participants’ perceptions of community in general?
2. What are the participants’ perceptions of the West End community?
3. What do the participants see as assets in the West End?
4. What were the participants’ perceptions of the community art project?
5. How did service-learning components enhance the community art curriculum as implemented in the West End?
6. Is there evidence that the community art project created changes in the community?

**Overview of the Study**

Based upon ethnography (Agar, 1980) and supported by principles of phenomenology (Farber, 1966) and case study design (Yin, 2003), I implemented a qualitative participatory action research study (Freire, 1997; Brydon-Miller, 2001) to examine participants’ perceptions of community through active engagement in creating asset-based public, community art, in the form of two murals. I used the techniques of observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. The data collected allowed me to consider various participants’ perceptions of the community and the community art process. Accordingly, my own perceptions and understandings of the participants and the West End community was examined through the process.

The methodology utilized for this study was qualitative and participatory in design. The data I collected was informed by my own personal experiences and perceptions, which was central to the study (Eisner, 1998). By examining one case study, I utilized participatory action research (Freire, 1997; Brydon-Miller, 2001) as the guiding paradigm within ethnography as the research approach, which involved the techniques of observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. These methods provided the data from which I analyzed results. The report was written primarily in a narrative style (Goodall, 2000).

The community art curriculum unit and research study took place over five months as participants actively engaged in the community of the West End in and through art. Specifically, participants first examined their personal sense of community through a drawing activity in which I asked them to draw their “idea of community”. The drawings were utilized in an interview with each youth about their drawing. Participants then more fully examined this specific community through an asset-based mapping exercise with cameras. Art was utilized in several ways: as a means to study the community, as a way to examine participants sense of community, and as a tool for social action through visual representation of two murals.
Time and Duration of Study

This study took place during the spring and summer of 2004 and brought together several groups of people in creating public, community art in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. During April and May, I worked with Donna and Jolynn, two adults, and Lyzbeth and Shanda, two teenagers of the Arts Consortium. Lyzbeth, Shanda, and I met twice a week to plan for the summer program. These after-school meetings were held at the African-American museum of the Arts Consortium located at the Union Terminal Museum Center. During the summer, I also worked with Alex, a teaching artist with the Arts Consortium, Ron, an adult volunteer from the University of Cincinnati, and Richard, a youth mentor from the Lincoln Community Center. In June of 2004, approximately eight to ten additional youth from the Arts Consortium and a fluctuating involvement of eight to fifteen youth from the Lincoln Community Center joined the project. From June through August, Alex, Ron, Richard and I implemented the community art curriculum with the assistance of Lyzbeth and Shanda to these two groups of youth ages eleven through fourteen. During the first six weeks of the summer, we met primarily at the Arts Consortium and occasionally at the Lincoln Community Center. During the final three weeks of the summer, we met at the Arts Consortium and walked down the street to the chosen location to paint the two murals. Alex, Ron, Richard, Lyzbeth, Shanda, the two groups of youth and I were involved in these meetings, classes, and painting days. Donna and Jolynn continued to serve as facilitators of the youth from the Arts Consortium and occasionally offered suggestions or advice for the project. I will continue to refer to the implementation of the community art curriculum as the community art project.

Setting of Study

West End Community

The West End of Cincinnati is the site of this study and was chosen based on a critical sample technique (Creswell, 1998), as this community exemplifies a typical, deteriorating, inner-city neighborhood that has faced problems similar to many inner-city, urban neighborhoods, such as crime, drugs, violence, and prostitution. Additionally, the West End has received much attention for development initiatives in the past few years. As this study connects community development through social capital for social
reconstruction, the choice of a community that has been the focus of building development is significant in considering the social assets. Additionally, I have a personal and vested interest in this particular neighborhood, as I was living in the neighborhood during this study and quickly realized the potential strength of the community’s social structure. My residence in the neighborhood enhanced the participatory nature of the study and aided in my building of trust with the residents.

**The Arts Consortium and Lincoln Community Center**

In February and March I made contact with many organizations in the West End in order to locate a program with which to work. I had contacted the Lincoln Community Center, which has a teen center, the local YMCA, also with a teen center, and the local community arts center, the Arts Consortium. I initially decided to work with the Arts Consortium, which informed the study well because of the center’s focus on the arts and arts education of African-Americans. Since I had worked with the Jolynn, the curator of the Arts Consortium, in the past, she was willing to work with me and include the community arts curriculum in the center’s existing summer programming. The Lincoln Community Center decided to participate after hearing a second presentation about the project in May. Their involvement, then, was delayed in comparison to the participation of youth from the Arts Consortium.

I was completely involved with the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center, so I had easy access and a critical role as we implemented the community art curriculum and planned for participant involvement. In participatory action research, “your being part of the organization is vital because the research is generally a beginning step in a longer, change-oriented process” (Glesne, 1999, p. 27). In this regard, I was better able to participate in the sense of a “committed involvement” (Freire, 1970/1994), as I was committed to the neighborhood because I lived there and to the community art project because I was a part of the ongoing process.

The Arts Consortium has a long history of community arts education in Cincinnati, particularly focused on the African-American population. It is located in a storefront on Linn Street. Not only does the program offer arts education courses, but also provides a gallery space for local artists. In addition, the program operates an African-
American museum located in the museum center at Union Terminal. The museum exhibits local and international artists’ work and houses a permanent historical exhibit.

Figure 3.1. A view of the Arts Consortium from across Linn Street in the West End of Cincinnati.

The Lincoln Community Center had recently been redeveloped, and was also located on Linn Street in the West End. The center offers a weight room, a gymnasium, outdoor swimming pools, and classrooms and meeting spaces. It costs an adult fifteen dollars and a youth five dollars to join the Lincoln Community Center for a year, and approximately seven dollars a month to use the weight room.

Figure 3.2. A view of the Lincoln Community Center from across Linn Street in the West End of Cincinnati.
Curriculum

Toward the goal of empowering the participants to participate in community activism, I developed an asset-based community art curriculum that loosely applied four components of service-learning, including preparation, action, reflection and recognition. The study was intended to construct and implement this community art curriculum and modify it based on the experience. The curriculum unit took place during the spring and summer of 2004 as participants actively engaged in the community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood.

As part of the curriculum and study, youth participants first examined their personal sense of community through a drawing activity in which I asked them to draw their “idea of community”. Participants then more fully examined the West End community together through an asset-based mapping exercise with cameras. These exercises will be described a part of the research methodology later in this chapter. In this curriculum and study, we utilized art in several ways: as a means to study the community, as a way to examine our sense of community, and as a tool for social action through visual representation of the two murals.

The community art curriculum served to examine youth’s perceptions of the community through their participation in the community art project and through their drawings and asset-based maps of the community. Additionally, the youth participated in deciding the logistics creating public, community art, including location and conceptual framework. Their opinions, ideas, and perceptions were central to the development of the art pieces. An asset-based approach was utilized, focusing on the assets already located in the neighborhood and portraying those assets in the artwork. Utilizing service-learning as the pedagogy provided a foundation for implementation of the curriculum. Four components of service-learning—preparation, action, reflection and recognition—framed the process of engaging the participants in the community art project and was in conjunction with the goals and strategies of the study as participatory action research.

Original Curriculum Unit: Discovering My Community in Art

Introduction. The Arts Consortium, a community art program intended to promote African-American art and artists and located in the West End of Cincinnati, agreed to include this curriculum as a component of their spring and summer youth
programming. This curriculum involves investigating and acting upon the local community in and through art.

**Instructional Unit.** Study in this community art project will include an investigation of our perceptions of the West End community. We will utilize art not only to examine and study our community but also to represent or react to our learning with a studio component by creating public, community art.

**Objectives.** We will first examine our personal sense of community and then more fully examine this specific community together through art. The curriculum is action-based and will be implemented and tested by the participant students and the instructor. We will utilize art in several ways: as a means to study the community, as a way to examine our sense of community, and as a tool for social action through visual representation of a public art piece.

**Intended Learning Outcomes.** The intended learning outcomes and central questions presented in this original curriculum were intended to serve as organizers in answering the supporting questions of this study. The central questions here helped address whether students learned the intended learning outcomes, which, in turn, addressed the supporting questions presented for this study.

Students will:
1. Be engaged in learning about our community, the West End.
2. Examine our role in the community.
3. Consider the possibilities for our community through an asset-based approach.
4. Participate in developing a public, community art piece.

**Central Questions**
1. What are the assets (good things) in my community?
2. What is my role in my community?
3. How can I use art to make a statement about my community?
4. How can I make a difference in and for my community?
5. How can I use art to make a difference in my community?

**Course Outline**

1. *Community Exploration and Reflection*
a. Students will draw their “idea of community” at the beginning of their participation in the project.
   i. Individual interviews with the youth to discuss drawings (see Appendix C)

b. Students will develop a mental map of their community at the beginning and end of their participation in the project.
   i. Introduce Mental Maps
   ii. Group discussion on how they perceive their community based on mental maps
   iii. Individual interviews to discuss mental maps

c. Students will utilize an existing map of the West End and walk through the neighborhood in small groups, marking assets they discover or think of as they walk (only at the beginning of the project).
   i. Discuss Assets
   ii. Group discussion on assets in the West End based on asset-based mapping exercise
   iii. Group discussion on our perceptions and findings about the community

2. Arts Enrichment
   a. Discuss their ideas about art
      i. How is art a part of their lives?
      ii. What artists do they know?
      iii. What arts venues do they visit?
   b. Attend arts events (primarily in the West End, but also visit other arts opportunities based on relevance)
   c. Small studio arts activities to develop skills
   d. View and discuss public, community art pieces in Cincinnati

3. Public, Community Art Project
   a. Plan project
      i. Group discussions about possible concepts of art piece
      ii. Discussions on public art possibilities
iii. Consider how to include community residents in the creation of the artwork
iv. Discussions on the potential impact of the art work on the community

b. Implement project
   i. Decide on location for art piece
   ii. Locate funding and in-kind donations
   iii. Create art piece and install

c. Reflection
   i. Final mental mapping exercise
   ii. Group discussion on the juxtaposition of the before and after mental maps
   iii. Individual interviews (see Appendix C)

The community art curriculum was enhanced based on the experience of utilizing it in this study and is presented in Chapter Four.

**Ethics and Politics of Study**

Prior to data collection, my application to the Human Subjects Committee at Florida State University was approved (Appendix A). This application detailed potential harm to the subjects, issues of power, and gaining access and consent. I will briefly describe these issues here. In terms of the youth, there were potential elements of racism, classism, and power issues, as all of the youth were African-American and possibly low-income. Because of these potential power issues, I was thoughtful in attempting to make the relationships in the study equitable (Seidman, 1998).

Youth were asked to sign a written consent form detailing these issues, as were the five other adults. These forms outlined their ability to discontinue being a participant and their right not to participate at all. The parents of the youth participants were also asked to sign a similar consent form.
Research Foundations

Qualitative Research

I chose to implement a qualitative research methodology in order to examine participants’ perceptions about community in general, the West End neighborhood in particular, and the role of art in engaging a community through a proposed community art curriculum. Qualitative research is interpretive and critical in nature, relying upon the researcher’s own subjective realities based on his or her prior experiences (Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1998; Merriam, 1998) and is conducted when a researcher is “interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The significance of qualitative research is in the researcher’s attention to the qualities or subtleties of an experience or phenomenon (Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1998).

Additionally, a study is qualitative because of its focus on experience of a human, transactive nature, which explores understanding and meaning (Eisner, 1998). “Experience has its genesis in our transaction with the qualities of which our environment consists” (Eisner, 1998, p. 17). So we develop our understandings and perceptions based on the qualities we attend to in our environment. Eisner (1998) described the ability to notice and make distinctions among subtle qualities as connoisseurship and claimed it is based, in part, on a person’s perceptions and experience.

Perception manifests itself in experience and is a function of the transactions between the qualities of the environment and what we bring to those qualities. The character of that experience is in large measure influenced by our ability to differentiate among the qualities we attend to. (Eisner, 1998, p. 63)

This transactional nature of understanding and perception as based on human experience can be shared through both stories and arts in order to generate meaning (Eisner, 1998).

As such, ethnography forms the foundation of the study as a search for meaning through experience (Tedlock, 2000). “Ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455). Ethnography was born out of anthropology two centuries ago as a way to collect, analyze, and represent information (Tedlock, 2000). As a study of people and their lives, “ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of their subjects than they can by using any other approach” (Tedlock, 2000, p.
In the role of an ethnographer, it is as necessary to reveal the self as it is to reveal the other participants. In this respect, ethnographers “demonstrate how ideas matter to them, bridging the gap between their narrow academic world and wide cultural experiences” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 467). There are many methods to utilize in ethnography in order to generate such cultural connections.

In ethnography, interviewing is the most common method for accessing stories of experience and perception from others (Seidman, 1998). According to Seidman (1998), “stories are a way of knowing” (p. 1) and the best stories provide insights to both the storyteller and the listener. Stories that “ring true” make sense to those involved (Seidman, 1998; Eisner, 1998), which develops understanding through meanings made by the storyteller (Seidman, 1998). So, in the process of creating the story, the storyteller must reflect on and reconstruct his or her experience and make meaning of the events (Seidman, 1998). This can take place through in-depth interviewing, which should happen “by examining the concrete experience of people… and the meaning their experience had for them” (Seidman, 1998, p. 10).

Educational criticism and art criticism have been likened to qualitative and ethnographic research because of a similar goal of searching for individualized meaning (T. Anderson, 2000; Eisner, 1998). Likened to naturalistic inquiry of qualitative research, Eisner (1998) described educational criticism as a process “to help others see and understand” (p. 3) while art criticism has been described by T. Anderson (2000) as a process of looking for meaning and significance in a work of art. T. Anderson (2000) fused the qualities of art criticism into ethnographic criticism:

Both activities seek to clarify the meanings and significance of human values, beliefs and institutions… Specifically, in the context of art education, critical ethnography is looking at educational interactions, situations, and institutions as though looking at a work of art for meaning and significance. (T. Anderson, 2000, p. 81) This study applies educational criticism and ethnography in a participatory action model that connects to the goals of community art.
Participatory Action Research

As a research study that took place in an oppressed, minority community, it was necessary to recognize power structures affecting such marginalized areas (LeCompte, 1995). For instance, residents of low-income, African-American communities probably have experienced issues of oppression and racism. Considering my personal characteristics—white, middle-class, formally educated—my experience within a community that is predominantly low-income and African-American was best framed by a strong participatory component (see Freire, 1970/1994) because participants can feel more empowered and be given a voice by being considered as collaborators (LeCompte, 1995). The sharing of power through a participatory model provided a research methodology that did not reinforce an oppressive situation. Rather it generated a collaborative approach to research that could be more liberating (Freire, 1997) and reconstructing of social practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Participatory action research (Freire, 1997; Brydon-Miller, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), as the guiding framework for planning and conducting this study, is founded on a social reconstructionist agenda which seeks change through action and education with oppressed classes of people (Foucault, 1980). With a goal of participatory action research (PAR) as transformation (Brydon-Miller, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), the placement of this study in an oppressed community served to approach research from a change-oriented perspective, rather than passive observation of existing events. Freire (1970/1994) has demonstrated both in writing and in community organizing that transformation implies an act of transforming an oppressive society through participatory opportunities. This notion holds true for community art as well, as the goal is social transformation through participation, with art as the means.

The process of a PAR study is fluid, open and responsive (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) and can loosely be described “as a spiral of self-reflective cycles of

- Planning a change
- Acting and observing the process and consequences of the change,
- Reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then
- Replanning,
- Acting and observing,
Reflecting, and so on…” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 595). This process should be undertaken collaboratively because, “the criterion of success is not whether participants followed the steps faithfully, but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 595).

As a strength of PAR studies, the researcher is deeply involved in the activities being studied. Freire (1970/1994) provided the term “committed involvement” as a method for conducting research with an oppressed community, which addresses the depth of involvement of the researcher with the participants and community. Brydon-Miller (2001) suggested, “The success of any PAR project depends on the depth of mutual trust and commitment held by all participants” (p. 81). LeCompte (1995) described collaborative and critical research as a method for addressing issues of power through research and action by providing a voice to oppressed groups of people. Similarly, a community art project has the goal of using art as a catalyst of community development through community engagement (Jones, 1988). The community artist, like the participatory action researcher, is the facilitator of participant and community involvement.

**Research Design**

In this study I examined participants’ perceptions of community in general and particularly of the West End neighborhood through implementation of an action-oriented, asset-based community art curriculum. The goal of the curriculum and research methodology was to build upon existing social capital in the form of relationships and social interactions as the connective tissue between potential personal and community success in order to create change. Participatory action research provided the framework for this qualitative study, in the larger context of ethnography. In that context, phenomenology informed my construction of meaning as I helped develop and participated in the program (Farber, 1966). Case study design (Agar, 1980) provided the boundary, that of researching one selected site (Yin, 2003). As the strength of PAR, I drew upon my own personal experiences with the community and community art project,
providing me an informed point of view that drove the outcome of this research (Eisner, 1998).

The study took place in the West End of Cincinnati, Ohio. I acted as the facilitator and initiator of the community art project, which primarily enlisted the involvement of youth, ages 10 through 17 and adults who worked with them. I formed a partnership with the local community arts center, the Arts Consortium, to oversee the involvement of the youth and provide the programmatic structure and location to house the project. Involvement of additional participants was encouraged through the design of the community art piece, which resulted in an additional partnership with the Lincoln Community Center.

The study examined participants’ perceptions of community and the implementation of a proposed community art curriculum intended to encourage community development through social action and reconstruction. The youth involved were encouraged to take a leadership role in the process of developing the artwork and the finished product. Data collection included observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. My own personal self-reflection was central to the study, and my journaling provided an account of my ongoing and evolving understanding of the youth, the community, and the project. I have primarily reported in a narrative style that centers me in the study (Goodall, 2000), and simultaneously highlights the voices of the participants through their drawings, maps, and quotes. Additionally, data analysis is further presented with tables portraying frequencies of responses to six specific questions.

Data Collection Procedures

In conducting this participatory action research study, I utilized several data collection techniques: observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. Additionally, personal self-reflection provided data on my changing and evolving understandings and perceptions.

Observations, Field Notes and Documentation

As I participated in the project, I observed the implementation of the community art curriculum and my involvement with the community over the course of the spring and
summer, keeping written fieldnotes of my observations in order to maintain details of the experience for the subsequent descriptive report (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995; Goodall, 2000). I was looking to answer my driving research question and supporting questions related to participants’ perceptions of the community and participation in the community art curriculum, although I went into the observation sites open to emerging themes that relate to community and art. During these observations, I conducted informal, conversational interviews (Seidman, 1998) with various participants throughout the spring and summer, asking them questions about the meaning of their ongoing experiences.

The use of observation provides for potential cultural exploration (Geertz, 1973). In this study, I increasingly understood this community art project through examining the perceived assets in the community, which unveiled potentially useful information about the perceptions of the West End and the use of art education to engage this specific African-American community.

I maintained written field notes and drawings in a bound notebook during and after my experiences in the community. In addition to writing my observations and thoughts, I also occasionally maintained drawings of what I saw and experienced. We took many photographs during the process, as well, which documented our mapping exercise and systems of working together. Additionally, I collected flyers from the Arts Consortium, the Lincoln Community Center, and the community council meetings I attended.

**Drawing and Writing Exercises**

Youth participants from the Arts Consortium were asked to draw “their idea of community” at the beginning of their involvement in the project as a piece of the reflection component of the curriculum as well as a form of data collection. They were given paper, markers, crayons, and pencils for the activity and more than two hours of time to complete the assignment. The youth were given no further instruction for the activity, but were told they would be interviewed individually about their drawing once they were finished. The purpose of the drawing activity was to determine the youth’s perceptions of community in general. These drawings were used in the interviews as described in the next section.
In August, at the end of the community art project, nine youth from both the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center were asked to write in response to questions about their perceptions of the community and the community art project. These questions are located in Appendix D. The purpose of the questions was to determine the youth’s perceptions of the West End community and their perceptions of the community art project. These written assignments were used as a starting point to informal conversations with the youth regarding their perceptions about the community art project.

**Interviews**

Interviews took place throughout the five months I worked with the participants from the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center. I planned to administer two audiotaped interview sessions with the youth participating from the Arts Consortium. The first interview session took place in April with two youth and in June with five youth and centered on drawings they made about their “idea of community”. The second interview session became difficult to schedule as the summer program came to an end, so I decided to give the youth a writing assignment with the same questions I had planned to utilize in the interview. The writing exercise was described in the last section and is located in Appendix D. Youth from the Lincoln Community Center started the summer program more than a week later than the Arts Consortium youth, and did not participate in the drawing exercise or interview. They did, however, participate in the writing activity.

The interview, centered on the students’ drawings of their “idea of community”, was conducted in T. Anderson’s (1997) proposed style of speaking with kids about art (Appendix C). In interviews, “some researchers use props such as card sorts or pictures as stimuli for specific information in interviews” (Glesne, 1999, p. 31); I utilized the students’ own drawings of community in this study. Researchers in art therapy have similarly utilized youth’s drawings, called personal construct drawings, in researching youth’s perceptions of themselves within their schools (Rosal, 1993; Rhyne, 1979). As these studies have exemplified, drawings can provide youth an opportunity to express abstract thoughts they often have difficulty articulating with words, while the interviews allowed youth the opportunity to describe, explain and interpret their own drawings. Eisner (1998) credited the use of images and pictures in sharing more complex thoughts
for both the artist and the viewer. He suggested pictures “enable others to experience their qualities and meanings” (p. 3). Hence, the youth’s drawings substantiated their perceptions.

T. Anderson’s (1997) approach assisted me in developing open-ended questions about the youth’s drawings, and provided methods for encouraging the youth to verbally share their thoughts (Appendix C). An open-ended question allows the interviewee to choose the direction in which to answer the question and presumes no answers (Seidman, 1997), allowing for natural conversation on the topic to develop. T. Anderson (1997) provided four stages for an interactive art analysis: reaction, description, interpretation and evaluation. The first stage, reaction, allows the youth to feel comfortable speaking openly and honestly about the drawing and directs the questioning of the researcher. The second stage, description, allows the researcher to gather evidence about the initial response and to analyze the thematic and formal qualities as well as contextual information, as these contribute to the work’s meaning. The third stage, interpretation, involves reflection as a search for meaning through the youth’s perceptions and experience. The final stage, evaluation, allows the youth the opportunity to reflect on the previous three stages and evaluate not only the work of art but also his or her perceptions of community. Within each stage, T. Anderson (1997) provided several questions to use in prompting youth to think and speak about others’ art. These questions were altered to fit this study and formed the questions to ask the youth about the community and their own art (see Appendix C).

Interview sessions were also conducted in July and August with adult participants, including Alex, Donna, Jolynn, Ron, Frank, and Richard. Interview questions and protocol provided a loose structure, however the interviews allowed for a conversational flow (Merriam, 1998) (see Appendix C). The interviews focused on the participants’ perceptions of the community and their perceptions of the use of art to better the community. The interviewees were also invited to share personal and family information as it related to the community or to the art project.

Asset-Based Mapping Exercise

The asset-based mapping exercise, as a component of the proposed community art curriculum, provided data about the participants’ perceptions of the West End. The
participants walked around the West End in groups of four to five and took photographs of assets they discovered while marking them on a map and maintaining a list. The groups then drew a larger map onto butcher paper of the part of the neighborhood where they had walked and attached the photographs to it in the appropriate places. Groups presented their maps back to the larger group, explaining why they chose items as assets.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed and coded through a review of the observation notes, interview transcripts, drawings of community, and photographs and lists of the assets. Initially, ideas in the interview transcripts that related to the supporting questions were highlighted. The second and third times the data were examined, repetitive new and emerging ideas were developed into evolving categories that I noted on paper. The categories, both prefigured and emergent, were studied and condensed into more manageable groups based on similarities in themes by drawing several conceptual maps of the information (Appendix F). The data were reviewed again in order to select data to represent the prefigured and emergent themes. As themes were finalized, the data was reviewed a last time to locate any additional data pertinent to the chosen themes. Finally, tables were created to display results that could be quantified and organized into frequencies. Photographs and drawings were also utilized and presented as data. The photographs and drawings provided an account of the process, selected assets, and the finished product.

Observations, Field Notes, and Codifications

In order to analyze the field notes, I conducted a content analysis, a process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 1989). After a careful reading of the field notes, I coded the data. My data analysis included both open- and focused-coding (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995), as I attempted to address prefigured and emergent foci (Eisner, 1998) and make sense of the thick data. I went into the site open but aware of my subquestions and objectives, which served to pre-establish categories as I collected the data (see Eisner, 1998). My journal helped me keep track of my thoughts and hunches as the project progressed (Merriam, 1998), which assisted me in developing additional, emergent themes. I selected themes that were pertinent to the
topic, reflective of the meanings, and integrated my findings into the existing theoretical framework, and vice versa (Emerson et al, 1995). This process did not necessarily start when data collection ended. It was ongoing and simultaneous (Wolcott, 1990).

**Drawing and Writing Exercises**

The drawings themselves were analyzed utilizing the interview transcripts and conceptual analysis of the images. Within the drawings, I looked for common images, ideas and themes. For instance, I analyzed whether the youth drew an ideal or realistic community, portrayed buildings, grass or people, the location of the community, and the mood of the artwork. I asked the youth about each of these concepts during the interview session about their drawings.

Responses to the writing exercise were organized into tables displaying the frequencies with which similar answers were provided. The responses were categorized based on similarity prior to tabulating the results.

**Interviews**

Interviews took place throughout the spring and summer. Two youth from the Arts Consortium were first interviewed with their community drawings in March. Five youth from the Arts Consortium were interviewed with their community drawings in June. The adult participants, including Alex, Donna, Jolynn, Frank, Ron, and Richard, were interviewed in July and August.

The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. The interview transcriptions were analyzed using content analysis, a process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 1989). The interview transcripts were read, highlighted, and coded into themes. These themes and patterns were compared to the patterns found in the coded field notes and the drawings of community. Once emergent themes were selected, the interview transcripts were read and highlighted again to locate instances pertaining to each of the themes.

**Asset-Based Mapping Exercise**

The lists and photos of the selected assets were analyzed through a process of comparing the content and looking for themes and similarities. The lists were compared to each other and to the photographs, as I looked for common ideas or themes and portrayed the photographs taken of assets and two lists of assets.

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Narrative Report

I have primarily written in a personal, creative, narrative style, as best described by Goodall (2000). The report reflects my process of discovery, providing a very personal account of the activity, which is supported with descriptions of the participants, images, and charts of pertinent data. The narrative is in my personal, self-reflexive voice (Goodall, 2000), based on what I experienced and saw of the participants (Eisner, 1998) in a conversational manner, as opposed to a more passive, speech-writing style (Goodall, 2000). As Seidman (1998) described, “Research, like almost everything else in life, has autobiographical roots. It is crucial… to identify the autobiographical roots of their interest in their topic” (p. 26). This approach assisted me in maintaining my perceptions as the foundation (Seidman, 1998) for understanding the participants’ perceptions. I present many realities, especially my own experiences through descriptive living, studying, reflecting, and storying in my writing (Goodall, 2000).

In the report, I have also included the voices of the participants through personal quotes and artwork. Interviews and observations provided me with quotes and information from the participants. These quotes and points of view have become central in comparing and contrasting perceptions among the participants and detailing the process of implementing the community art curriculum. Additionally, the youth’s drawings have provided important data, which substantiate their verbal responses.

Summary and Implications

From this study I hoped to gain a meaningful understanding of the sense of community of the participants, including myself. I only hope that the findings offer art educators, both formal school teachers and community art teachers, an enlightened understanding of the role art can play in social reconstruction of a local community and the importance of the perceptions of the participants in the process of using art to respond to a community. The results of the study may have implications for formal k-12 art education, community art education in centers and projects, community development initiatives, urban education and education for liberation.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Review of Methodology

This chapter presents the participants’ experiences of engagement in the community and community art project during the spring and summer of 2004 in the West End of Cincinnati, Ohio. The findings have been collected using the techniques of observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. Refer to Chapter Three for a detailed description of the participatory action research (PAR) techniques, but briefly the research strategy will be summarized again here.

The participants consisted of several groups of people: the youth and adults who participated from the Arts Consortium, the youth and adults who participated from the Lincoln Community Center, and others who participated in the project. I conducted one audiotaped interview with the youth from the Arts Consortium. This interview session took place in March and June at the Arts Consortium and was focused on drawings about their “idea of community” (see Appendix C). The youth also participated in a writing exercise in August (see Appendix D). I conducted interviews with the six adults, Alex, Richard, Donna, Jolynn, Frank and Ron, who had participated in the project (see Appendix C). Observation took place continually during the process of implementing the curriculum and developing public, community art. Participants also participated in an asset-based mapping exercise as a component of the curriculum and research methodology. I collected documentation in the form of flyers, photographs, and drawings throughout the study. The data were analyzed using content analysis in order to locate prefigured and emergent themes relative to the research questions.

The findings have been presented in a narrative style and organized into seven sections. The first section describes my point of view as the researcher. The second section describes the demographics of the West End and my experiences in the neighborhood. The third section describes the community art curriculum as it changed as
a result of implementing it in the West End neighborhood. The fourth section is a
description of the enhanced curriculum abased on changes that were made to the original
curriculum. The fifth section, Disclosing My Identity, in the context of this study is a
presentation of myself as the principal investigator of this participatory action research
study. My own learning through this research shapes the study, so my personal
characteristics, in addition to those of the other participants, are critical in understanding
our learning process. The sixth section, My Story of Engagement in the West End
Community, provides a narrative account of my activities in the West End leading up to
and including the mural project and data collection. The seventh section introduces the
participants as I share my observations of them, syntheses of their interview transcripts,
and, for the youth, their drawings of community. Additionally, frequencies are presented
in tables to provide another approach to reporting results.

Point of View of the Researcher

My point of view as the researcher in this participatory action research study is
based upon my personal experience as a white person accustomed to a suburban lifestyle
and working class ideals. However, based upon my background as an art educator in
primarily African-American inner-city communities, I believe there is much to be learned
in order to develop approaches to incorporating the assets located in urban contexts into
community development initiatives through social reconstruction. The goal of this study
was to examine the implementation of the proposed community art curriculum and the
interaction of the participants’ perceptions of community on the development of public,
community art. I believe people and their relationships are important social capital to be
recognized and utilized in order to strengthen communities which suffer from oppression,
poverty, and violence. I anticipated that the utilization of art to assess and display the
assets of this type of a neighborhood would result in an increased awareness for the
positive aspects of the community. I believe youth can play an important role in
increasing this awareness, as their excitement and energy can incite the same in their
parents and adult family members and friends.

I find community development efforts that focus on physical developments such
as buildings often miss the real values and opportunities present in underserved
communities. As needs-based maps become the standard for these communities, I believe those who are a part of these neighborhoods feel threatened and undervalued by those who make decisions that affect them. In this study, I wanted to explore the use of art to highlight the assets located in an underserved community in order to shed light on the inherent opportunities present when social factors are considered first in community development initiatives. I also wanted to connect these approaches for community development to educational programming in schools and organizations. As I have learned from the community, the youth are their investment in the future. I have inherited that view from my own experiences with youth in underserved communities, and believe in all education, development, and decision-making, we need to recognize not only the needs in these communities, but the richness in the assets there as well.

In that context, the guiding question to be answered in this study is: What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?

An Introduction to the West End

The West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, is an inner-city, primarily African-American community located a few blocks from the downtown business district. A map showing where the West End neighborhood is in Cincinnati is located in Appendix B. In 2000, census data indicated 8,115 people resided in the West End. From 1990 to 2000, the West End experienced a 29% decrease in overall population and a 25% increase in white population, as the black population dropped from 94% in 1990 to 87% in 2000. The increase in white population, from 681 people in 1990 to 850 in 2000, despite overall population decline, may be attributed to recent community development initiatives, as several housing projects had been torn down to make room for a new mixed-income housing development spanning several blocks of land. I lived in a rental unit in this new housing development.
Children dominate the streets and sidewalks of the West End neighborhood. Census data of 2000 indicated that children made up 30% of the West End population. Of the 2,511 children the 2000 census reported living in the West End, 95% were African-American. There are currently two teen centers located in the West End, one at the local community center and one at the YMCA. There have been many recent development projects in the West End. For instance, the Lincoln Community Center recently reopened after major renovations and a new Head Start building was built in the neighborhood in 2003. The local YMCA is planning a building redevelopment project on the same street, scheduled to open in January of 2006. Each of these services, in addition to the local community art center, the Arts Consortium, is located within a block of each other on a busy street in the West End: Linn Street. From the family room window of my rented townhome I could see most of these buildings on Linn Street, and could hear the sounds
of kids’ voices and music playing. One of my favorite sounds was of a particular boy who skillfully played his drumsticks on any available surface or wall.

Despite the many assets of the West End, the neighborhood also faced the highest murder rate in Cincinnati in 2003, comprising 13% of the total murders in the city. Poverty, drugs, and prostitution were commonplace in the neighborhood. Trash was commonly found on the streets and sidewalks. Drug dealing was rampant. While there was an abundance of children in the area, there were few outdoor areas for them to play and exercise. Basic city services such as snow clearance and trash pick-up were inconsistent.

In January of 2005, I sat in the back of the room of the former Arts Consortium building as the community council meeting began. The murals we developed in the community art project, central to this project and described later, had been finished for five months and I had moved out of the West End three months ago, but I continued to attend some meetings as I analyzed my research data. The leaders of the council consisted of four African-Americans, including Frank, as the president, who usually sat in the center facing the audience. The demographics of the audience had been consistently inconsistent, but at this council meeting there were about four white people and fifteen black people. The police captain, who regularly attended the meetings, for the first time, was the only police representation.

Again at this meeting, as if looking for positive stories to share, Frank asked if I, among several other attendees, had anything to report to the group and then reminded the group of my role with the community art project in the neighborhood. I chose not to speak. The topic turned, again, to the community’s problems and methods for change. Story upon story was shared of violent acts witnessed throughout the community, as residents often turned to the police captain for legal advice on specific situations. The first homicide of 2005 had recently occurred in an apartment complex on Linn Street. A woman had been badly assaulted at a convenience store. The stories continued. An elderly woman who owned a small candy and soda store shared a story about her van being “shot up.” The windows were broken out with bullet holes. The librarian said she heard four gunshots at 4:30 one afternoon as she started to walk a group of preschoolers from the library back to the Head Start building.
Then again, youth activities became the focal point of the conversation, although the group argued over what those activities should consist of: jobs, sports, education, incarceration (for some). One man who led a sports program for kids said he was bringing in more non-traditional sports, such as golf and swimming, to his program because he heard several local college scholarships for non-traditional sports had gone unfilled. Another man, who now owned the space where the Arts Consortium was located, argued that the kids needed good paying jobs to try to prevent them from “selling on the street.” Frank reminded us that we were all right, as he pointed out the many people in the audience who were a part of some youth program. I thought of my method of community art, and realized it was also a piece of this complex puzzle of youth and community development.

**Description of the Community Art Curriculum**

The original community art curriculum was implemented loosely in order to allow for the participants to make suggestions as we proceeded. This curriculum entailed a service-learning process of planning, action, reflection, and recognition. After partnerships and relationships were initially developed, I worked with two teenagers, Shanda and Lyzbeth, during April and May in order to utilize their assistance in planning for the summer portion of the program. Shanda and Lyzbeth first participated in drawing their “idea of community.” I then interviewed both of them about their drawings. Next, the three of us conducted an asset-based mapping of the West End neighborhood, in which we walked around the neighborhood with a map and a camera, marking and photographing assets as we discovered them. Shanda and Lyzbeth then wrote a reflection about their experience. I asked Shanda and Lyzbeth if they found those two exercises to be beneficial and if I should repeat them with the younger kids participating in the summer. Shanda and Lyzbeth claimed they liked the exercises, and thought the younger kids would enjoy them as well.

In June, Alex, Ron, and I started to work with the youth from the Arts Consortium, including Shanda and Lyzbeth. Seven youth participated in drawing their “idea of community” and I interviewed each of them about their drawing. As the youth from the Lincoln Center did not join us for another week, they did not participate in the
drawing activity and subsequent interview. Next, the youth from both centers and Alex, Ron, Richard and I conducted the asset-based mapping exercise. We had discussed assets prior to the mapping exercise. For the next several weeks, Alex had the youth work on studio projects in order to discover and improve their basic art skills. We also presented several times throughout the summer on public art in Cincinnati and the nature of community art and also toured other public, community art in Cincinnati. We then turned the discussion into a conversation about a public art piece in the West End. In the end, we decided to create two murals.

In order to choose a location and theme for the murals, we conducted another mapping of the West End, this time considering various walls and the possibility to create a mural on them. Each of four groups presented their top two choices of locations for the mural, and we decided to create two murals along Linn Street, one in a playground and one a block south adjacent to another playground. We then drew ideas for the murals based on the location and results of the asset-based mapping exercise. The drawings were stylized and condensed into one theme by Alex. The final two weeks we spent painting the murals. We ended the summer with a recognition event.

**Changes to the Original Community Art Curriculum**

As a result of the process of engaging in the service-learning approach to this project and in conjunction with the goals and strategies of PAR, the initial curriculum, described in the methodology chapter, was changed as follows.

Changes from the original curriculum resulted for many reasons. First and foremost, the youth who participated through the two partnering organizations were not primarily from the West End. I had planned this project assuming I would only work with youth from the West End, but I learned through the process that many youth in the West End do not attend any youth service organizations. So, the curriculum became less about “Discovering My Community in Art.” The curriculum became more of a study of community in general and the West End neighborhood in particular, whether the youth lived in the neighborhood or not. However, all of the youth who participated had ties to the neighborhood, so they started with some knowledge of the West End. We explored their current knowledge and expanded upon this as a starting point. However, the realization that the youth who worked with us were not all from the West End provided a
valuable learning experience and required some reworking of the original curriculum, including a change to the cognitive and asset-based mapping exercises.

Additionally, as I was suspecting, the participants in the project were not all involved fully from beginning to end. Several youth who started in the beginning did not finish the summer. Also, there were several youth who joined the project somewhere in the middle. I found that several of the youth were facing difficulties at home or other areas of their lives, and stopped coming to their site when problems arose. Also, the youth who attended the Lincoln Community Center were not required to attend every day nor did they have to pay to participate. So they chose whether or not they would attend the community center on a day to day basis. With this information, it is surprising that several of them actually did attend every day.

In keeping with PAR methodologies, it was necessary to allow for active engagement by those who participated. Because of this, I encouraged participants to make suggestions as to the next steps in the process and responded to the needs of the community as we discovered them. For instance, the choice of location affected our choices for concept and content for the murals. The location in and near a playground, which was a controversial and important place in the neighborhood and had faced negative perceptions and negative activities, provided us inspiration for which we developed the theme for the murals. Because of the violence associated with the playground, we decided to assist the community’s efforts in reclaiming the area for children. So, we utilized several assets, including the youth and the community’s current activities to reclaim the park, in order to address a need, which was the proliferation of violence in the park.

I also decided to strengthen the service-learning components of the curriculum in order to provide more structure to the methodology. This assisted me in the implementation phase as it simplified the curricular approach in order to assist with attending to the components of service-learning.

A report on the revised curriculum, including components of the methodology, follows.
The Enhanced Curriculum: Discovering Community in Art

Introduction

As review, this curriculum was implemented in the West End of Cincinnati, Ohio in the spring and summer of 2004. Participants from two organizations actively participated in the community art project, including the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center. There were two teenagers with the Arts Consortium who were involved from April through August: Shanda and Lyzbeth. There were approximately eight to ten youth ranging in age from 10 through 13 from the Arts Consortium who participated from June through August. The youth who were involved from the Lincoln Community Center ranged in age from 10 through 14. There were anywhere from eight through fifteen youth from the Lincoln Community Center involved on any given day.

Curriculum for Community Engagement

This curriculum served to explore the community of the West End through an asset-based, action-oriented approach. It became apparent that, since many of the youth and adult participants were not from the West End, we had to work to engage the community through conversations with residents and requests of suggestions and input at community council meetings. However, the overall structure of the curriculum is only the skeleton to the role of engaging a community. The methods for engagement are philosophically implied but go beyond what is specified. For example, according to interviews with adult participants in this project, the role of the leader of the project is important. Also mentioned as important to engaging the community are the participants’ sensitivities to the neighborhood, the genuineness and caring of the participants, showing a commitment to the community, completing the project, and building relationships with people in the neighborhood. The consideration of all participants as equals in the project is also highly important, and is shown through listening to and enacting suggestions of participants. It can also be shown through the request for guidance or help in the project. For instance, I presented our proposal to the West End Community Council and asked for their help in gaining permission to paint on a wall. I also asked for their suggestions for the murals, and implemented those whenever possible.
Service-Learning Approach

This curriculum follows four main components of service-learning: planning, action, reflection and recognition (Duckenfield & Wright, 2001). The participants were involved in all four components of service-learning.

**Planning.** We spent most of the summer planning for the community art pieces. This involved discussions, art activities, the asset-based mapping exercise, choosing the location of the art piece, choosing walls once a mural was the chosen art piece, obtaining permission to paint on the walls, and sketching and discussing ideas.

**Action.** The action of painting the mural lasted two weeks. The action of painting the murals, while tedious, hot, or difficult at times, was important for the youth in order to actually paint their own ideas and drawings onto the walls.

**Reflection.** Reflection took place through the interviews I conducted with the youth. Also, reflection took place through group discussion and personal conversations with the youth and is taking place now in the writing of this report.

**Recognition.** We planned a celebration event for the murals and youth. There were food and drinks at the celebration and the youth created flyers about the event and passed them out around the neighborhood. We also sent the invitations to every local news station, and four of them broadcast the event.

Outcomes

This curriculum unit took place over five months as we actively engaged in this project of examining the community of the West End in and through art. We first examined our personal sense of community through a drawing activity. We then more fully examined this specific community together through an asset-based mapping exercise with cameras. We utilized art in several ways: as a means to study the community, as a way to examine our sense of community, and as a tool for social action through visual representation of the murals. The curricular project we engaged in resulted in the development of two community murals, which are described later in this chapter.

**Intended Learning Outcomes**

Students will:

1. Be engaged in learning about the West End community.
2. Examine our role in the community.
3. Consider possibilities for the community through an asset-based approach.
4. Participate in developing a public, community art piece.

Central Questions
1. What are the assets (good things) in this community?
2. What is my role in making a difference in this community?
3. How can I use art to improve this community?

Course Outline
1. Community Exploration and Reflection
   a. Students asked to draw their “idea of community” at the beginning of their participation in the project.
   b. Individual interviews with the youth to discuss drawings (see Appendix C)
   c. Asset-Based Cognitive Mapping of neighborhood
      i. Students will utilize an existing map of the West End and walk through the neighborhood with cameras in small groups, marking and taking photographs of assets they discover as they walk.
      ii. Groups will develop cognitive maps by drawing a large map of the area where they walked and attaching the photographs to the appropriate places. The groups present back to the class.
      iii. Group discussion on assets in the West End based on asset-based mapping exercise.
      iv. Group discussion on our perceptions and findings about the community.

2. Arts Enrichment
   a. Introduce various arts activities
      i. Team-building activity with boxes
         1. Three groups, each group gets a box
         2. Each box represents a part of the body: head, torso and legs
         3. Each group draws on their box one of the body parts on four sides
         4. Boxes placed one on top of the other, and each group writes a story about a character that is created
ii. Stamping exercise
   1. Students use potatoes to create a stamp
   2. Students create patterns on paper with their stamps

b. Explore public art pieces in or out of the neighborhood
   i. Discuss the public art pieces
   ii. Consider possibilities for creating a similar public art piece in the neighborhood

3. Public, Community Art
   a. Planning
      v. Group discussions about possible concepts of art piece
     vi. Discussions on public art possibilities
     vii. Consider how to include community residents in the creation of the artwork; Present ideas at community meetings and ask for involvement
     viii. Discussions on the potential impact of the artwork on the community
     ix. Walk around the neighborhood in small groups with cameras to choose locations for the art piece (i.e. walls if doing a mural)
     x. Each group present top three choices for location
     xi. Attempt to gain permission for choices of locations

b. Action
   i. Sketch and discuss ideas for the project
   ii. Consider site-based themes or issues to consider
   iii. Lead artist take ideas and draw into art sketch
   iv. Youth practice painting the mural on large paper
   v. Youth paint base coat and background paint on the wall
   vi. Lead artist(s) paint outlines of the mural on the wall
   vii. Youth choose pre-mixed colors and choose locations to paint
   viii. Lead artist(s) touch-up mural

c. Reflection
   i. Writing exercises with the youth about community
ii. Group discussion about the community art project
iii. Writing about youth’s perceptions of the community art project

d. Recognition
i. Plan for recognition event
ii. Invite community residents and organizations, donors, etc.
iii. Food and drinks at the event
iv. Invite media

This curriculum, as implemented in the West End, should be altered to fit the needs of the community where it is implemented.

**Disclosing My Identity**

I am white. I did not really know the significance of this until recently. This may seem a moot point to some, but it has recently become one of my most defining characteristics. Perhaps it is because I am in an interracial relationship. Or maybe it is because of my various experiences in primarily African-American neighborhoods.

I grew up in the suburbs of Cincinnati, Ohio, and attended predominately white schools through college. I very rarely encountered people whose backgrounds were different than my own, but I started to seek them out in college. It was difficult to do at a private, Catholic university, so I had to be purposeful about it.

I lived in the Florida Keys for a year after college. I had never considered prejudices and racial issues outside of black and white, but I was introduced to the grey areas of racism while living in south Florida. My experience with race relations continued back home in Cincinnati where I waited tables at a country club while simultaneously coordinating a community art program in a neighborhood near the West End known as Over-the-Rhine. During this time, heated racial tensions erupted into civil unrest on the streets of Cincinnati following the shooting death of a young unarmed black man by a police officer. Issues of race became the topic of conversation in the city for several months, although the conversations seemed to be vastly different. I heard stories from the youth with which I was working, and realized their deep fears of police officers.

While I was a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati we utilized community art as a tool to engage the black youth and white college students in a
conversation about racial tensions in the city (Bastos & Hutzel, 2004). Through our conversations and drawings, we developed a strategy for action. We created artwork to paint on panels that had been placed in the broken-out windows of storefronts. We took our conversations and displayed them through art while simultaneously beautifying and addressing a point of conflict. I started to believe in the power of art to create change. The neighborhood responded to us through kind words and suggestions of poems to include in the art. The youth thanked us for listening to their stories and the college students expressed changes in perceptions toward the media and the neighborhood.

Most recently, upon another move back to Cincinnati, I moved into the West End of Cincinnati with my black boyfriend of three years and his bi-racial daughter. This would be my first experience living in an urban neighborhood. It would also be my first experience living as a minority in a community consisting primarily of African-Americans.

My Story of Engagement in the West End Community

My boyfriend and I chose to move to the West End in August of 2003 because of a unique housing opportunity. I may have been the only white person living in the area. I was definitely the only one on the block. City West is a community development initiative intended to create a mixed-income neighborhood in which market rate and subsidy-dependent individuals could live side by side. A lofty goal, I now realize. I was not aware how lofty until we were one of the last market rate tenants to move out.

From the living room window of our City West town home, I could see the neighborhood community center (the Lincoln Center), the new Theodore M. Berry Head Start Center, the neighborhood library, several convenience stores, and the West End YMCA. I could also see the abandoned Regal Theatre, which used to be a popular, inexpensive movie theatre. The Regal—surrounded by positive community development—was an eyesore to the community, and I was immediately inspired by it. I was also struck by the number of youth crossing busy Linn Street from the City West apartments to the amenities found on the other side. However, I was sometimes frightened to look out the window, for fear of witnessing a horrible accident. I saw kids risk their lives as they managed their way across the street in front of cars driving well
above the posted speed limit. The crosswalk and pedestrian sign did little to slow down the cars and the youth showed little fear of them.

I occasionally took my boyfriend’s four year-old daughter, Brianna, and my cocker spaniel, Saka, across Linn Street to the playground or down the street to the park. At one time, there were about fifteen kids around us wanting to pet Saka. They were full of questions, the most popular being, “Does it bite?” Another time at the playground, two kids approached me to help them resolve a fight. I was the only adult in the playground area, and the younger boy did not hesitate to ask me to stop his sister from hitting him.

The Arts Consortium, a community arts center that promotes African-American art and artists, was located further down on Linn Street. I had worked with an employee of the Arts Consortium, Jolynn, on another art program in Over the Rhine. Jolynn was willing to integrate this community art curriculum into the existing structure of the Arts Consortium’s summer program. So I started the community art project with two of her teenage participants, Shanda and Lyzbeth, in March, 2004, at the African-American Museum located in Union Terminal. Shanda, Lyzbeth, and I conducted an asset-based mapping exercise of the West End in May of 2004. Shanda had lived in the West End most of her life. Lyzbeth claimed she did not know the West End very well, although I found out later in the summer that her father lived there and owned a barbershop in the neighborhood.

I attended West End community council meetings to present our community art project, and was initially met with mixed reactions, including several instances when I felt verbally attacked for initiating this project. However, Frank, the West End Community Council President, agreed to assist me in locating a wall for a mural and attempting to engage the community. At the first meeting I attended, I shared a written reflection by Shanda, and asked for assistance in getting permission to paint a mural on the Regal Theatre. Originally I was intent on painting a mural on the Regal Theatre, but was not aware of the difficulty in locating the owner of the building in order to gain permission. Frank introduced me to Lee to help me locate the owner of the Regal Theatre, but after several weeks, Lee said he was unsuccessful. After this meeting, the executive director of the Lincoln Community Center approached me to see if her summer kids could work with us as well.
In the meantime, I started to work with the Arts Consortium group of kids, a group consisting of all girls. Donna, another employee of the Arts Consortium, also had me work with one of her teaching artists, Alex, who was one of the white college students who had been a part of my experience in Over-the-Rhine during the civil unrest. I was excited to have the opportunity to work with Alex again, knowing she has had an experience similar to the community art project I had initiated. Also, Ron, a graduate student in art education from the University of Cincinnati, was interested in volunteering with the project. Alex became the lead artist with the community art project.

Seven youth from the Arts Consortium started the process with the exercise to draw their “idea of community” and subsequent interviews. Approximately eight to fifteen youth from the Lincoln Community Center started to attend the meetings a week later, but had missed the drawing activity. The youth from the Lincoln Community Center were led by Richard, who became the fourth adult to play an integral and ongoing role in the project. We each found our roles and contributed to the community art project. Alex, the teaching artist from the Arts Consortium, served as the lead artist and worked with the youth on several small projects, in order for them to practice visual art skills. Ron gave a short presentation on a mural project he had just completed in Over-the-Rhine and then helped organize the painting of the mural by dividing up the paint and encouraging the youth to continue painting. In the beginning, Richard sat quietly by his group of youth, and reprimanded them when they misbehaved, but later became much more involved in the painting of the mural and oversight of all of the youth.

We conducted the asset-based mapping exercise, in which four groups walked around the neighborhood with maps and a disposable camera to locate assets. The groups were led by Shanda, the teenager from the Arts Consortium, Ron, Alex and Richard. Prior to this, I described to the youth that assets are good things in the neighborhood and could be buildings, people, businesses, social activities, or other activities. See Appendix P for two lists of assets developed during the mapping process and Appendix Q for photographs of those assets taken by the groups. At the next meeting, each group drew a large map of the area where they had walked and attached their photographs to the appropriate areas of the map. Each group presented their maps back to the larger group, sharing why they chose certain photographs as assets in the neighborhood.
Figure 4.2. Preparation of a group’s asset-based cognitive map.

Figure 4.3. Asset-based cognitive map containing photographs.
I had been having trouble getting to know Richard. His group had seemed more aloof and disconnected than the youth from the Arts Consortium. They were also more difficult to handle and seemed less interested in participating. Ron seemed to notice, too, and suggested that the youth from the Lincoln Community Center might feel more a part of the project if we met on “their turf.” We did, and saw a difference in the level of involvement and ownership by the group and with Richard. At our first meeting at the Lincoln Community Center, one youth gave us a tour of the facility and Richard provided us with juice and donuts. The second time we met at the Lincoln Community Center I interviewed Richard. Once I started to ask him questions about his own experiences in the neighborhood and his reasons for working with the youth, he really opened up to me. My respect for him grew upon hearing his compassion for making a change and helping kids succeed. He also had seemed hesitant but open-minded about the art project (and perhaps me) during this first interview.

Ron, Alex, and I then started to talk with the youth about creating a piece of public art in the neighborhood. After some deliberation, we decided to paint a mural because we were running out of time, and the youth seemed most interested in painting. So we discussed how to choose walls and how to attempt to gain permission to paint on a
wall. I asked the youth lots of questions about walls: location, type of wall, size, age. We went around the neighborhood in four groups again, again with disposable cameras, but this time with the task of locating walls for a mural. During the next session, each group picked their top two choices and presented the photos back to the larger group, telling us why they chose certain walls. The youth decided they wanted the mural to be visible to people driving through the neighborhood and large enough to be seen. They wanted people to know that the neighborhood and the kids within the neighborhood were good, despite many people’s perceptions. When I was leading a group around the neighborhood to consider walls, Lyzbeth mentioned that she wanted to choose a brick wall, as opposed to plywood over windows, so the mural would be permanent and she could one day bring her children to see it.

We narrowed our choices of walls down to three, and I contacted Frank, the president of the West End community council, to help us gain permission. Our top choice was a retaining wall surrounding a playground on Linn Street. It was right next to a playground known as the Tot Lot, in which a local gang got their name and spent their time – the Tot Lot Posse. The playground we chose was Raymond Jackson Park, and rarely did kids play in the playground. I usually only saw grown men in the playground, and found the location of the park next to the Tot Lot had tarnished residents’ perceptions about that park.

![Figure 4.5. A view of Raymond Jackson Park from the sidewalk.](image)
The parents of some of the youth participants showed concern about their children’s safety in the park. Richard even told me that the uncle of one of the Lincoln Community Center youth had been shot and killed in that park. Next door to the park, the Tot Lot playground was being revitalized by the community, and had recently been torn down with the plan to rebuild it. So we decided to paint a second mural on a house that
was closer to Linn Street and on the other side of the Tot Lot from Raymond Jackson Park. We did this as a way to surround the Tot Lot with murals and reclaim the entire area for kids. This second mural was also more visible to people driving by on Linn Street, as was requested by the youth.

The location of the first wall helped us to focus on kids because of the location in a playground and the current emphasis on reclaiming the Tot Lot park next to it. So we asked the youth to draw or write ideas about things they used to imagine when they played on a playground. They were hesitant at first, but several developed ideas in the form of drawings and written words. Several youth were not comfortable with their drawing skills, so we told them they could write down their ideas. Shanda and Lyzbeth developed an image of a boy kicking a football that turned into a space shuttle and showed their drawing to Alex and me with pride and excitement.

![Figure 4.8. Drawing of idea for mural by Shanda and Lyzbeth.](image)

We decided to expand upon their drawing and shared it with the other youth to inspire them with their drawings. Their idea became our theme because it represented an idea of kids dreaming, playing, and succeeding. We asked the other youth to consider what they dreamed of doing or becoming when they played on a playground. One boy drew a picture of himself on a swing, flying off as Superman, who was actually a firefighter flying into a burning building to save people. Others drew or wrote about
activities they wanted to see in a community or playground. Basketball and other sports became common themes in the youth’s drawings.

![Figure 4.9. Drawing of idea for mural by Devonte.](image)

![Figure 4.10. Drawing of idea for mural by Shai.](image)

In an effort to include everyone’s ideas, whether they were written or drawn, Alex took all of their drawings and combined them into one drawing with a common style. We decided not to use their original drawings because several youth did not feel comfortable drawing and we wanted them to feel included. The youth seemed very pleased to see their
ideas in the drawing Alex had designed. The youth practiced painting the drawing onto a larger piece of paper, copying Alex’s drawing onto the larger paper while pointing out which parts were their ideas. One section of her design became the image that we painted on the second wall.

![Figure 4.11. A part of Alex’s drawing for the mural.](image1)

Frank arranged for a city representative to meet me at the playground in order to get permission to paint on the first wall. I brought Alex’s drawing and all of the kids with me. I wanted the kids to learn that walls are attached to people, and you have to get permission from a person to paint on a wall. However, the city representative thought I was trying to influence his decision with the kids’ presence. Perhaps he was right. He
asked a few logistical questions, but seemed to be influenced by Frank’s reputation and my past involvement in similar projects in Over-the-Rhine, and we did receive permission.

I had also contacted Nu-Blend Paints about donating paint for our mural. I spoke with Sharon and she told me about Nu-Blend, which recycles old paint, and said we were welcome to take the paints that been donated for processing into clean paint. Alex and I went to their warehouse, and found a floor full of old paint. Sharon was very helpful, and assisted us in finding all the colors we wanted. She showed a lot of interest in our project and told us to come back if we needed more.

With our donated paint in hand, we had all the kids paint a base coat and then green on the wall in the playground. They seemed to have a lot of fun with it, but not all dressed appropriately to be painting. I had brought t-shirts and suggested they tie plastic bags around their shoes (very important to protect those shoes!). As time went on, most youth dressed more appropriately. Due to the youth’s insecurity about painting the mural, we decided Alex would paint the outlines of the mural in black, and the kids could fill in the colors.

Figure 4.13. Several youth painting the base coat for the mural.
The first official painting day was a little hectic. I walked back to the Arts Consortium from the playground with three boys from the Lincoln Center in order to get some coffee cans for paint, and they got into a fistfight on the way back. It had been a long time since I had to deal with fighting teenagers, and I was quickly deciding how to handle the situation since I was on my own and had gotten accustomed to Richard intervening when necessary. The boys took their fighting to the middle of Linn Street, and I became scared they would get hit by a car. I heard myself yelling and threatening, and sent one boy back to the Arts Consortium to sit and wait. I took a deep breath, and realized my thumb had been bleeding because I had been holding the empty coffee can so hard, my thumb dug into some torn metal. When the three of us returned to the mural site, I told Richard what had happened and he spoke with the boys. Alex poured clean water on my bleeding thumb. I had forgotten about the third boy until we returned to the Arts Consortium an hour later, and he was still sitting there. I had mistakenly assumed he would leave, but was happy he had chosen to stay and wait for us to return.

That first day we also ran out of water and did not have enough paint brushes. It was hot, and we did not have drinking water. I was not sure if anyone would come back the next time! I was not sure that I wanted to come back. But we all did, and this time we brought drinking water (on the advice of Donna) and crackers, enough water for the
paint, and enough brushes for everyone to paint. Each youth chose a paint color and decided where he or she wanted to paint that color on the wall. Some would take long breaks, or get bored with painting (usually the Lincoln Community Center kids). We finished painting in only a couple of weeks. Alex and her husband and friends painted over the black lines and did some touch-ups prior to our celebration event. The two murals now surround the Tot Lot, with Raymond Jackson Park to the north and the red wall of the house to the south.

Figure 4.15. Several youth painting the mural with me.

Figure 4.16. Ron and Kayla (from the Lincoln Center) painting the mural.
Figure 4.17. Shawanda and Kayla (of the Lincoln Center) painting the mural.

Figure 4.18. The completed second mural.
During our time painting, we were featured in the local newspaper, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, on August 3, 2004 (see Appendix E). Frank had contacted the newspaper and arranged for the article. On a Thursday afternoon we had a celebration and recognition event, which highlighted the connections made during the community art project and also helped publicize the murals to the larger community. We created a flyer
and the youth handed it out around the community (see Appendix R). Frank helped me contact the news media, and we had every local news station attend the event. In creating a welcome environment, we had drinks and cookies, and invited the entire neighborhood, including the YMCA, the Neighborhood House, and the firefighters. The YMCA brought about 100 youth to the event, so the small playground was full of kids. Several adults we had met during the painting stopped by as well, including the owner of a barbershop across the street. He was often in the park with his rottweiler, and brought her again for the event. Frank seemed excited and happy about the outcome and said he saw a birthday party there the day before, with balloons hanging all around. He asked if we could do more murals in the neighborhood. Sharon, the representative from Nu-Blend who donated our paint, attended as well.

Since the event, I interviewed Jolynn, Donna, Richard, Ron, Alex, and Frank. I had hoped to interview the youth during the end of the project, but with time running out, decided to have them participate in a writing exercise instead. I also tried to locate Lyzbeth and Shanda to interview them, but Jolynn and I were not successful in locating them after the summer program had ended. Lyzbeth started to face some family problems during the summer, and was moving around with different family members. Her mother was not being responsive to our phone calls and would not share any information about Lyzbeth with us. Shanda faced a problem with school. Her small charter school had closed suddenly when she had only a couple of classes remaining in order to graduate. Instead of graduating her, the school district required that she attend another much larger high school in her neighborhood and take a full load of coursework for a year.

In the process of developing the murals, several local residents provided varying levels of support and commitment to the project, including Kevin and Wayne. I met Kevin at a community council meeting. He attended several of our meetings and helped paint portions of the murals. Kevin was a recovering addict, and felt he and I were meant to come in contact with each other in order to improve the neighborhood and overcome negativity that he claimed was rampant in the community council. He claimed his religion and spirituality gave him much needed strength. We lost contact with Kevin before the murals were finished, as he left suddenly one day when he was told his mother was in the hospital. I have not seen him since.
Frank introduced me to Wayne to help us obtain permission to paint the second mural on the red wall next to the Tot Lot playground. Wayne was able to locate the owner through his local contacts and received his permission for our second mural. He had told me that the reason he got involved with the project was because his deceased mother had wanted to improve the park for five years before she died. Taking on the challenge seemed to be a very deep and spiritual way for Wayne to honor his mother.

The summer following the development of the murals, I spent time observing the playground. Three days in a row, at several times throughout the days, I saw both kids and adults utilize the playground space. At 7:30 p.m. on a Tuesday night in June, I saw three teenage boys sitting at the picnic table at the playground. When I walked over, I said hello, and was met with a brief nod. The next day, at 12:00 I saw at least ten children ranging in age from three to eight playing on the playground. At the same time, the same man who had spent much time in the playground area while we painted was there again. If I did not find him in the playground area, he was usually only a couple of houses down the street sitting on the front stoop. He always waves to me when he sees me drive by, and says hello when I get out of my car. At 5:30 that evening, I saw another group of children playing on the playground and riding on the purple “Barney.” My boyfriend drives by the playground every weekday at 5:00 and usually sees children playing in the playground. Frank, the West End Community Council President, who lives down the
street from the playground, told me again he has continued to witness much activity at the playground, including birthday parties and children playing.

**Portraits of the Participants**

During the course of this study, many people showed varying levels of participation in the community art project in the West End of Cincinnati. I will highlight here the participants who were the most involved, but do not wish to diminish the importance of the participation of the others. For instance, I received suggestions for the murals from several adults at community council meetings and we would often find several people stopping by the mural site to ask questions or offer suggestions. All of these levels of involvement were important to the success of the community art project for the community.

While there was a pretty consistent group of about ten youth from both the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center, there was still a lot of fluctuating involvement by the youth from both organizations. The participatory and qualitative nature of the study allowed for these dynamics to be considered without hindering the success of the study.

Six of the seven youth from the Arts Consortium were interviewed during the interview sessions in May and June and will be introduced along with his or her drawing of community. I was unsuccessful in obtaining permission to interview the seventh youth participant. Interviews with and descriptions of four adult participants will be shared next, followed by a description of the asset-based mapping process. Finally, frequencies are provided to highlight the most common answers to questions asked of the youth participants in the writing exercise conducted in August (see Appendix D).

I will provide a synthesis of the interviews along with descriptions and the youth’s drawings, with each of the full interview transcripts located in the Appendix.

**Lyzbeth, 15, resident of College Hill, another neighborhood in Cincinnati**

Lyzbeth seemed to have so much going for her when I met her. She spoke well. She was pretty and athletic. She showed respect and caring toward others. She usually dressed very fashionably. I liked her and enjoyed working with her. As her story
unfolded, I gained much more respect for her. She struggled through and seemed to stay on top of things, until she ended up in the hospital due to stress-causing stomach pains. I was afraid she might be pregnant, but was glad to know I was wrong. Jolynn, the Curator from the Arts Consortium, shared with me that Lyzbeth had tried getting out of her mother’s house by living with her aunt or staying with her boyfriend. We eventually lost track of her, and were not able to obtain information from her mother on Lyzbeth.

Lyzbeth’s drawing portrays two apartment buildings surrounded by two apple trees and parking meters. The apple trees each have a large hole in the front and lots of apples drawn over the green leaves. The tree on the left is larger than the tree on the right, while the building on the right is larger than the building on the left. A street takes up the bottom third of the drawing with bright yellow lane markings and runs right up to the apartment buildings. A large sun and several birds are in the top right corner. In the top left corner, Lyzbeth has drawn in additional buildings, which she claimed to be the downtown area. These seem to grow out of the left apple tree, and seem slightly misplaced or an afterthought. She has included chimneys on the two apartment buildings, with smoke drifting out the top.
Lyzbeth’s Interview about her Drawing from May, 2004

I interviewed Lyzbeth with Shanda at the same time, as they had seemed hesitant about being interviewed. In order to help them feel a little more comfortable with this first interview, I asked if they would want to be interviewed together, and they both said they did. See Appendix G for the full interview transcript. I provide a synthesis of that interview here, and also in the next section describing Shanda.

**Title:** “My Dream Community”

**Important space in the drawing:** “The street… because don’t nobody play in the street ‘cause you could get hit by a car…. Because over here, the side of the street, is where the apartment buildings at. Then the other side of the street where I didn’t finish drawing, like going down this way with a swing set and the water fountain and everything’s at. The kids over here they’re gonna try to get over here, but they gotta cross the street. So this is the danger point.”

**Mood of the drawing:** 3:00 in the afternoon, after school, “Everybody’s runnin’ in the house to change they clothes.”

**Why her community is not dirty:** “…It looks nice because my mama, she like to plant. So my mom got a garden in her backyard. She got flowers on her tree actually in front of her house. She got flowers; she got a rosebush and everything and she don’t like trash… She’ll tell me and my sisters to go pick up the trash.”

**What the drawing means to her:** “This community is like a fantasy world. Basically you leave your doors unlocked when you walk out, you ain’t got to worry about nobody breakin’ in your house and takin’ your stuff.”

**How to make the community better:** “People need to pick up their trash, be more respectful for where they live at and their surroundings. You just learn how to be neat at some point in time. You know what I mean, you ain’t gotta be neat all your life but just, you know what I’m saying, just give respect to where you live at. Don’t let all that trash build around your house ‘cause the trash around your house make it look like you nasty within yourself, within your house.”
Lyzbeth’s drawing and responses show her concern for safety, as she called her drawing a fantasy world because of the safety she perceived in it. She also pointed out the danger of people crossing a busy city street and her disgust of trash lining the streets. She used her mother’s garden as an example of how her own community was clean and nice. She placed apple trees next to parking meters, describing her interest in apple trees stemming from her own experiences with apple trees her mother had planted when she was a young child. She described the set of buildings in the top left corner as representing the downtown business district, which was adjacent to the apartments. It seems as though Lyzbeth was inspired either by Shanda’s drawing or by the City West development across from the Lincoln Community Center, as the apartments she has drawn look very similar to the new City West buildings located in the West End.

**Shanda, 16, West End resident**

Shanda was the first student I met about the community art project, and I immediately liked her. In our first conversation, we found out that we had a common friend: a former student from Over-the-Rhine I had worked with. Shanda dressed less stylishly than Lyzbeth and attended a charter school that taught construction skills. She seemed to really enjoy working in construction. Shanda was open to and interested in the ideas about the community art project, and shared some of her own. We talked about her plans for the future, and I offered her encouragement and suggestions. She impressed me with her intelligence, and I found myself wanting her to go to college instead of working in construction, so I suggested she look into construction management or something similar. She was conscientious and hard working and showed strong leadership skills with the younger students, as could be seen when she led one group through the asset-based mapping process. Her love of her school was shattered when she discovered it was closing and she would not be graduating when she had expected. She had to attend the neighborhood high school for an additional year in order to graduate. I have not been able to contact her ever since.
Shanda’s drawing is split in half, top to bottom, by a street shaped almost like a rainbow. In the bottom half of her drawing is a house located next to an apartment building. These buildings, just like those in Lyzbeth’s drawing, look very much like the City West buildings. The house on the bottom left side is tall and narrow, with a circular window on the top level. The apartment building to the right is even taller, with square windows lined up top to bottom. She drew the house in three dimensionally while the apartment building is drawn flat. To the left of the house is a swing set and a large tree. To the right of the apartment building is a large tree and a bright sun. A small pond is in front of the apartment building, surrounded by green grass. Clouds are located just beneath the street and above the apartment and house. In the top half of Shanda’s drawing are five larger buildings, with the smallest located in the middle. She has two flags over
the two buildings on the right side. At the top of the drawing, she has a portion of another sun, several clouds and birds, and a title for her drawing, “What is Community”.

*Shanda’s Interview about her Drawing from May, 2004*

The full transcript to the interview I conducted with Shanda and Lyzbeth is located in Appendix G. A synthesis of the interview follows.

**Title:** “What community is to me”

_when she thinks of community, she thinks of:_ “The place where the people are.”

**How this drawing is better than her community:** It’s not dirty.

**Why is there so much trash on the ground?:** People don’t use the trash cans… “They probably don’t even like the community that they live in…. They don’t care about their community. They just like, ‘I got somewhere to live and I’m gonna leave here.’ They don’t care if it’s clean or dirty.”

**Why she chose to include things in the drawing:** “Something that I want for our community. Basically stuff that our community has missed.”

**Reflections on the changes in the West End:**

Shanda commented that the new City West development may have changed things in the neighborhood for the better, but only temporarily. She said that when people moved out of the old development, the neighborhood got worse. She said it happened when her sister was hit by a car and died about ten years ago. Her sister was ten at the time and Shanda was six. Her sister was stealing from the gas station with some friends, and they ran out of the store into the street.

**Why did it make people move out:** “It hurt the community. Like when she died that hurt the community ‘cause everybody who was down here… most of her best friends was, they lived down here, so they parents moved them away so they won’t remember…”

**When asked about her community drawing, she said:** “I just want it to be like this…. We a long way off. People need to care more about where they live and what they do.”
Shanda, like Lyzbeth, complained of the trash found in her neighborhood, the West End, during the interview. She claimed that people dropped trash on the ground because of their lack of self-esteem and a sense of ownership of the neighborhood. She pointed out that residents need to care for their community and themselves in order to have the kind of community she envisions. During the drawing exercise and the interview with them together, I sensed they were building off of one another’s ideas. For instance, during the drawing activity, they sat very close and chatted quietly while they worked. Shanda’s and Lyzbeth’s drawings look very similar for that reason. When I interviewed them together, the conversation became very natural and casual, and allowed them to think about each other’s drawings as much as about their own.

**Shai, 10, West End resident**

Shai was a very quiet girl who wore glasses and usually wore her hair in pigtails. She did what as asked of her, and had advanced drawing skills. She seemed very proud that she attended a public arts school as well as the summer program at the Arts Consortium. She was not as rambunctious as the other kids, as she usually sat quietly and seemed interested in and attentive to whatever activity we were engaged in.

*Figure 4.24. Shai’s community drawing.*
Shai’s drawing shows a house with different shapes of windows and a large garage. To the right of the garage is a girl wearing a skirt and tank top with a bow in her hair, happily claiming, “This is my home.” The roof of the house is painted in large stripes and the windows are outlined in thick lines. The garage shows the details of the door in horizontal lines. Shai also has a sun and clouds in the top of her drawing, which are portrayed in outlines.

**Shai’s Interview about her Drawing from June, 2004**

The transcript of the interview with Shai is located in Appendix H. A synthesis of that interview follows.

**Title:** “New Home”

**What it means to her community:** “That we should appreciate where we live and stuff. Because some people don’t have homes.”

**What community is to her:** “A place where people should be happy, but they are not happy. Because it’s too much violence…” When asked further, she claimed that kids are happy, but a lot of adults are not.

She spoke of her own home, living in an apartment complex in the West End. She said, “It is not that great where I live because everybody is being all loud at night and stuff.”

**What could be done to make her community better:** “Spread the word… to the little kids. Try to be a more example to the little kids.” She claimed that she can sometimes be an example to her brothers and sisters.

Shai’s drawing and responses reflect a desire to be in a more quiet setting. At the same time, she seemed grateful for having a place to live, but aware of the violence surrounding her. I asked if she has ever seen a community like the one she drew, and she said no. However, I suspect that she got the idea for the circle and triangle windows from the new City West development located across the street from the Lincoln Community Center and the Arts Consortium. She provided a poignant response about her definition of
community, as she thought it was a place where people were happy. In reality, however, she felt that most adults were not happy.

Amber, 14, recently moved to Winton Terrace, another neighborhood in Cincinnati.

Amber was quiet and usually unengaged, often sleeping during our meetings. She seemed the least interested in the project from the beginning, and did not finish the summer with us. I found it difficult to get to know her, as she did not attend our meetings regularly and usually did not talk much while she was there. When I tried to start a conversation with her, she would say very little.

Amber’s drawing is a bird’s eye view of a swimming pool. The pool is rectangular and very closely centered in the drawing. She has included a lifeguard’s chair in the top left and a diving board with steps on the right side, which are drawn in line and not colored in. She also has drawn an inner tube on the left side of the drawing. There are two images of kids in the bottom left side of the pool with smiles on their faces. One appears to be floating on a raft and the other seems to be swimming freely. The child who is swimming seems to be wearing swimming trunks, while the child who is floating has stripes on each arm. There is a striped beach ball toward the top of the pool.
Amber’s Interview about her Drawing from June, 2004

The transcript to the full interview with Amber is located in Appendix I. A synthesis of that interview follows.

**Why she chose to draw a swimming pool to represent community:** “That is what you will find in a community also.”

**Why swimming pools are an important part of the community to her:**
“Because it would be hot outside and you want to keep cool and go swimming.”

In the interview with Amber, it was very difficult to get much of a response from her. She often trailed off in her answers, as if her mind was somewhere else. I did not get a chance to speak with her much more because she did not attend many of the meetings and stopped attending the Arts Consortium altogether before the end of the summer. Of all of the youth I interviewed, Amber was the most perplexing and closed off to me. I was unable to get much information from her in this interview and about her drawing. During the summer, the pools in the city are filled with water and become a very popular place for kids to spend their time. I am suspecting, since this drawing was done during the beginning of the summer, Amber was thinking about this as a community and summer activity.

**Ki’cure, 12, lives in College Hill, another neighborhood of Cincinnati**

Ki’cure was slightly outspoken, but also did what was asked of her and worked consistently and diligently. She was very outgoing and took many opportunities to socialize. She also, however, knew when she was not supposed to socialize, and worked when it was expected of her. She was with the project consistently throughout the summer, and was present at almost all of our meetings. She never complained, and was very positive and friendly.
Ki’cure’s drawing presents a swing set with two swings and a slide with stairs. Next to each is a person drawn in line with smiles on their faces and arms raised. Above the slide is a sign that reads, “Keep our kids safe!!!”. The people are standing on grass, which is sketched in very roughly. Again, there is a sun and there are three clouds at the top of the drawing. The entire drawing, except for the grass and the hair on the people, is drawn in line.

*Ki’cure’s Interview about her Drawing from June, 2004*

The full transcript of the interview with Ki’cure is located in Appendix J. A synthesis of that interview follows.
Title: “Keep our Kids Safe”

**Significant spaces in the drawing:** “Kids are having a good time and they are not doing something they shouldn’t be doing.”

**The mood of the artwork:** “They are not in trouble and just happy.”

**What they “shouldn’t be doing”:** stealing, doing drugs, drinking, “being in somebody’s house when their parents ain’t home,” “walking somewhere without telling a parent where you are going”

**Meaning of this artwork:** That “the kids can’t get killed”

**Good things represented here about community:** “flowers on the side of the street” and “nothing is broken”

**Why the community is important:** “Because we need to keep our community safe away from people who don’t need to be in there…. People who are stealing and bringing in drugs…”

After Ki’cure got over her insecurities about her drawing abilities, she displayed a playground to represent community. Her drawing and interview show a concern for the safety of kids and the importance of a playground as a symbol of safety. She also mentioned flowers and cleanliness as important components to her drawing of community. In her interview, she mentioned the negative influence of drugs and guns and the people who bring drugs and guns into communities. By drawing kids on a playground, she wanted to display the need for their safety and staying away from those negative influences.

**Bria, 11, Western Hills resident**

Bria was small and thin for her age. She displayed confidence, and spoke often about the arts school she attended. Bria wore glasses and usually had her hair in braids. She was very playful with her friends, often laughing and skipping when she walked with them. She was very positive and upbeat, and always worked hard on activities.
Bria’s drawing is of church buildings and playground equipment. The church is on the left side of the drawing, represented by two buildings with windows, doors, and crosses at the top. She drew a walkway from the church building to the playground equipment. A slide and swing set are drawn floating in the air. The church buildings and one piece of playground equipment are placed on grass at the bottom of the drawing. Unlike the other drawings, however, Bria did not include a sun and clouds. All of her images are line drawings, with only the grass colored in green.

**Bria’s Interview about her Drawing from June, 2004**

The full transcript from the interview with Bria is located in Appendix K. Highlights from that interview follows.

**Title:** “Next to the Church and the Park”

**Why the church and the park?:** “Because sometimes I like Church and when I get out of Church I go to the park and I like the park… Because some of my friends are in the Church in the neighborhood, around the corner from me.”

During this interview, I found it difficult to get Bria to talk, but soon after discovered it was because she was not feeling well. After the interview, she got sick in
the art room. The other kids immediately attended to her, while some got paper towels to clean up the mess. The rest of the summer, I realized how close Bria and many of the girls at the Arts Consortium were to each other. I also saw a more outgoing and playful version of Bria throughout the summer. She seemed very committed to her religion and her church and showed a concern for drugs and violence in the West End. While she saw her connection to the West End through art, she saw religion as a way to help make the West End better.

**Summary of Youth’s Drawings**

The youth portrayed their desires for community when asked to draw their “idea of community.” Lyzbeth described her drawing as a fantasy world. Shanda described her community of the West End as being “a long way off” from what she has portrayed in her community. At the same time, the youth portrayed community in a positive light, as most included trees, a sun, clouds, and birds. The drawings and interviews portray their interest in safety, greenery and cleanliness, as well as their connection of kids playing to the idea of community.

**Interviews with the Adult Participants**

I interviewed several adults during the community art project, including two interviews with Richard and one interview each with Alex, Ron, Jolynn, Donna, and Frank. During these interviews, I asked the participants about their perceptions of the West End and the community art project. Descriptions and insights of Richard, Donna, Jolynn, and Alex are included here. The full transcripts from their interviews are located in the Appendix.

**Richard, Youth Coordinator at the Lincoln Community Center**

*One thing that children and youth always remember is if you tell them you are going to do something and finish it they will always respect you and they will always remember that. We made an impact on at least thirty to forty kids. We put a seed in their head about what a wall—an empty wall— can look like with art.*

I met Richard at the Lincoln Community Center twice for interviews, once in June after one of our meetings with the youth and once after the mural was completed in
August. He was a very polite and courteous man who dressed in button-down shirts and slacks most days. After the project, during my second interview with him, Richard was dressed nicely in a jacket and tie. He seemed to take the interview very seriously, and was very thoughtful with his responses. He was also very philosophical in his responses, taking his time to answer my questions. The full transcript of the interviews with Richard is located in Appendix L.

Richard was born in the West End in 1956, and often talked about the differences between the lives of the kids he works with now and his own experience as a kid in the West End. After leaving Cincinnati for college, a failed marriage, and raising a son as a single parent, he returned to Cincinnati and was living in a suburban community of Cincinnati. He was working part-time at the Lincoln Center and full-time at a fast-food restaurant. At the end of the summer, his first summer living again in Cincinnati, he was offered a full-time position with the Lincoln Center. I asked him about his favorite things about the West End.

Richard: Well, everybody knows each other. I mean there are, back in the day, if there was a situation where there was a disagreement, families solved it. You took it to the family. You just didn’t go fight in the street. No, that didn’t happen. I mean it happened, but it was very seldom. I mean you know families would mediate the process. Then you know this child stays away from this child. They end up getting back together but at least the parents had that.

Karen: There are no heads banging into the cement. That was horrible [an incident in which one boy beat another boy’s head into the cement, causing brain damage].

Richard: Right, now just the opposite, they shoot guns.

He looked very forlorn when he told me about a recent funeral for a young boy whom several of the kids from the community center knew.
Richard: There was a funeral for some young kid that got killed, and this [Lincoln] Center was empty almost because all the kids went to the funeral.

Karen: A kid from around here?

Richard: Yes.

Karen: What happened?

Richard: Argument, misunderstanding, shooting and that is how it happens.

Karen: Were they shooting here?

Richard: In the community. I don’t know, maybe on Twelfth or something like that.

Karen: That was maybe like a week ago?

Richard: Yes, they had a funeral yesterday. All the kids were upset, you know, walking around…

Karen: Did they know him?

Richard: Yes they knew him. We have got a whole list of murders around here, so what we are doing [the mural] is therapeutic in nature. Because a lot of kids have a lot of issues on the playground around here. What we do is cut through to get to them. I think that art was a way to help take their minds off some of the things that are going on in their life. One of our students, Devonte, he lost his father.

Karen: Recently?

Richard: Well two years ago.

Karen: That is recent.

Richard: Yes, but he still carries anger. He has anger, a lot of anger. Look what therapeutically it [the art project] had done for him. He was one of the best painters that we had according to Alex.

Richard often looked off into the distance when he spoke of the problems of violence in the community and with the youth. We spoke for a while about parenting, education, and extra-curricular activities that can impact a child. He seemed to have
reflected quite a bit on the community art project, and the impact it had on the
community and the kids. He mentioned the many connections the project had created. I
asked him if he could describe one connection.

Richard: *I would say it is a spiritual connection because you know just the
word spiritual. Things happen in a way where a higher power kind
of helps out even when we don’t know that it is happening. I use
spiritual principles today in my life. Art is another spiritual
connection. What is her name, the red head?*

Karen: *Alex.*

Richard: *Alex. She is very articulate, blessed. That is a skill. She was a
center piece of the whole program, along with you putting it
together. We all came together to create one common thing and
that is the finishing touch. There is a spiritual piece to all of that. I
don’t question it. This is the right thing for the right reason and
everything will go right… It [the mural] is already protected from
a spirituality piece.*

My second interview with Richard became more of a conversation about the
impact of the community art project and the lives of the youth in the West End. Richard
seemed to have a deep commitment to contributing to the success of the kids he worked
with. He spoke about their lives and the activities he planned for them often with me, and
his descriptions often brought tears to my eyes. Richard described his least favorite things
about the West End community as violence and lack of visibility to the city
administrators. He commented that there needed to be more connectedness, closeness, in
which the police know the children and their parents. He said that there needed to be a
sense of pride and caring about the community and that there needed to be more
prevention programs in the city, such as drug and alcohol prevention. He also spoke often
about the proliferation of violence and said people need to “speak out against violence.”
Karen: *So what do you think are two things that could make the West End better?*

Richard: *Community relations, which is something they are still talking about today, community relations. A sense of pride, of caring. Caring about the community. People and police need each other. Today you could snitch and you have got Crime Stoppers who keep your identity revealed but back during the day if you did something wrong you got told on plain as day. You know if somebody is doing drugs, he got told on and he got busted and just point blank. Karen: There is almost a sense of fear to reveal.*

Richard: *Yes, right. So you know we need to speak up. A lot of times we feel if we tell then there are repercussions from that. People don’t say nothing. They just turn their back. That is why this crime and violence has gotten so out of hand. You know a fifteen year old shooting a twenty-one or a thirty year old, fifteen year old shooting. I have never heard of that, never. That is daily. Number one thing that creates prison or death for the community and then it leaves the women without a man. It is a whole cycle…. If you look at what is happening we have got men going to jail or dying over proudness. So the population out here shrinks in the inner city. There are not a lot of good men out here…. I mean we tend to mind our own business because if we get outspoken there are repercussions to us, our cars, families and that sort of thing. That would mean if we even step up.

I started to ask Richard about his perceptions of the community art project in addressing some of the problems in the West End. He related it back to the development of the youth in the neighborhood, so I continued my questioning.

Karen: *What do you think it is about art, be it music, murals, painting that is able to do this? The connection or the reaching of the kids…*
What is it, do you think, about this process, the mural process? Or music, as you were talking about before, that does this?

Richard: Well it is a form of, the music is a form of entertainment based on reality. Art is a form that is based on reality. It took a childhood dream of theirs of playing in a park or swinging on a swing and interjected that into their future goals. So it is a reality piece that could be put in a cartoon figurine because it is coming from a child. It is not a real serious thing of emphasis. It is a childhood thought process of what do you like to do? What would you like your career to be? They just went with that and just did a whole dream type of a thing all on one piece. So reality, cartoon figuring, innocent very innocent.

Karen: That was something that we wanted to, especially the matter of the park because of the perceptions of that specific park. Having from what I have heard a lot of parents don’t want their kids to go to that playground because of the perceptions around it. The so-called gang that hang out there and hung out there. So one of our goals was for me, once we chose that site and I think it happened to all of us on a level that we weren’t aware of, was we need to reclaim this so that it is recognized that this a kids place for innocence, for play, for dreaming. Not for guns, not for gangs, not for violence.

Richard: So the seed has been planted. That mural is a seed. When kids walked by there, their parents would probably say, “We are not going to that park.” That is before that mural. Now they see that mural as a token for kids to now enter... So that mural has taken back the idea they were kids. It has probably done scared away some of the dope dealers too. So it is a double edged thing here. It is a sense of taking back without even saying a word.

Karen: How do you think it has scared away the dope dealers?
Richard: Well, because they saw a bunch of kids doing that work and that was their stake. That was their stake and we claimed it. They see all those kids up there painting. When those dope dealers walked by and they saw that… Without even saying a word to them, this is ours. Now they are able to respect that. That might just push them away. Whereas before they took full ownership. That mural will be working even when no kids are up there…. It is a slow process. Sometimes we don’t see it because we are always having a death or a shooting or child struggling in school, but we are turning a corner. We are turning a corner and I really truly believe if my vision, is just a key, putting up power structures around kids in the community. I mean that is our investment. The more we do that and the more we are visible, the more we allow our children to be a part of the process like we did with the mural.

Richard’s description of the community art project surprised me as he helped me see more components of it than I had originally experienced. My comments and questions were driven by what he was articulating about the mural, and I began to see more depth in the mural than I had before speaking with Richard. When I asked him specifically what he thought made the project successful, he said the structure of the project was beneficial to the engagement of the kids. While he saw the youth as assets in improving the community, he also explained that their future would define the future of the community. In showing a commitment to the youth, Richard believed that completing the mural was imperative to the success of the project.

Donna, Education Director at the Arts Consortium

I think right now the arts in the African-American population is still at a disadvantage because we haven’t yet learned to value art for art’s sake and to really teach our kids to value arts, value all kinds of music and not just hip-hop and not just what you’re used to hearing on the radio, but to teach them the value of art and creating....
Donna was a working mother who did not live in the West End, but had worked at the Arts Consortium for many years. She was easy to work with and offered suggestions to me on occasion, often holding herself back from giving too many suggestions. She seemed to put a lot of trust in me, and allowed Alex to take the lead role in the community art project and be the representative of the Arts Consortium. In the meantime, Donna and I had several conversations about art and the role of the Arts Consortium in promoting African-American art and artists. She was usually rushed in our conversations, as she would have to attend to the needs of the children in her care, to their parents, or to the artists she oversaw during the summer. At the same time, she seemed to take great care in connecting with those whom she came in contact.

I met Donna for the interview at the Arts Consortium on an afternoon in late August. She had less time than we had planned for the interview because she had to pick up her daughter from school. For the full transcript of the interview with Donna, see Appendix M. I started the interview by asking Donna why she was willing to work with me on the project without having known me very well, and she spoke of the impact of the project on the community. She described it as a way of showing responsibility and caring toward the community.

Karen: *Can you tell me why you were willing to work with me on this project in the beginning, not knowing me very well and not really knowing what the project was going to be?*

Donna: *Well, I thought it would be a good challenge for the kids, something for them to participate in other than just general classes that we offer here. And I knew it was gonna be something that was gonna impact the community and I wanted them to be a part of that.*

Karen: *How do you think it impacted the community?*

Donna: *I think it always makes a difference in the community’s perspective when you see people coming into the community and beautify their community by taking responsibility for doing things*
that they should be doing, but someone else cares enough to come into the community. So it’s not like you have a group of people who are just doing it for show, but you’ve been there for a long period of time and put some thought into it, and it was something that’s gonna stay there for a long period of time.

Karen: What do you think, what role do you think art plays in improving a neighborhood like the West End? I mean the Art Consortium’s been in this neighborhood for a long time and you’ve been a part of that, so what role do you think art plays, the arts play, not just visual?

Donna: I think the role of the arts can play in neighborhood, in some, you know family pride, you know parents watching their children grow through the arts and establishing artistic skills and finding that there’s other needs and other ways for them to be successful and expressing themselves through instead of violence. I think it’s difficult when you grow up in a community that’s under-served to especially be yourself, and that’s what I think the arts does for under-served populations is teaching you it’s okay to be yourself; it’s okay to think the way that you think; it’s okay to act you know that way as far as your personality… and you get you build more self confidence out of the arts because it’s an the individual type of activity. And I think the sad part about it is that when you are in a under-served population people tend to utilize the arts as long as it benefits or it meets the needs that they have.

Donna commented often on the importance of showing a commitment to the community. I asked her why she thought so many people took an interest in the mural.

Donna: Because it’s making a change. It was making a visual change that you can see; it’s an instant change. It’s not something that you started in September and hopefully by May you’ll see the change in
their attitude or maybe their grades will get better, but this is an instant change. And hopefully by having a positive part, a positive image in it and people are involved... The park is such a great controversy, you know for it’s reputation as “Murderer’s Park” and the gangs, so it’s like we’re trying to clean up. We’re doing two things; we’re teaching kids values, at the same time giving them art skills and we’re changing the community.

My relationship with Donna had grown over the course of the summer, and potential issues of race seemed to dissipate. During one particular phone conversation with her, she casually called me “sista’,” and I was struck by having been given such a coveted title by an African-American woman. After this, I asked her how she viewed the impact of race on my involvement in the community and as an “outsider.” She explained that showing a commitment and withstanding initial criticism was necessary toward being accepted by the community.

Karen: What impact do you think it had then, here I was this white chick comin’ in tryin’ to do a project in an African-American neighborhood? I mean I got different, especially sitting in here I’m remembering a couple of the West End community council meetings and one not going so well, and I think that might have been part of it. But do you think that was something I had to overcome or you think it was something that was never an issue?

Donna: Well I think it’s always an issue. I know that it doesn’t matter if you’re black or white. I just think anyone coming into this community; this community has been, for lack of better words, pimped so much, you know an underserved population, especially this community. Groups coming in saying, “We’re gonna do this,” and they come and they, this is from what the residents are saying to me. They come in and then they do a good month. They’re supposed to be here for the whole ten months but they only do one
month, and then the next month they’re in and out barely… once they get the money that they want for the press or whatever it is they’re trying to get, once they get that then they have no regard to be involved with the neighborhood at all. Or their agenda when they come in are not for the community, so they’ve experienced a lot of that. This neighborhood is, particularly the councils, are so protective of this community. And you, or any white individual or someone who’s not of African-American descent, is going to be scrutinized even more. And if you can handle that scrutiny during a couple meetings and you can stick in there, then they have respect for you.

Karen: It’s a level of commitment then, you think?

Donna: Yeah, it’s definitely a level of commitment. What’s their purpose, you know? What was your motivation behind this? Are they really serious? Do you really want to make a change? You know you may be committed, but are you really serious about it? Do you really care?

Donna made me aware of the importance of showing commitment and a genuine level of caring toward the community and with the youth. She pointed out the importance of earning the community’s respect and withstanding any initial scrutiny in order to become engaged with the community. She also connected this to the importance of making a visible and instant impact on the community and following through on commitments.

Jolynn, Curator of African-American Museum of the Arts Consortium

I think the arts are something that most of the kids don’t know they have capabilities in. Some kids know they can draw, but they don’t know the value of that… I think they take that very much for granted. Their artistic talents are not overly promoted in their community. Particularly the two girls you had [Lyzbeth and Shanda]. They come from communities where art is probably not even on the
list as something for them to be exposed to. I think they actually were able to see that they could do something besides just work or that they could make a product and they could have a result of paying attention and listening. I think definitely that art gels people, regardless of where people come from and what age they are. It is an easy way to educate people on bigger things.

I met Jolynn several years before this project while I was working with a community art program in Over-the-Rhine. I worked more closely with her father at that time. Her father considered himself a community artist, and seemed to have a keen interest in helping his daughter become a leader in the African-American arts community. He was one of the founders of the Arts Consortium, and continued to utilize the arts to make change in the African-American community. Jolynn was in her early thirties, had attended a primarily white, private, catholic high school, and had not yet received a college degree. She had implied that she still had plans to continue her higher education, but her career seemed to keep her busy. Not only was she the curator of the African-American Museum, but she was also the diversity coordinator for her former high school. She also served on several boards, including the board of the organization I worked for at the time of this study.

I met Jolynn for the interview at the African-American Museum in the basement of the Museum Center. We sat in the quiet hallway outside of the museum. For the full transcript of the interview with Jolynn, see Appendix N. I started the interview by asking her why she was willing to work with me on the community art project.

Karen: So I am wondering I guess from your end why you felt it [the community art project] was something worthy of taking a risk with and seeing the kids involved with.

Jolynn: … I think that your project, a lot of kids don’t understand I guess large aspects of doing art. They kind of know what painting and drawing a picture is, but really what goes behind doing installation piece or behind doing art. They kind of see me do that here with the shows but they don’t really understand the process. I
thought it would be interesting to kind of enlighten them on the work that goes behind producing something, as an additive to the stuff they would learn with me. Which actually I think helps them to do better work for the smaller projects because they were actually working with something where they are going to use a lot more brain power and a lot more thinking. Which when they got into some of the easier stuff, that typically is where most people would start with kids, it was kind of like, “Oh this is, I can do this. I have actually, we have done a mural.” You know, which was a large project. Then I think too that kids need to kind of understand, particularly the kids which we work with, which is mostly African-American kids. That there are a lot of the people in the community that are involved with trying to make their neighborhoods better or their environments better that are not just black people, are not just African-American people. That there are a lot of people consistently in our community thinking of ways to improve things.

Karen: What do you think Lyzbeth and Shanda got out of that project?
Because you had a pretty big group of kids this summer and those were the only two other than Amber who sort of fell off.

Jolynn: Yes, was off the wagon.

Karen: Maybe also address why she didn’t get out of it what the other two did.

Jolynn: I think those in particular, I think they [Lyzbeth and Shanda] were very proud of the accomplishment of doing it. I think they were more proud of it as they walked away from it than while they were doing it and I think they were definitely more proud of it after it got recognition from other people… externally from us. I think they didn’t really learn to appreciate it. I think probably maybe the week after you did it and we were talking about it, they were very much wanting and encouraging the other kids to go see it.
You know, everybody needs to go see it. I think that that experience for them where some of the kids did go see it and saw it made a difference to them and kind of a peer acceptance was so important. I think that too they will be, I don’t know regardless of what they decide to do from now on with working or whatever. They actually have a discipline to them they are not aware they had because they did complete it. Those two in particular. They still are a little bit young and trying to figure out what they should do with their life, but I think that the next thing they go into that is concentrated they are going to be, they are going to benefit from having a structured project. Even compared to the other kids who were here with us doing other things. Amber, I think Amber unfortunately, she just started off on the wrong foot from day one and was never able to come back in and get on the right foot…. I think she really felt like she didn’t have a purpose. She wasn’t gelled to the program at all because of her indoctrination with it. She didn’t choose it and so therefore she was kind of put in it and she felt that way I think through the whole thing. There was nothing we could do to change that.

Jolynn had a unique ability to engage and empower youth, so I asked her for suggestions for engaging youth, or if she thought there was a model for engaging kids.

Jolynn: There are lots of books about strategies on how to get kids involved but the reality is it is all about the individual. Our success with working with children is how you interact with them. You have to be active in every aspect. That doesn’t work for every person.

Karen: Do you think it is a personality thing or is it passion and… ?

Jolynn: I think it is the person. I think it is also a life experience thing… You have to start to involve yourself in their communities and their
environment. Not just specifically to children, but just being aware of the environment in which you are saying you are serving. The model would be that you would have to be proactive in being involved in the community prior to approaching the community with your program or activity. .. It is the attitude in which you bring to the environment.

Jolynn pointed out that there are various types of kids, even within the inner city setting, that we deal with. She admitted that she did not have the time or resources to work with the ones who were most in need. For instance, she described Amber’s unsuccessful end to the program as something that we could not have changed because the program she worked through had started her off on the wrong foot from the beginning. Jolynn also described the community art project as a lesson in the process of finishing a big job and the confidence it instilled in the youth who participated. She claimed that this confidence would help them accomplish other tasks, whether it was a small art project or other activities in life.

**Alex, Teaching Artist with the Arts Consortium, Art Teacher with Cincinnati Public Schools**

I was brought up with spirit, some sense of spirituality but I wasn’t completely surrounded by it all the time. So I don’t know if I would have picked up on it as a kid, but I think that if kids pick up on positive things and they want positive things, and if you’re bringing a very positive spirit to this project as a positive thing, they’ll pick up on it, and that’s what they wanna pick up on, you know, because you know people can generally tell I think if something’s right or something’s wrong. You know, I think that’s something that human beings are capable of doing and you know we were doing the right thing and I think they could pick up on that.

Alex was in her early twenties and in her second year as an art teacher with Cincinnati Public Schools. Alex’s skin was very pale with reddish freckles, and she had
long, red hair. She appears younger than she is. Alex is also very religious and free spirited. Alex and I had worked together several years ago with the *Art in the Market* program in Over-the-Rhine, a neighborhood adjacent to the West End. She started working with the Arts Consortium, as the only white teaching artist, after her experience with *Art in the Market*, which led to her involvement with this community art project. Her new husband, Joel, had also become involved in the community art project, and had been living in the West End before they were officially married during the summer. He was an artist, and assisted Alex with painting the outlines of the images on the mural. Most of the girls at the Arts Consortium worked with Alex the previous summer and seemed to really like her. They would hug her often, and she always responded with the compassion they seemed to be looking for. At the end of the summer, they made up a rap song about her and sung it to her in the hall of the Arts Consortium.

For the interview, Alex and I met at a coffee shop near the school where she was an art teacher. The full transcript of the interview with Alex is located in Appendix O. I started the interview by asking Alex why she thought this art project was successful in engaging the community.

Alex: *I think the project was very successful in that the kids were the ones that came up with the idea and worked to the end to finish it. I feel like I played – and you played – a big role in facilitating that process, but not to the degree where it was just solely our work. And I think that’s the most essential part when you’re working with community and projects of this nature is to allow room for other ideas, not just your own agenda…. They’re getting a new life to the playground that was otherwise kind of dull and boring; made it very inviting to the kids. At first I think they [the youth] were kind of embarrassed or didn’t want to act like kids, but by the end of it I think they had a lot of fun playing in that playground. We didn’t come in trying to solve the community’s problems or anything like that. We came with a purpose of inviting the community to make*
the community a more beautiful place, and I think that, in itself, was very successful.

Karen: Why do you think that there was a positive embrace of us, then?

Alex: Their hearts are ready for a change, and it’s, there are people in that community trying to do something right, doing something positive. I think that people will generally see that as something that’s a genuine thing and not just a quick fix. Working with the kids is a genuine thing. We’re working with kids and teaching them. We’re teaching children, and anyone who teaches children—no matter where they come from—has a good agenda I think. You started with the children first and you taught them and they got excited and then they talked to their parents and things like that. And I think with their involvement it made the adults more interested; it made the adults more appreciative because they saw these children out there workin’... We worked with kids who were on the inside.

Karen: What do you think it is about some people that can engage you better than others, or some programs engage you better than others?

Alex: I think it’s definitely something within the person that, a quality that the kids see, probably that they know you care about them. If you don’t care, if it was just a job to you, then they’re gonna pick up on that, you know what I mean?

I shared with Alex Richard’s perceptions of the spirituality he said he saw in her and the community art project. For the first time in our interview, she stopped and smiled before she responded. She seemed to be caught off guard, and was more careful with this topic in her response. She even seemed grateful another person had commented on the spirituality component, although disappointed she was not able to make that connection with Richard sooner.
Karen: One of the other themes that I’m seeing come out of this is the part about religion. Sometimes it’s spirituality or religion, however you wanna look at it, but that’s something through the arts in general that sort of always seems to come out for some reason… And when I was interviewing Richard the idea of spirituality came out, and I don’t know if there’s something, but there’s just like a similarity between the two, like religion as a way to better a community or whatever… do you see that component, too?

Alex: Well I see that in the community in general; it’s an integral part of their community, and I don’t think, you know, the political correctness as it is, it’s hard to sometimes be politically correct and reach an integral part of their community at the same time. And I find that to be true in my own classroom, you know? And I always feel like I had to be really careful what I say, you know, whether I believe and not to press my beliefs on anyone but to let them you know feel comfortable in their belief also. So you know it’s a shame that it’s gotten to the point where we can’t even discuss God without feeling like you gotta watch your back; I think that’s a shame in a country where freedom of speech is protected under the Constitution but we have to be so careful about that. But you know I feel like it comes out because it’s there. You know I feel like that’s the reason it comes out is ‘cause it’s there. If it wasn’t there it wouldn’t be comin’ out, so the fact that it’s comin’ out means that it’s there and can even probably benefit, to its benefit, you know what I mean? I think it would only help. When kids understand that you believe that they believe or understand what they believe, you got another way to communicate with them, you know?

Karen: What about the spirituality component, ‘cause I think they were two different things, really. And Thomas described our experience as the four of us as…that there was some spiritual connection and that’s why we worked well together on the project. That, that art is spiritual and that’s why this project was so powerful. And he went on to say that the project
or the mural and the fact that the kids were there working on it is going to now be a barrier to any drug dealer being anywhere near that mural, that there will not be drug deals in that neighbor, in that park ever now because of the fact that the mural was there and they saw that kids did it and that spirit, that spirit of that is going, will prevent them from, that will make them not wanna be there ‘cause they know. And he described like he said, you know, “Alex, she’s very spiritual and that’s why she was able to, that’s why she’s so good at this.”

Alex: See Richard never talked about that.
Karen: No, but he got that.
Alex: I know.
Karen: He picked up on that. Then without even hesitating…religion or anything about that, but he talked about the spiritual component, that art is spiritual just like religion is, about this process of, that there was some sort of a spiritual bind between all of us and he described you specifically as being very spiritual, I mean, and because of that that’s why it was so successful.

Alex: Well I guess to be spiritual was to be patient and kind and giving and considerate and all things that are good, and so I’m being myself. I’m glad that he could see those things and I like the, he had never said that to me about you know, but I really think that that could be true you know and I hope that it is. I mean we could go really deep here and we don’t probably need to, but you know seriously, I mean if you break it all down that’s all it really is, everything is spiritual. Everything and art is definitely spiritual. It’s creation, I mean what a better way to express spirituality but by creating. It’s what we were made to do I think, so I don’t know. Yeah, I think it was a spiritual process. Whether or not I see it specifically as that I don’t know. Would I say it was? Sure, definitely, you know what I mean? I mean I consider a brief encounter with every person every part of the day a spiritual journey, so this was just another part of that you know?
Alex had involved two other artists in the mural, including her husband, Joel, and their friend Eric. Their involvement was unexpected, but I think Alex wanted to share the process with them, as artists. I asked Alex why she thought they had decided to become involved.

Alex: *For the same reason I’m doing it, because they can see value in it. They can see that it’s not just an arbitrary project; that there’s value in the process, there’s value in the product; there’s value in the community; there’s value in the people. That all in all there really, there’s not a lot of that goin’ on in the community. I mean artists tend to be pretty to themselves and when they make art it’s about their own agenda and it’s neat to see there’s creativity to share with people and to bring other people in, you know. It’s like there was a way for my husband and Eric to share their talents with a lot of people. And they were really excited about working with the kids and meeting the kids, but I think once they did, they were kind of nervous. The whole idea of it though seemed really fascinating to them.*

As I had asked Jolynn, I asked Alex what she thought it took to engage kids in a program such as this.

Karen: *What do you think it is about that some people can engage you better than others or some programs engage you to do better than others? However you wanna look at it I guess.*

Alex: *Yeah because not everyone could do it probably, so I think it’s definitely something within the person that, a quality that the kids see, a quality that, probably that they know that you care about them. If you don’t care, if it was a job to you then they’re gonna pick up on that, you know what I mean? If you just treat it as whatever. “I don’t care if you guys are*
“people or a product,” you know what I mean? If they can’t tell that you care for them, then they’re not gonna respond to you.

Karen: No.

Alex: For me to get the kids engaged is to bring myself into the situation, to let them know who I am, to pour out myself and that’s really hard, you know what I mean, ‘cause you never know what they’re gonna do with it once you pour it out and that’s really hard. And I’m learning that the more that I give the more that I get back, I mean you know, so you have to be willing to give, you know give the chance, give trust, give all those things in order to receive them back. And I think that that’s really what they need, what they want you know? They want somebody who cares, somebody who isn’t a pushover, you know? They don’t want somebody who’s gonna let ’em, but they might like it but I find that they feel safe when they know that there’s boundaries.

Alex described her methods of reaching “at-risk” youth as being open and honest with the kids in order to earn their trust and engage them in a project. She specifically mentioned making a connection with the religion of the youth and letting them know that she cares about them while setting strict boundaries. I saw her employ these methods in her daily interactions with the youth, and only assumed she also used these methods in her classroom. While she seemed a little guarded, at first, to share her religious beliefs and notions of spirituality in this interview, I remember her being very open about it while we worked together with Art in the Market. I could only wonder if her two years as a public school teacher had taught her to be more guarded about that component of her life and her personality.

Asset-Based Mapping Exercises

The asset-based mapping exercises took place twice during the project, once in May with only Lyzbeth and Shanda and once in June with the whole group. Lyzbeth and Shanda were the two teenagers from the Arts Consortium who I started to work with during the spring of 2004 in order to plan for the summer program. During the asset-based mapping with Shanda and Lyzbeth, we walked around together and each had a map
of the West End and made choices as to what to mark on the map. As the three of us walked around a portion of the neighborhood, we noted various assets including buildings, people, developments, home ownership, and businesses. Specifically, we noted the library, the YMCA, the Lincoln Community Center, a historic building, the homeownership rate associated with the new City West development, the park, the Head Start Center, and the Arts Consortium. When we returned from the mapping exercise, both Lyzbeth and Shanda wrote a reflection about their experience. Those reflections are included here.

*Lyzbeth’s Reflection*

“I don’t live in the West End so I really don’t know much about the West End. But the walk that we took was really nice because it showed me where some things were at that I didn’t know that was there. It also showed me the positive places that kids can go rather than stand on the corner all day. Now when people ask me about the West End I can tell you the good points than the bad points of the West End.”

*Shanda’s Reflection*

“I have lived in the West End my whole life. I never knew that we had all of those assets in our community. I never really paid any attention to those buildings. I think that the kids in the summer program will really like that experience as much as I did. It is really good to know that a community like the West End has so many historic buildings around. I like the experience of walking around my town. At first when we began to walk I was like ‘Why we walking around Downtown? There is nothing here to see.’ Then when we started to see all the historic buildings I began to think to myself, ‘Is all these buildings down the way.’ I really never hardly looked at these buildings (assets). I realized that the West End is really a nice place to be.”
In June of 2004, while working with all the youth and adults involved with the project, we broke into four groups of about five people and conducted the second asset-based mapping exercise. Group leaders included Richard, Alex, Shanda, and Ron. Each group had a map and a camera, and chose a different part of the neighborhood to explore. Each group also kept a list of the assets they discovered. Two examples of those lists are in Appendix P. The film was developed for the next class period, and each group met to discuss their pictures and lists. Each group then drew a larger map of the part of the neighborhood they explored and attached their pictures to the appropriate areas. They presented their maps and lists to the larger group, describing why they chose to photograph specific assets in the neighborhood. Photographs taken of assets in the neighborhood are located in Appendix Q.

Assets the groups identified included murals, historic buildings, businesses such as barbershops or convenience stores, firefighters, new developments such as the City West development, the West End YMCA, the Lincoln Community Center, the Arts Consortium, parks and playgrounds, churches, and schools. The groups photographed murals they discovered, firefighters, playgrounds, and parks.

**Participants’ Perceptions After the Project**

Nine youth participated in the writing exercise in August. The results of these questions have been tabulated by frequencies in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6. In the writing exercise, each youth was asked to provide two answers to each question, although some provided more or only one or none. In addition, I informally asked youth their perceptions of the community and the community art project at the recognition event and kept notes of their responses in my journal. Their responses to the writing activity and to my informal questions highlight their perceptions of the West End and of the community art project as it impacted them and the community. They cited positive components of the West End primarily as social activities, arts activities, and kids-related activities.
Table 4.1. When asked, “What are your favorite things about the West End?”, frequency of responses:

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<td>3</td>
<td>Social components in neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arts Consortium</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Kids</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Going to the park</td>
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<td>Boys and Girls Club</td>
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<td>Visiting family</td>
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<td>Going to the store</td>
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In the youth’s written responses, several described their favorite things about the West End. Shai, a ten-year old West End resident, for instance, stated that her favorite things about the West End were “the kids and the events we have down here, like cookouts and celebrations for retirement.”

They cited negative components of the West End primarily as crime, poverty, litter and trash, and fighting. The factors participants saw as ways to improve the community included people-centered strategies, such as working together and cleaning up trash, reductions in crime-related activities, and places for kids to spend their time, both indoor and outdoor.

Table 4.2. When asked, “What are your least favorite things about the West End?”, frequency of responses:

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Crime; Fights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rude people; Arguing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shai wrote that her least favorite things about the West End were that there was “fighting and no swimming pool.” Ki’cure wrote that her least favorite things about the West End were the poverty and that people were rude. I asked her why she thought people were rude, and she said that they probably did not like where they lived, “but it’s getting better” she told me.
Table 4.3. When asked, “What could make the West End better?”, frequency of responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People working together; helping out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cleaner; Picking up trash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No drugs, guns, fights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More parks; Green areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More places for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>People stop cursing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shai wrote that “plants and people working together” could help make the West End better. When I asked her how she could improve life in the West End, she said that she could be herself and set an example for other people. Joy, a youth who lived in the Mt. Healthy neighborhood of Cincinnati, thought there needed to be more education and learning through cultural activities. She also wrote that “it needs to be cleaner” because “it’s a lot of pollution down here.” Her father was a firefighter in the West End, and, based on her often insightful comments and writings, I suspected he spoke with her about his views of improving the neighborhood. Christina wrote that two things that could make the West End better were “if people don’t litter and if people work together to make a better community.” Ki’cure wrote that “the kids helping out” by picking up trash and “doing that mural on the wall” was helping the community. When I saw her response, I asked her how the mural made the West End better, and she said that “kids and adults can go look at the wall and maybe have memories or something about going to that playground a long time ago.” Diamond also wrote that the mural was something that could make the West End better and that she liked “that we get to paint it.” Diamond also wrote that she could “speak out against violence” to make the West End better.
Table 4.4. When asked, “What could make the West End worse?”, frequency of responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trash; litter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Drugs, guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>More factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nowhere for kids to go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joy wrote that the West End would get worse “if they took everything away” because there would be “nowhere for kids to go and that would be bad.” Ki’cure wrote that the West End would be worse if there were “a lot more problems like on the news when they talk about the West End and all the problems that happen. And the people who move in that area and try to destroy it.”

Overwhelmingly, the youth responded most positively to the actual painting of the mural on the wall as their favorite part of the process. Their least favorite part of the process was getting their clothes or shoes messy. Their responses are presented below in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 as frequencies.

Table 4.5. When asked, “What was your favorite part of the mural project?”, frequency of responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorite Part of the Mural Project</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting the murals on the wall</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had fun</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing it - Completed murals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific image in the mural</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood what murals were about; Their ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second mural - less people working on it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting messy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas coming together into one big idea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6. When asked, “What was your least favorite part of the mural project?”, frequency of responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least favorite part of the mural project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 getting dirty or paint on clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hot outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Other people complaining or not working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 chalk drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 taking pictures around the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Making mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cleaning up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diamond told me that the mural makes a difference “because I did it and people like it so that’s how it’s different.” When I asked Shai what she thought art does for a community, she said that it shows people how creative a person can be and that it is exciting to see people who know about art. She also told me that the mural helped show children what they could do and play at the playground. I asked another youth, Joy, what she thought her role in the community was, and she claimed that her involvement in painting the mural was one role by “bringing the community together to the park… just enjoying and having a good time.” Joy also told me that the arts help to bring everybody together “in a way of seeing yourself different, that there are people out there and not just you. They might not all be like you, but you guys probably still have things in common.” She said that having a “piece of somebody in every picture” could do that. Similarly, Bria responded to my question about how she feels she fits in with the community by saying that she fits in with the arts, “because I like to paint.” She said her favorite art in the West End was the mural we created, and her favorite part of the mural was the spaceship. She also wrote in her response that her favorite part of doing the mural was “when people kept telling us how nice it was.” The image of the teacher was Bria’s idea, and she told me that she was proud of herself to have her idea in the mural.

I asked Ki’cure what she thought the arts did for the community, and she said it would “get a lot of adults and kids to do fun stuff ‘cause they’re always usually held up in their house. A lot of art stuff really makes life fun, I think. But if we didn’t have that I
think it would be really hard for people to try to do something fun. If they didn’t have arts it would probably be really boring.” I asked her what she thought was fun about the arts, and she said, “it’s a new experience because you get to learn different things and you might get to show somebody what you learned that is different that you’ve never done in your whole life.” Christina told me that the mural impacted the community because “some of the kids would grow up, like with the football, like they play football and then they might want to be an astronaut when they grow up.” Imani told me that art “makes people respect each other more.”

The writing exercise revealed the youth’s perceptions of the West End community as well as their perceptions of the community art project. Their favorite aspects of the West End were the social activities and the Arts Consortium. Their least favorite aspects of the West End were crime, fights and trash. Overall, they thought the way to make the West End better was to work together, pick up the trash, and get rid of the drugs, guns and fighting. They claimed their favorite part of the mural project was actually painting the murals onto the walls. They also enjoyed having fun and receiving recognition for what they accomplished. Their responses about their least favorite aspects of the mural project revealed that they did not like getting dirty or getting paint on their clothes and the actual painting was hot, causing some youth to complain.

Participants’ Perceptions of Community

The perceptions of the primary participants will be discussed based upon their drawings and interviews about community. As a reminder, each youth from the Arts Consortium was asked to draw her “idea of community.” Each youth was then interviewed about her drawing using an adapted version of T. Anderson’s (1997) model of “speaking with kids about art” (see Appendix C).

The youth drew various objects and activities to represent their ideas of community. The youth’s drawings of community contained such objects as buildings, kids, suns and clouds, trees, houses, playground equipment, and grass. They chose various locations to represent their idea of community, including apartment buildings, houses, playgrounds, a pool, and a church, but all were represented from an outside view of these locations. The most common factors found throughout their drawings included a yellow sun, green grass and trees. Their interest in environmental factors was recorded
again during the writing exercise, which focused more specifically on the West End, as green spaces and other outdoor areas were often written as positive things in the neighborhood. As this study took place in the summer, their keen interest in warm-weather activities is not surprising. It was apparent that the youth valued green spaces and places for kids to play and socialize, whether they chose to draw people or not. Upon further inquiry as to why some youth included people in their drawings and some did not, several youth responded that they did not feel comfortable drawing people, but the people were there, perhaps inside the buildings that were drawn.

While several of the youth chose kid-related activities and images to represent in their drawings, such as playground equipment, a pool, and kids, several focused more on the physical structures that house a community, such as the buildings, homes, churches, or playgrounds. So, while the youth described in their interviews that the social activities were the defining factors of a community, they often chose to draw the facilities that tended to house specific social activities. However, during the interviews, all of the youth mentioned social activities and interactions as defining characteristics of community. Other characteristics mentioned often included safety, greenery, and cleanliness. These same characteristics were repeated in the writing exercise that focused more specifically on the West End, as the youth responded with such characteristics as social activities, safety, cleanliness, and greenery as positive in the West End.

Participants’ Perceptions of the West End

While many of the youth were not from the West End, their perceptions were similar to those who were from the neighborhood. Additionally, the adults’ perceptions were similar to each other as well as to the youth. This section will discuss the assets and needs the participants suggested for the West End, which were derived from interviews, writing exercises, observations, and photographs they took during the asset-based mapping exercise. The asset-based mapping exercise may have impacted their responses to the question about the positive components of the neighborhood. While information on their changed sense of community would be valuable, this study was not intended to uncover this data.

Assets. The assets in a community are the positive things that are found, including physical, environmental, social, and human assets. As I asked participants to
write their favorite things about the West End, I discovered that social activities and environmental factors were offered the most often. This, again, highlights this community’s reliance on social capital for quality of life and to meet the community’s needs. The youth and adults responded overwhelmingly in favor of things identifiable as social capital as the greatest assets in the community. These assets are important to consider when engaging a community to create art in a neighborhood.

When asked about their favorite things about the West End, youth participants from the Arts Consortium mentioned most often human and social activities, such as interactions with others, knowing others in the neighborhood, visiting friends and family, and social locations such as the Arts Consortium, the park or kids’ clubs. Shai, who lived in the West End, claimed her two favorite things about the West End were kids and events in the neighborhood, such as cookouts and celebrations for retirement. She declared that plants and people working together could make the West End better, which implies a reliance on social capital in the community for community development. Bria claimed her two favorite things about the West End were hanging out and going to the park, again highlighting the interest in green spaces and places for kids to play outside.

The adult participants provided similar responses to the kids. For instance, Richard said that his favorite things in the West End were the sense of family and closeness. At the same time, Richard thought the sense of family and community were less in the West End than when he was a kid. Perhaps the perception of closeness is still prevalent in the community, but the reality is that the community is less close than in the past. However, it is apparent from the participants’ responses that the social capital of a community is one of their highest priorities as well as their most often suggested way to make the West End better.

In response to improving the neighborhood, youth participants most often mentioned human and social activities as ways to improve the community. Also mentioned often as ways to improve the community were cleanliness, reduction in crime, drugs and fights, and more green spaces. Adult participants offered similar, although more refined and specific, suggestions for improving the neighborhood. For instance, Richard suggested that there needed to be more connection and closeness, especially between the police and the residents. He also focused on the development of youth as a
solution to the community’s problems, such as an increase in prevention programs. I experienced the same suggestions at the West End community council meetings. However, disagreements seemed to occur over specific activities and tactics to be offered for youth engagement. The community mural project seemed to transcend these differing agendas and suggestions, as could be seen in the keen interest and involvement of the community and the continued interest in future community art projects in the West End.

It was apparent that most of the participants in this project wanted to be engaged in improving the community. It was not apparent, however, how those who were not involved felt about the community. While I spoke with several residents on the street about the mural and the community, I did not seek out people to interview about the community. The residents I did speak with about the community mentioned similar assets in the neighborhood, most often social or youth-related. The barbershop owner with the rottweiler, for instance, thought the mural could somehow benefit his business, since, he claimed, any positive local development would be good for his business. He did not mention, however, the role of the youth or adult participants in creating the mural as important to the success of the mural as part of the community development.

**Needs.** While I propose an asset-based approach to engaging a community, the needs of the community are often addressed in the process. In this study, I wanted to know what the community defined as needs in the neighborhood. While we took an asset-based approach to the community mural approach, we did address a community need through the community mural project, which was the reclaiming of a playground for kids. This was accomplished through relying on the assets in the community, including social, human, and organizational assets. The needs of the community were defined by the participants as problems such as crime, trash, and fights. The suggestions offered to combat these needs or problems included, primarily, people-centered strategies such as clean-up efforts and anti-violence programs.

When asked about things they do not like in the West End, youth participants mentioned most often crime, fights, and trash. These social problems were seen as the greatest needs in the community by the adults as well, although Richard offered the lack of visibility to the rest of the city as another need. The lack of visibility was the only need mentioned that was focused outward, versus needs that focused inwardly on the
community’s problems. While most of the needs mentioned about the West End were focused on the negative human components found within the neighborhood, Richard’s suggestion placed some responsibility on the greater city community. He suggested that the city government rarely attended events in the neighborhood, which resulted in less city response to needs in the neighborhood. The youth were less able to offer tangible solutions to the needs in the neighborhood. While they suggested social activities to improve the neighborhood, rarely were specific examples provided. Usually, suggestions included a broad reduction in the problems they had already identified.

Summary

This qualitative participatory action research study was primarily presented through storytelling and narrative sharing of the process of engagement. Research techniques of observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation were used to examine the research questions posed in this study. The data were revealed through stories of my experience, drawings by the youth, syntheses of interview transcripts with participants, and tabulation of the frequencies of similar responses given in the writing exercise.

My observation included experiences I encountered while living in the West End, such as encounters with neighbors and kids, as well as experiences through initiating and completing the community art project. The community of the West End was described through census statistics, description, and narration of experiences. Youth who participated through the Arts Consortium were asked to draw his or her “idea of community” and were subsequently interviewed about their drawings utilizing an adapted version of T. Anderson’s (1997) proposed model for speaking with youth about art. The youth’s drawings presented varying views of community, including an interest in cleanliness, kids, and playgrounds as well as safety and social activities. During the interviews, however, most youth claimed that these things were not necessarily present in their own communities. Youth from the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center were given a writing exercise at the culmination of the community art project. The results of this writing exercise were presented with tables of frequencies relative to six specific questions. The writing exercise revealed similar results to the drawings and
interviews, as issues such as violence, drugs, and unhappiness were revealed while social activities, green spaces, and activities for youth were described as ways to address the problems. The responses also showed the youth’s enthusiasm for painting the mural and enjoying the fun and recognition. The frequencies showed that many of the youth were not accustomed to getting dirty or withstanding heat when working.

All participants participated in an asset-based cognitive mapping exercise, in which they utilized maps and disposable cameras to mark assets found in the neighborhood. These photographs were then attached to their drawing of a large map of the area where they walked. The mapping exercise exposed what the participants determined as assets in the neighborhood, including murals, historical buildings, new building developments, the YMCA, the Lincoln Center, the Arts Consortium, the library, firefighters, and parks and playgrounds. Six adult participants, including Alex, Richard, Donna, Jolynn, Frank and Ron, were interviewed in July and August during the study.

Interviews with the adult participants revealed similar results to the youth, although more intricately defined, as most of the adults alluded to issues of race, violence, drugs, and distrust as problems in the West End. The adults presented solutions such as art, spirituality, commitment to the community, and youth activities as methods for addressing the problems. Also, the adults spoke of the role of art in providing the community with a non-threatening, instantly gratifying method for reclaiming the playground in honor of the youth.
CHAPTER V
INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is focused on the interpretation of and conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter Four. In that context, this chapter will focus on the outcomes discovered, emergent topics, and implications for future research and educational practices. Interpreting the results of the study is intended to provide meaning in light of the research questions. The primary research question for this study is: What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?

To better answer and consider this question, six supporting questions were asked. As represented in the results through observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation:

1. What are the participants’ perceptions of community in general?
2. What are the participants’ perceptions of the West End community?
3. What do the participants see as assets in the West End?
4. What were the participants’ perceptions of the community art project?
5. How did service-learning components enhance the community art curriculum as implemented in the West End?
6. Is there evidence that the community art project created changes in the community?

This study was designed to be participatory and exploratory in nature, in which the primary objective was to better understand participants’ perceptions of community and the use of social action to create change (see Freire, 1993) through participation in an asset-based approach to community art (see Lowe, 2000). As a participatory action research study attempting to create transformation (Brydon-Miller, 2001), a community art curriculum was developed, implemented, and altered based on the community’s response through this study. Based upon my analysis of the research experience and
collected data, I further interpreted the data in relationship to the research questions, identified emergent themes and conclusions.

**Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 1**

*What are the participants’ perceptions of community in general?*

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The participants’ perceptions of community in general can be analyzed and interpreted through interviews, the youth’s drawings about community and through observations. In my observational experiences, I sensed that the term community held deep meaning for many of the participants, as it implied, for many of the African-Americans participants, the general African-American community and experience as opposed to one specific neighborhood location. Jolynn, for instance, described the necessity of connecting with the community or learning from the African-American community in order to enact any educational programming with African-American youth. M. James (1995) described a goal of African-American educators of the 1930s as providing an emphasis on solidarity in order to help support the African-American community against segregation and racism. Jolynn described it as necessary to “involve yourself in their communities and their environment” when trying to engage youth from African-American populations. The strength of the African-American community developed out of the collective identities that resulted from oppression and marginalization (Sleeter & Grant, 1999), which I experienced as a white person in the West End neighborhood when I initially received some negative comments about my involvement with the community. However, once I showed a committed involvement (Freire, 1970/1994) to their interests and needs, I became accepted into that community.

Overall, the youth’s perceptions of community were of a positive nature, in which the youth portrayed community as a happy, safe, sunny place with buildings, trees, birds, and activities for youth. In the youth’s drawings and interviews about community, they usually connected their perceptions back to their reality, claiming that their drawings were fantasies or dreams and their real communities did not usually compare. While their drawings often represented fantasy, the reality of their own communities became paramount in their descriptions of their drawings. I also often witnessed a sense of
hopelessness in some of the youth as they described their desires for their own communities based on their fantasy drawings. For instance, Shanda commented about her drawing in comparison to her neighborhood of the West End, saying, “I just want it to be like this…. We a long way off.” Shai described her understanding of community as, “a place where people should be happy, but they are not happy because it’s too much violence.” While she claimed that we should appreciate where we live, “because some people don’t have homes,” she said about her own community of the West End that, “it is not that great where I live because everybody is being all loud at night and stuff.”

The youth revealed three basic components of community in their drawings and interviews: safety, greenery, and cleanliness, which I will discuss in further detail.

Safety. The safety of residents in a community became an important component of the youth’s ideas of community. For instance, Lyzbeth’s interest in safety was revealed in her drawing of her “Dream Community,” which she claimed was a fantasy world where “you leave your doors unlocked when you walk out; you ain’t got to worry about nobody breakin’ in your house and takin’ your stuff.” Lyzbeth also pointed out the “danger point” in her drawing, which was the busy street that people had to cross to get to the amenities on the other side and that nobody would play in the street for fear of getting hit by a car. Ki’cure’s drawing focused on the safety of youth, as she titled it, “Keep our Kids Safe.” She claimed the meaning of her artwork, which depicted two kids playing on a playground, was “that the kids can’t get killed.” Her heightened awareness of the need for safety in a community was highlighted in her response to my question about why her community is important: “Because we need to keep our community safe away from people who don’t need to be in there.” In light of the high murder rate in the West End, it is not surprising that fear and a desire for safety were so important to the youth. As Richard described, “We have got a whole list of murders around here.” The youth’s desire for safety, which is something that is often taken for granted in many communities, is understandable in a community that experiences so much violence.

The community art project through the murals addressed the need for safety by attempting to reclaim a park that had previously been considered unsafe by local residents. The participants’ emphasis on safety had to be considered and included in this project, as it was so important to them. However, the approach toward addressing safety
was done through an asset-based, people-centered strategy, as proposed by Lowe (2000), which highlighted that the park was intended for children to dream, play and imagine. According to Richard, the drug dealers would respect the message.

**Greenery.** Greenery, such as trees, grass, plants, and gardens, was found in several of the drawings and mentioned often by the youth. When asked about things to make the West End better, “green spaces” was mentioned twice. Ki’cure claimed that the good things found in her community drawing included flowers on the side of the street. Lyzbeth, who drew apple trees next to parking meters, had mentioned that her community was not dirty because her “mama like to plant.” She equated her mother’s flowers and trees with her interest in keeping her yard and neighborhood free of trash.

The need for more greenery is common in most urban neighborhoods. For this reason, it is beneficial to include environmental components in public artwork that is created in an area that is deprived of greenery. The first mural was painted green to make it look more natural, which helped it blend into its surroundings well. Also, several trees were included in the first mural, which we found to be very important to the youth.

**Cleanliness.** Trash was mentioned repeatedly as a negative factor of the West End, while cleanliness was mentioned as one of the best ways to improve the West End and as one of the most defining characteristics of their community drawings. In my own experience in the West End, I discovered trash to be a common problem. When asked what could make the West End better, cleanliness was tied for being mentioned the most often in the writing exercise. While Lyzbeth had equated her mother’s flowers and trees with cleanliness, she also mentioned that her mother would “tell me and my sisters to go pick up the trash.” She had claimed that this had made her own community not look dirty. Shanda, who had lived in the West End all of her life, claimed that her drawing was better than the West End because, “It’s not dirty.” She claimed that in the West End people do not care about where they live, that it is only a temporary place for them to live. With a low home ownership rate in the West End, her observation has value. The West End residents’ lack of a sense of ownership can be equated with a disregard toward the cleanliness and beauty of the neighborhood.

While the mural itself did not directly approach the topic of cleanliness, it did engage the community in creating a sense of ownership for the park. I discovered several
months after the murals were completed that one of the men who spent a lot of time in the park had started to keep the park clean once the mural was finished. While he did not paint with us, he occasionally asked us questions and offered suggestions, or he simply watched us work. Perhaps he felt more proud of the park with the attention the mural brought to it, and realized that he, too, could play a role in keeping it nice.

As a process to create and initiate change in this neighborhood, understanding the participants’ perceptions of community was an important starting point for engaging them in the community art project and responding to the core values they have of community and indicates one’s degree of social identification (Davidson & Cotter, 1986). Asking this question highlighted the youth’s desires for their own communities and neighborhoods, such as their need for safety, interest in greenery, and longing for cleanliness, attributes many of us take for granted in our own neighborhoods. The implication is that the absence of these basic human needs can inflict trauma on youth and adults, ultimately forcing them into survival mode.

Just as Dissanayake (1988) described art as a necessity for social survival, the community art project provided a means for attending to the need for survival mechanisms through the participants’ social networks. And the use of art for survival, as well as for a collective identity, solidarity, and resistance, are common in African-American traditions (Lewis, 1990). Community art empowers communities (Kay, 2000) and creates a foundation for solidarity to develop within a community (Lowe, 2000). The process of examining the youth’s perceptions of community attends to Dewey’s (1938) suggestion for democratic education as a way for citizens to critically examine their society and as a starting place for them to ultimately participate collectively in social action for change. Just as Dewey (1934) described the arts as a forum for displaying what is considered socially important, the perceptions the youth have of community constituted, partially, what they considered to be socially important in a community. In addition, understanding the participants’ perceptions of community helped establish the “perceived control the person has over the immediate environment” (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990, p. 67) and willingness to participate in community activities (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).
Implications

The implications are many. For art education, the implication is that taking into consideration students’ perceptions of community contributes to a better understanding of culturally and socially important values such as power struggles, cultural influences, and history (Bastos, 1998). Also, understanding youth’s perceptions of community contributes toward a more meaningful approach to social action by involving the youth in the preparation of any social action agendas in keeping with Freire’s (1993) suggestion for liberating education through local collective action. For community development, the implications are more general. Understanding residents’ perceptions of community provides a framework and foundation for what planning and developments will be successful in that community, based on what the community values. De Tocqueville (1969) found that associational life in a community inspired participation. By addressing the community’s core values, residents can become involved in development efforts and contribute to more sustainable community improvement.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 2

What are the participants’ perceptions of the West End community?

Analysis and Interpretation

While I had intended to work primarily with youth who lived in the West End neighborhood, the youth from the two organizations I worked with were not all from the neighborhood. However, I discovered that most of the youth had some connection to the West End (obviously through their involvement with the Lincoln Community Center or the Arts Consortium, but also through family and friends). I also discovered that the youth’s perceptions of the neighborhood were similar to each other, independent of whether or not they lived in the neighborhood. Shai and Shanda, for instance, both lived in the West End and complained of the trash, noise, violence, and drugs in the neighborhood. Both girls also seemed to have a sense of hopelessness about the neighborhood. Shanda claimed that the community was far from being what she wanted it to be while Shai claimed the adults in the neighborhood were not happy. Through the process, however, I noticed an increased awareness of the possibilities for the West End, and the youth’s perceptions about the neighborhood became more positive as their sense
of pride about the two murals increased. Jolynn described the sense of pride Lyzbeth and Shanda had about the murals: “I think probably maybe a week after you did it and we were talking about it, they were very much wanting and encouraging the other kids to go see it.”

Ultimately, the social networks and activities were described most often when participants were asked about the West End. Their willingness to participate in the community art project, based on their high level of social capital, addresses Chavis and Wandersman’s (1990) claim that a person’s degree of social identification indicates one’s willingness to participate in community activities. Richard, for instance, described his favorite aspect of the West End: “Well, everybody knows each other.” He also thought the West End’s greatest investment should be in the kids. The notion that kids make the West End better was apparent from the adults and the kids themselves. Alex claimed that we showed our genuine commitment to the West End, as outsiders, because we worked with children in the neighborhood. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), an important asset in a community is youth.

My own perceptions of the West End changed as well as I lived in the community for a year and a half and was engaged in this community art project. Initially, I saw only the negative components of the West End, such as the crime, my fear, the trash, the noise, and the violence and drugs. However, as I interacted with the participants in this study and participated in the asset-based mapping and the development of the two murals, I realized the inherent caring and compassion many people felt for this neighborhood and the children who lived there. While I still feel fear at times in the neighborhood, I also recognize the accomplishments of those who work to provide more opportunities for the youth in the neighborhood, despite the political struggles, difficulties, or obvious lack of financial resources. Alex, too, claimed she saw value in the West End community, which explained her commitment to the Arts Consortium summer program for three years.

While the youth and adults often mentioned the problems and needs of the neighborhood, it was also very apparent that the social aspects in the West End were most valued. The collective identity described about African-Americans by Apple (1995) was clear to me as I lived in the West End and spoke with the participants in the community art project about the neighborhood. While initially I thought I would have to try to utilize
the community art curriculum to improve the connectedness and sense of community of the participants, it was obvious that the connectedness within the community did not need strengthening. Rather, the perceptions others had about the West End needed strengthening and the community needed to be given more opportunities to build upon the social capital already existent in the neighborhood in order to address the perceived problems in the neighborhood.

**Implications**

The implications for these perceptions of the West End are many. First, recognizing the participants’ perceptions of the West End played an important role in the development of the two murals because we were able to address the values they have of the community. In particular, the interest in greenery, safety, and cleanliness, as described in their general perceptions of community, became important components of the murals. Also, the value placed on the kids of the West End was the most telling feature of the murals, the project in general, and showing our commitment to the interests of the community. The murals, highlighting the significance of children playing and dreaming, portrayed the deepest value discovered through this study about the West End: the future of the youth. This, as one of the greatest assets of the West End, attended to Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) emphasis on asset-based approaches to community development instead of deficiency-oriented needs-based approaches.

While focusing on the positive perceptions, or assets, of the West End, we ultimately addressed some needs in the neighborhood as well. According to Richard, the murals did contribute to decreasing criminal and drug activity in the playground. Also, the murals contributed to empowering one particular resident to continue to keep the playground clean. Just as McKnight and Kretzmann (1990) suggested that sustainable community development can only happen when local people become involved in and committed to the improvement of the community. And the murals beautified an otherwise plain-looking playground. These needs were addressed, but through an asset-based approach to understanding the perceptions the participants had about the West End community.
Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 3

What do the participants see as assets in the West End?

Analysis and Interpretation

When we discussed the notion of assets with the group, I think the youth were not sure what the purpose or connection of it was to their involvement in the art classes. The discussion took place early in the summer, and I may not have made a strong enough connection of the process to the art project. However, once the youth participated in the process of walking around the neighborhood with cameras and the intent to locate positive things in the neighborhood, they got over their hesitations. We identified many assets in the neighborhood that I think we may not have noticed prior to this event. The assets we identified can be assigned to McKnight and Kretzmann’s (1990) three categories of assets: individual capacities and organizational capacities, private and non-profit organizations and physical resources, and welfare expenditures, public capital improvement expenditures, and public information.

Individual Capacities and Organizational Capacities. The assets identified that fall into the category of individual capacities include the locally owned day care center, the “Just Cuttin” barbershop and the owner, the “Duke’s Place” store and the owner, the many murals, and the firefighters. These are all assets that are created by individuals who contribute their own abilities and assets to the community. Assets that fall into the category of organizational capacities include the Arts Consortium the businesses such as the mini mart, the Liberty Lounge, the Laundry Mart, and the many churches. These assets utilize the capacities of the organization to contribute to the community’s well-being.

Private and Non-Profit Organizations and Physical Resources. There were many private and non-profit organizations identified as assets in the West End. Schools that were identified included Taft High School, Lafayette Bloom School, a back on track school, and Hayes-Porter school. There were not many social service organizations identified, however the identified nursing home would fall under this category. There were also public institutions identified, such as the fire department and the library. Physical resources include vacant land and buildings, which were identified as the
abandoned Regal Theatre and a closed church as well as the parks and playgrounds, a community garden, and other physical amenities such as buildings.

**Welfare Expenditures, Public Capital Improvement Expenditures, and Public Information.** This category has the fewest identified assets assigned to it. Under this category, I would include the new City West development and renovated houses as public capital improvement expenditures.

**Implications**

This process provided us with a better understanding of the resources of the West End and a better understanding of each others’ perceptions of the neighborhood. As we created our asset-based maps with our groups, we had to dialogue about the process and choose the most important assets we identified. We also had to remember where we located the assets we photographed, figure out how to draw the map of that area of the West End, and reflect upon our experience. By sharing our maps with the larger group, we were able to see what other groups identified as assets, combining all of our maps together cognitively to see the many components and segments of the West End through an asset-based lens. This approach was in keeping with Jameson’s (1999) suggestion for cognitive mapping of a community to locate oneself socially and also Lynch’s (1960) suggestion to cognitively map the physical aspects of a neighborhood.

The implications for identifying the assets of the West End were that the participants could revision the West End through the possibilities instead of through the deficiencies. McKnight and Kretzmann (1990) identify this process as the “first step in the path toward community regeneration.” In this study, it was our first step toward mobilizing our efforts to create art for regenerating the neighborhood. The concept for the murals grew out of this process of asset-based mapping, as the theme for the mural of kids playing and remaining focused on this as an asset and not on the problems associated with the neighborhood. For instance, the murals could have directly responded to the problems by telling kids not to do drugs, or to combat violence. Instead, we focused on the positive things kids can do and the importance of them playing, similar to the notion that, instead of telling a kid not to run you tell him or her to walk.
Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 4

What were the participants’ perceptions of the community art project?

Analysis and Interpretation

The youth provided many likes and dislikes about the community art project. They claimed they liked painting the murals, they had fun, they liked the recognition, they liked finishing the murals, and they liked having their ideas in the murals, which helped them understand what the murals meant. Several of these point to a feeling of contribution and camaraderie, in which they felt they were an important part of this project and the images in the finished murals, which supports Lowe’s (2000) findings that community art provides solidarity and identity. Another underlying message in their responses is that they liked finishing the community art project with a tangible and recognized product.

The youth claimed they did not like getting dirty or messy with paint, some did not like painting, some did not like being outside in the heat, and some did not like working hard while others did not do much work. Some of the youth did not dress in old clothes the days we painted, and got upset when they got paint or dirt on their clothes or shoes. I provided t-shirts for them to wear and plastic bags for them to tie over their shoes, and most youth utilized both to protect their clothes and shoes. However, I got the impression many of the youth from the Lincoln Community Center were not used to working outside or getting dirty, as those seemed to be the ones who complained the most. The youth from the Arts Consortium, however, seemed to dress more appropriately for painting, complained very little, and worked very hard. However, I suspect the youth from the Lincoln Community Center learned valuable lessons by participating with peers from the Arts Consortium and seeing them enjoy the work. Adejumo (2000) suggested that community-based art could instill in youth a sense of responsibility through pride and unity. In the end I think all the youth enjoyed the recognition event and seeing the murals completed. Jolynn suggested that there be more frequent recognition activities throughout projects like this, because she felt the kids lose sight of the bigger picture and need the ongoing recognition.

Richard claimed the structure of the community art project was beneficial to the success. Since his experience is in community centers, I would suspect his experience
with youth programming is of a less structured nature in which the youth are given more
free time for recreational activities. Alex felt the community art project was “successful
in that the kids were the ones that came up with the idea and worked to the end to finish
it.” She felt that the murals were not the result of any one person’s effort, but of a
combined effort, and that was very important to allow for everyone’s ideas in the process,
similar to Lowe’s (2000) findings about the significance of the participatory process in
creating community art. Donna felt the project was successful because we made “an
instant change” that did not take too long to create, implying the murals that were
displayed as a result of the community art curriculum were very important to the success
of the community art project for the community. She also felt that the involvement of so
many people was important to the success of the community art project. In this regard,
the community art project was able to expose the inherent collective identities of the
community (Lowe, 2000) by involving a lot of people and including their ideas in the
murals. Jolynn thought the community art project taught the youth about the work that
goes into “producing something.” This notion relates to the negative comments made by
the youth about the hard work involved with painting the murals. I suspect that seeing the
murals finished and working through the messiness, heat and hard work, the youth started
to understand the reward of working hard to achieve a goal. Perhaps many of the youth
had never felt that satisfaction with a project as large as the two murals before.

The youth’s responses to the written questions and my informal conversations
with them revealed that they felt proud of the two murals and saw the murals as a way to
make the West End better. For instance, Ki’cure thought that “doing that mural on the
wall” was helping the community. She claimed that “kids and adults can go look at the
wall and maybe have memories or something about going to that playground a long time
ago.” Diamond claimed that the mural made the West End better that that she liked “that
we get to paint it.” The youth’s responses indicated that they understood the murals as a
project to improve the community. They also indicated that their involvement in the
murals made them feel proud and realized their role in affecting change in the
neighborhood. Joy, for instance, thought her role in the community was her involvement
in the mural by “bringing the community together to the park… just enjoying and having
a good time.” Bria felt she fits in with the community through the arts, “because I like to
paint.” Bria expressed pride “when people kept telling us how nice it was.” Christina thought the images in the mural might help kids realize that they could become astronauts when they grow up.

**Implications**

The community art project provided a challenging and equally rewarding activity for the youth during their summer break from school. While some youth had to struggle through the hard work, heat, and messiness of painting the mural, I see the importance of that struggle for them to learn about the rewarding feeling of pushing yourself to accomplish a goal and feeling a sense of responsibility and pride (Adejumo, 2000). The youth were able to see the process of goal setting, working hard, contributing to the greater good, and being recognized for those efforts. This implies that the production of public art provides valuable lessons in the rewards of working hard to complete a task. Working as a team, the community art process contributed to strengthening the social bonds (see Dewey, 1934) of the participants and observers, implying that a group effort is important to representing and strengthening the social capital of a community. This developed solidarity and identity among the participants, as Lowe (2000) described, which occurs through the participatory art process of social interaction, sharing a common goal, and setting a positive mood.

At the same time, the structure and completion of the community art project provided the youth clarity and direction as we progressed throughout the summer. This implies that, although I do not want to diminish the importance of free time for youth, structured activities are important to their development into contributing adults. Activities that provide structure do not have to be limiting to the youth, they should provide more empowerment and engagement, which may attend to what are often considered oppressive educational systems (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993) that do little to provide ownership to youth. Knowing the community places so much value in the youth, this is an important contribution to any educational or community development activity. This implies that valuing youth as assets in a neighborhood (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and providing structured activities for them to contribute to their community are important to their development as well as the development of the community.
The perceptions of the youth about their role in affecting change is an important component of the study, and has great implications. Their pride and realization about their role and the role of the murals in affecting change in the community is a significant development and educational outcome. The implications for community building reveal the important role youth and art can play in bringing people together. Educational activities that can bring together these two assets—youth and art—(Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) has the ability to affect change and enrich the experiences of the youth while teaching them their own ability to affect change to their environment.

**Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 5**

*How did service-learning components enhance the community art curriculum as implemented in the West End?*

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The community art curriculum, based on components of service-learning, provided the structure and foundation for the development of the two murals in the West End. It was apparent that the murals were regarded very highly by the participants and the community, as evidenced in the ongoing responses I receive from the community. However, it was the curricular foundation that provided the means for the meaningful creation of the two murals in the West End community. Richard regarded the structure of the project as very beneficial to the empowerment of the youth, in keeping with Taylor’s (2004) claim that arts-based service-learning projects instill a sense of empowerment in the participants. While there are many public and community art projects that provide participatory involvement by residents of neighborhoods, often the curricular structure is overlooked in light of the finished piece of artwork. The success of the two murals created in the West End, however, was based on the service-learning curriculum. The service-learning components utilized in this community art curriculum included preparation, action, reflection, and recognition (Duckenfield & Wright, 2001). I will analyze each component with regard to enhancing the community art curriculum.

**Preparation.** The participants were involved from the beginning stages in the development of the community art project, including having an ongoing say in how the curriculum would proceed. I initially conversed with Jolynn and Donna regarding the
community art project, and more closely worked with Shanda and Lyzbeth as we planned
the details of the curriculum for implementation in the summer. Their involvement at this
level was very important to their sense of ownership and belonging, as Shanda and
Lyzbeth were both older than the other youth we worked with, and therefore needed more
of a leadership role with the project. Additionally, Shanda and Lyzbeth were able to tell
me if certain components of my original community art curriculum would go over well
with the younger youth. For instance, they reassured me that the youth would enjoy the
asset-based mapping exercise, as they found it beneficial themselves.

When the younger youth joined us in the summer, they were also involved in the
preparation component of service-learning, which involved the asset-based mapping
exercise and determination of the kind of artwork we wanted to develop and what
concepts the artwork would ultimately convey. I realize I could have determined a
location for a mural prior to the involvement of the youth, but I felt their participation in
that component of the preparation was imperative to their sense of ownership and
empowerment.

**Action.** It is difficult to determine where preparation ended and action began,
however, the importance to this component of service-learning is that the youth engaged
in social action for change. The culmination of the community art project in the
development of two murals was a necessary piece toward a rich learning experience for
the youth. The murals, obviously, impacted the community the greatest, as the murals are
now on permanent display for the community to see. The action of critically examining
the community contributed to the success of creating a reciprocal learning environment
(Sigmon, 1979) and realizing Taylor’s (2002) vision of a postmodern service-learning art
pedagogy “as a transformative and socially reconstructive practice” (p. 124).

**Reflection.** While art, in itself, is an act of reflection, the additional reflective
components of the community art curriculum were pivotal to the increased sense of
community and commitment to the community for the youth. The act of reflection for the
youth and adults in this community art project deepens their understandings of the
significance of the experience and of the two murals for the community. As for my own
reflection, Richard inspired me to reflect deeper about the experience as he shed light on
the impact of the mural on the perceptions of that playground and the drug dealers who spent their time there.

**Recognition.** It was surprising how many youth mentioned the recognition event as their favorite part of the community art project. It reinforced the importance of celebrating the efforts of youth in order to encourage them to continue to do positive things. In fact, Jolynn challenged me on the recognition component, as she felt there needed to be more recognition for the youth throughout the entire summer. Looking back, I realize that the youth really needed the recognition, which may have increased their sense of belonging and importance with the finished murals. Their desires for recognition could also be seen in their choice to make the murals visible to people driving through the West End, as some youth claimed they wanted people driving through to know that the kids in the West End are good.

**Implications**

The strength of the community art curriculum was in the adherence to principles of service-learning methodologies. Also, the success of the two murals resulted from the structure and strength of the curriculum. It is apparent that the community art curriculum was deemed successful because the four components of service-learning—preparation, action, reflection, and recognition—were adhered to in an authentic and meaningful way with the youth and community. Involving participants in the preparation allowed them to feel ownership of the project, and not merely be pawns in somebody else’s agenda. The participation in the action component allowed participants to act upon their critical discoveries, as Bastos (1998) described in saying that newly afforded “knowledge of immediate reality can incite a need for changing that reality” (p. 58). It was obvious, in my own reflection of the community art project, that my own learning was deepened through ongoing and consistent reflection of the events and meanings.

As the youth cited recognition as one of their favorite components of the community art project, it implies that they are in need of being recognized and celebrated for positive actions, which can instill in them a sense of pride through CBAE methodologies (see Bastos, 1998). Without recognition, the youth may not have felt the impact they had made on the community. Without that, the project may not have
impacted them. This implies that whenever possible, recognition of youth should be an important component of any art education curriculum.

These results imply that community art programs and projects and art education in schools and other locations can benefit from a curriculum that utilizes a service-learning methodology addressing the four components outlined here. The principles can be applied to any setting that intends to approach a social action agenda through art.

At the same time, service-learning definitions have tended to rely on meeting “needs” of a community. For instance, service-learning has been defined as “a strategy that combines academic and social education goals to meet real community needs; it requires the application of knowledge, skills, and systematic reflection about the experience” (Community Works Press, 2001, p. 6). This definition addresses the meeting of a community’s needs, implying that students do service for a community in order to address their needs, or otherwise fix their problems. This implies that the community is not capable of solving their own problems, or that there are not assets already existent in the community from which to build upon. I propose that we heed Freire’s (1993) advice, and, instead of “doing for” the community, we focus on “doing with” the community. This requires a shift from a needs-based approach to service-learning to an asset-based approach.

Another implication is in the application of service-learning for efforts of community development. Community development is defined “as a planned effort to produce assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. vii). Service-learning, in itself, can be considered an asset-based community development tactic, as Green and Haines (2002) include many examples of informal organizations in promoting locality development, such as “voluntary groups of youth doing community service” (p. vii). Schools and youth have, themselves, been defined as important assets in a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), so service-learning utilizes these two assets. However, it is important to apply the asset-based approach to the implementation of service-learning projects in order to provide students with the acceptance of others’ abilities to be able to contribute.

The community arts curriculum utilized in this study is an example of an asset-based service-learning approach to community development. An analysis of the
curriculum through the four components of service-learning will solidify this claim. First, the preparation component of service-learning was applied in this community art curriculum in the asset-based mapping portion of the project. The asset-based mapping helped prepare the students for developing ideas that portrayed the assets of the community, as could be seen in their drawings of ideas for the mural. The action component of service-learning was the development of the mural design and the actual painting of the mural. This approach applied the students’ learning during the mapping exercise by encouraging them to act upon their new knowledge. The third component of service-learning, reflection, took place throughout the project through interviews, discussions, writings, and drawings by the youth. Recognition took place during our celebration event, in which the media attended, the youth were formally recognized for their achievements, and the community was recognized for it’s contributions to the mural project. The absence of any one of these four components would be to the detriment of the learning process and the development of the community.

Service-learning projects are often difficult to manage and it is even more difficult to maintain the integrity of the four components. I found this to be true during the implementation of the community art curriculum. For instance, while I felt our preparation component was done very well, I felt we should have done more recognition throughout the project as was suggested by Jolynn. The youth often seemed to forget the bigger picture, and probably felt that the end would never come. It would have been beneficial to have better recognized individual students throughout the summer in order to highlight hard workers, exceptional ideas, or good attendance. Perhaps the age group of 10-15 year olds required more instant gratification and recognition, which may have helped keep more of them engaged through the entire summer. Also, I feel we should have closed the project with a focus group discussion about the project as a form of reflection. However, this asset-based approach to community art provides a starting place for further consideration and study.
Analysis, Interpretation, and Implications for Supporting Question 6

Is there evidence that the implementation of the community art curriculum created changes in the West End community?

Analysis and Interpretation

There were several changes apparent as a result of implementing the community art curriculum in the West End, including physical, social, and personal changes. First, it should be noted that the relationship that developed between the Lincoln Community Center and the Arts Consortium was a significant change for both organizations, as representatives from each organization recognized potential future resources available from each other. Donna, for instance, chatted with me about several ideas for arts projects that would connect sports-related activities of the Lincoln Center with arts activities of the Arts Consortium. Specifically, she suggested a sports research project that would involve the youth in looking into the history of African-Americans in various sports. This type of idea generation developed out of the collaboration between these two organizations, and may have a lasting affect on future programs and projects in the West End and is in keeping with the notion that community organizing and visioning are essential to successful development approaches (Green & Haines, 2002).

Additionally, the most obvious and important physical change was the creation of two murals in the neighborhood. The appearance of Raymond Jackson Park was beautified as a direct result of the mural on the retaining wall surrounding the playground. Additionally, the second mural provided the wall and that general area with a positive message about the potential of the kids in the West End. This mural is more visible to people driving by the area and enhances the entire block because of that visibility. The murals represented Dewey’s (1934) belief that the arts can display what is considered socially important as well as impact the judgment others make about the quality of the community. The youth responded with pride that the murals were well received.

Those who participated in the community art curriculum also experienced personal changes, as evident through their newfound appreciation for the positive aspects of the West End, their pride in the murals, and their interest in creating more murals in the West End. The youth experienced pride (see Adejumo, 2000) as a result of being
recognized for the accomplishment of painting the murals and may have developed stronger work habits and a sense of ability they may not have had prior to this project. According to Jolynn, this experience of completing a large-scale art project will benefit them in their future endeavors and increase their sense of ability to complete tasks. Richard claimed that we impacted thirty to forty kids by having them experience the possibilities with an empty wall. The youth described the murals as impacting the community by bringing people together, teaching kids what they could become when they grow up, and inviting people to have fun and enjoy themselves. The youth’s realization of their involvement in affecting this change is evident in the change between their comments in the beginning of the project and the end of the summer. For instance, in the beginning of the project, the youth expressed a hopelessness about the future of the West End. Shanda, for instance, claimed that “we a long way off” when she spoke about the future of the West End. At the recognition event, Joy claimed that the murals helped the neighborhood by “bringing people together to the park.”

For the adults, I think we were all impacted by this experience. I was enlightened by the caring and compassionate people I met in the West End, which has altered my perceptions about that particular community as well as the potential of communities similar to it. Alex felt this project was an important component of her journey in art education, and saw her career as an art teacher shifting from a school environment to a community environment. Richard seemed to desire to continue utilizing arts projects with his youth programs. Initially, however, Richard had seemed hesitant about becoming too involved in the artwork.

The community has responded with very positive comments and plans for continuing similar arts projects in the neighborhood. For instance, I have continued to work with the community council to apply for funding to continue community arts projects with youth in the neighborhood. Their interest in continuing similar arts related projects has been the best indication in the change that has taken place in this community. In fact, the local PBS station in Cincinnati, located in the West End, has hosted a full-day workshop that brought together community representatives and arts organizations to consider future possibilities in the West End. There are four more workshops planned, the next one intending to implement the asset-based mapping exercise with the adult
participants. The community representatives are widespread in the community and are eager to work with the arts organizations to enhance their own programming in the community.

Implications

The changes to the community, the participants, and the organizations highlight the possibilities with community art projects that engage the community in an asset-based approach to addressing problems. The changes I witnessed in those of us who participated imply a need to create public art with youth and community residents in a manner that is structured and highly participatory. The changes in my own perceptions might portray that programs that include outsiders in learning about the assets of oppressed communities are important to addressing pressing issues such as racism, classism, and oppression. Just as social reconstructionists in the 1930s had a goal of educating the white community about “rights of African-Americans in a democracy” (M. James, 1995, p. xviii), my awareness as a white person about the social dynamics in an African-American community encouraged me to consider my own actions as they might contribute to oppression.

The changes I witnessed in the community in general suggested that the use of art helped the community overcome some of the barriers that prevented them from creating change in the neighborhood, such as disagreements about what actions to take. This also reestablished the historical role of African-American arts for collective identity, solidarity, resistance, and survival (Lewis, 1990). The youth also showed a change in their perceptions of their ability to affect change in the community. The success of this project implied that art was a non-threatening way to solidify the interests of community organizations and individuals to create change. The asset-based mapping component also highlighted and reinforced the ideal that almost all of the participants and others held in common: the interest in the future of the youth. The community art project became a project most people could get behind and support and the youth responded with great pride in feeling the support and being recognized for their accomplishments and hard work.
Emergent Themes

In addition to the prefigured foci discussed above, the data collected through observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation has presented several emergent themes that relate to the original question of participants’ perceptions of community and implementation of a community art curriculum for social change. The nature of qualitative research requires the researcher to attend to issues that arise during the study (Eisner, 1998). The themes uncovered through this study include the costs of violence, spirituality, the role of art in bringing people together, and commitment to community. Each of these themes is considered in relationship to the implementation of the community art curriculum.

While the approach used in the community art curriculum was asset-based, there was an undeniable need to address the violence that permeated the neighborhood. The study revealed a response to the violence through the use of art, spirituality and showing a commitment to the community. Through the process of discovering the desires of the community, I was able to better understand the true costs of violence on the youth and this neighborhood. I was able to understand the important role of spirituality in the mural process and as a coping and survival methods for those who suffered. I also started to understand the role of art to engage a community by bringing the community together along a common agenda with art as a non-threatening tool. I learned that my own commitment to the community was imperative to the success of engaging the community. These themes were present in the data I collected even though I did not consciously explore these themes, which is the intent of an exploratory study such as this one and the intent of a participatory action research study to reveal subtleties that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Costs of Violence

Through my experience living and working in the West End I saw violence as more commonplace than I have ever previously experienced. It was through the interviews that the impact of this violence became emphasized. The various levels of violence, including even “environmental violence,” (McIntyre, 2000) that I experienced range from shootings, beatings, and fights to trash, pollution, and graffiti. Living in the neighborhood, I had become indifferent to the various acts of violence, although that did
not mean I was unaffected by the violence. Even when asked by friends and family about my safety in the neighborhood, I did not consider the acts of violence as threatening to me. In fact, I had grown accustomed to hearing about shootings and witnessing fights. However, everyday as my boyfriend’s thirteen year old nephew, Hakeem, walked down Linn Street to football practice, he encountered a group of boys who threatened to hurt him and showed him their guns and knives. It was through these stories of impact to my loved ones and seeing the impact the violence had on the lives of the youth that I was reminded of the severity of living within such a violent atmosphere.

The continual exposure to violence for youth can create much greater problems, as sixteen year-old Shanda described the downfall of her community being her sister’s sudden death. The impact of pre-school students becoming “used to” hearing gunshots in the afternoon, as a local librarian described, is an issue the community constantly wanted to address. Shanda described her dream community as being a place that is not dirty, but she claimed, “We a long way off.” Her sense of hopelessness for her neighborhood was seen often, as she often claimed the West End may have gotten better for the time being, but that it would end up “the way it was” because the same people who caused trouble before would eventually move back into the neighborhood.

McIntyre (2000) included environmental violence, such as trash, pollution, and abandoned houses, as an equally threatening form of violence, as it “directly and indirectly violates the self and the collective” (p. 132). The youth overwhelmingly responded to the trash in the West End as one of the worst problems and one of their most desired changes for the neighborhood. The violence of trash and abandoned houses often caused a feeling of helplessness for the participants.

**Spirituality**

Our process of creating the community art project was often described as a spiritual process. It was through the observation of others and through the participants’ comments that I started to see the spiritual component to our community art process. In the context of social reconstruction and change through art, spirituality was an undeniable theme Richard, in particular, helped bring to my attention.

Spirituality and religion seemed to be one of the strongest methods participants utilized for coping and survival and for strength to continue to work toward change.
Richard relied on spirituality to help him cope with his own problems as well as the problems of the community. At the same time, he felt the need to keep working toward change through the youth. He was the first person to identify spirituality as an important characteristic of the mural project. He claimed that the process of our coming together was spiritual and that the art was spiritual. Alex claimed that art was spiritual, in general, because it is creation. She, too, relied on her spirituality for strength, and applied this strength to working with youth. A community art project attentive to the existence of spirituality in a community can better involve the participants by respecting what is important to them.

**Role of Art in Bringing People Together**

An important component to this study was the use of the community art curriculum to bring people together to create change. In the process, I discovered the problems with politics and competing agendas, which can prevent any action from taking place at all. As I learned about the many competing methods and agendas in the community, the implementation of the community art curriculum assumed the role of bringing people together through art and education of youth. This was highlighted in the community art project through uniting organizations and individuals from within and outside the neighborhood for a common cause. The community was interested in making the area around the Tot Lot playground safer. Our decision to paint the murals near that area helped to bring more people in to work on the community art project. Through finding this common ground and using art as a non-threatening tool to respond to the problem of violence, we successfully overcame issues of competing agendas and politics.

As I sat in community council meetings, and listened to various people make claims that they knew how to improve the neighborhood and the youth, I realized that we all had the same agenda to make the neighborhood better. I also realized that the difficulty came in our various methods used for improving the neighborhood. I found that most of those at the community council meetings wanted to engage youth in some capacity, such as jobs, education, recreation, arts or service. Although in the beginning I faced scrutiny by some community residents when I proposed this community art curriculum, I found that the project was able to bring many of those residents together. Since the project’s completion, I believe the community has embraced the role of art to
bring them together, as they are planning for more community art projects to take place in
the West End. A community organizer employed through a local initiative explained to
me that she had difficulty bringing the community together, but felt the community mural
was such a success and wanted to do more. She has asked me to keep working with her to
help her use art to engage the neighborhood.

The use of art was a non-threatening way to involve the community, to give them
a voice, and to beautify an area in great need. The community respected and appreciated
these aspects of the community art project. Even those who may have originally opposed
my involvement in the neighborhood seemed to appreciate the success of the community
art project.

Commitment to Community

In attempting to engage the community, evidence of distrust and fear became
apparent and a hurdle to overcome. The community perceived “outsiders” as threats and,
although I lived in the neighborhood, I was perceived as an outsider because of at least
one obvious characteristic: the color of my skin. I learned that gaining trust was
necessary in order to engage the community. In order to gain trust, I had to show
commitment to the community by making my intentions clear to the community, showing
a level of caring toward the youth, and being able to withstand initial scrutiny. Freire
(1970/1994) described such a phenomenon as displaying a committed involvement.

I found engaging the community to be very important to showing my commitment
to the project, to the community, and to my long-term contribution to improving the
neighborhood. The community measured my commitment by my length of time in the
neighborhood, my reliance on the community for assistance, the quality of the art we
developed, and addressing a need the community identified. Donna referred to this as my
“agenda,” as the community seemed to be weary of outsider’s with a self serving agenda.
Donna claimed, “if you can handle that scrutiny for a couple of meetings and you can
stick in there, then they have respect for you.” She also said about revealing your agenda
toward working with the community: “What was your motivation behind this? Are they
really serious? Do you really want to make a change? You know you may be committed,
but are you really serious about it? Do you really care?” The community wanted to know
that I was not using them or the project for money and that I saw them as assets to the
project’s development. They looked for meaning in the project, which seemed to be identified by my value of the community and the use of local residents, especially kids, in the project. The community art curriculum was designed to address these issues, as the project was open enough to allow for input from the community.

Answering the Guiding Question

After addressing the six supporting questions and revealing four emergent themes, I am now in a position to address the guiding question they support; that is:

What does the implementation of an asset-based community art curriculum in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, reveal about participants’ perceptions of community and how does it contribute to social change?

The six supporting questions and four emergent themes guided the answering of this question through the techniques of observation, interviews, drawing and writing exercises, an asset-based mapping exercise, and documentation. I will answer the guiding question based on the interpretations and implications I addressed for each of the six supporting questions and the analyses of the four emergent themes.

Through participation in the community art curriculum, participants revealed their perceptions of community in general and the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, in particular. The community art curriculum correlated with the transformative purpose of participatory action research (Brydon-Miller, 2001) by applying a social reconstruction agenda in the form of service-learning. As review, the service-learning components of preparation, action, reflection, and recognition, in keeping with the components suggested by Duckenfield and Wright (2001), were utilized as the framework for the community art curriculum. As is supported by PAR studies, the curriculum and research methodology were altered during this study and the curriculum was enhanced based on the suggestions of the participants and needs of the community. The participants’ perceptions of community in general and the West End community in particular and the implications for social change will be reviewed here from the perspectives of the youth, the adults, and myself as the researcher.
The Youth

In the beginning, the youth portrayed their perceptions of community through drawings of their “idea of community” and subsequent interviews. This methodology revealed that the youth considered the term community in a positive context, however, for that reason, this often meant that they had to draw a fantasy or dream version of community instead of their own. This revealed that many of the youth, whether they lived in the West End or another neighborhood of Cincinnati, were not very happy with their own community. They considered greenery, cleanliness and safety as important components of a community, although several youth felt that their own community was far from achieving those basic needs. In that context, the process of understanding the sense of community of the youth provided us with a foundation from which to build upon. With that in mind, it was important to provide the youth an opportunity to consider positive components of community that were existent in the community we were studying, the West End.

Through the asset-based mapping of the West End neighborhood, we were able to consider primarily the positive aspects of that particular community. This revealed that the youth were able to locate many assets in the community, such as locally owned businesses, firefighters, churches, schools, playgrounds and parks, and murals. The asset-based mapping exercise gave the youth the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about the neighborhood’s assets, which empowered them to feel ownership of the assets they located while they presented them back to the larger group. While we all learned from one another, we started to realize the potential for the West End based on what was already there.

As the youth became actively engaged in studying the West End, they became excited about creating an art piece to portray what they had discovered and simultaneously address a need in the community. The dynamics of the two groups of youth changed as we worked together cohesively for a common cause (Lowe, 2000). The strength of the two groups together resulted in significant social capital that was guided by a spiritual presence as regarded by Richard and Alex. According to Sleeter (1996), this type of shared identity can contribute to a group collectively pressing for change.
The presence of the youth in the playground, and of their hard work in the form of two murals, created a physical change in the neighborhood as well as a potential deterrent to drug-related criminal activity, according to Richard. The youth indicated that they realized their own ability to affect change in the neighborhood as well and saw the murals as important to making the West End better. This was perhaps the most rewarding and surprising part of the experience for me. But for the youth, one of the most rewarding activities was being recognized for what they had done. It seems so simple, but had such an impact on them.

**The Adults**

The youth and the murals also impacted many adults, including the man who now keeps the park clean and those of us who are continuing to plan for more art projects in the West End. The youth’s perceptions of community in general were very ideal, very innocent. That ideal concept as displayed in the murals as kids playing impacted all of us. Richard claimed that the innocence we portrayed in the murals was important to the murals acting as a repellent to drug dealers. Alex claimed that the youth began to feel comfortable playing in the playground and being kids as the murals were finished. It may be that kids in communities like the West End have to grow up too fast, and feel embarrassed playing or being creative. Donna suggested the arts allow people to feel comfortable being themselves. Perhaps the murals did the same for the youth.

The adults in the study revealed the negative impact of violence and drugs on the community. While these realizations often created a sense of hopelessness in some, most of the adults seemed to be motivated to take action because of these challenges. The adults also revealed a strong commitment and connection with the general African-American community and wanted for the youth to be engaged in learning about African-American heritage, as M. James (1995) suggested for African-American education and social reconstruction.

Many of the adults who participated in the community art project seemed to already share a common interest in community regeneration and youth development. However, by implementing a structured community art curriculum together, we strengthened our own social bonds by connecting through our common interests in community development and the education of youth. Many of the adults in this study
recognized this as a spiritual journey that brought us together and contributed to the power of the two murals to create change and address the violence.

Alex described the West End community as being ready for a change. In the meantime, Richard reflected on the changes he has witnessed in the West End since he was a child living in the neighborhood. He felt residents in the community were afraid to report criminal activity to the police for fear of retaliation. This, he felt, was to the detriment of the community’s well being, as he claimed people need to “speak out against violence.” Overall, the adults who I encountered in this study shared one particular thing in common: the desire to create change in the community by focusing on the youth.

Through the process of implementing the community art curriculum, the participants who had not participated in community art projects before seemed to have been impressed with the success of this art project in the West End. This can be seen in the community council’s work with the local PBS station to continue planning for more arts related activities for youth in the neighborhood. In fact, the community council has submitted several grants to do just that. This effort portrays a level of sustainability that is imperative to the future success of the community (Green & Haines, 2002), developed by the community art curriculum in the West End.

**The Researcher**

My own perceptions of community were based on my own ideals as a relatively young, educated, white person who grew up in the suburbs raised by a working class family. My childhood community was very important to my development, so I believe the community in which a child lives has a great impact on his or her development. With that said, I began my journey in the West End with some preconceived notions. I also began the community art project having had similar experiences in similar neighborhoods, one, in particular, in Cincinnati adjacent to the West End: Over-the-Rhine. As I told Jolynn, my savior complex had long been disregarded before I began the study of the West End. However, I still entered with my own fears and misconceptions. The biggest challenge emotionally for me was overcoming the negative comments I endured at a couple of community council meetings. By the end of the summer, however, I realized that most people received the same treatment when they first attended the community council meetings. I felt less isolated with that information.
My original perceptions of community impacted my desire to undergo this particular study, as I felt that oppressed communities have the social capital to create change, but often need further resources to carry those actions through. The West End was no exception. The social bonds were stronger in the West End than in any other community I have encountered. There were families and individuals whose families had spent generations in the West End. Frank’s family is one example, as he and his brothers were raised in the West End by a state senator and they were now involved in similar service-related fields. One of his brothers is currently running for mayor of Cincinnati. Another brother had contacted me regarding an art program he created in a suburb of Cincinnati that Frank had convinced him to bring to the West End. These were all people who had strong family ties to the West End. My boyfriend’s brother and his family have lived in the same apartment in the West End for more than fourteen years. While the kids have learned to be careful in the community, they experience a strong family network and parents who are committed to their success. My perceptions of family life in the West End changed based upon examples like these.

As the instigator of the community art project, I came with the belief that this type of activity had the potential to create change in the community. I was not surprised by the physical change it created, or the individual changes we each experienced, but I was most surprised by the impact it had on the community council’s desire to continue such programming. I am still surprised by the networks I have generated in the community, and the potential for future programming to develop out of these networks. Much of that I owe to Jolynn and Frank, as they have continued to connect me with opportunities in the community. For instance, Jolynn gave my name to the executive director of the West End YMCA to serve on the board, which I have been doing for more than a year now.

While I thought I understood what Richard was saying about “everybody knows each other” in the West End, I did not understand the depth of that comment for a while. I have found out through my continued work in the West End that most of those I encounter do know others I work with, which can usually be a good thing, but sometimes is not. Sometimes, I find that I am suggesting the collaboration of two individuals or organizations who have known each other for years and do not regard each other highly.
But I found that community art projects with youth have the potential to encourage adults to overcome their own problems with each other for the sake of the youth.

**Summary of the Findings: Learning from Community**

“To bring a spirit of study to learning that takes place both in and beyond classroom settings, learning must be understood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety” (hooks, 2003, p. 42).

This study has revealed several important findings regarding community art for social reconstruction. The community art project appeared to create change and make a difference in the West End community as it impacted the environment of the playground to be much more colorful and inviting, encouraged the youth to realize their own ability to affect change in the community, and developed lasting relationships that will continue to work for change through art. As the study intended to administer and test a community art curriculum, the changes that resulted for the curriculum are important. The changes that occurred include a shift from focusing on discovering “my community” to discovering community in general, as the youth were not all from the West End. The asset-based mapping exercise was combined with the cognitive mapping exercise since many of the youth were not from the West End. This allowed them to work in groups to cognitively map the assets they identified in the community. Additionally, the service-learning framework of the curriculum was strengthened in order to provide a more comprehensive educational experience for the youth. The biggest problem encountered was the fact that many of the youth were not from the West End. This problem was addressed through the alteration to the cognitive mapping exercise. Another problem I encountered was the initial reaction I received from several people at the West End Community Council meetings. I overcame this obstacle by continuing to show my commitment to the community and gaining their trust. By the end of the project, I had gained their trust and am now continually invited to assist them in working toward developing more community arts projects in the neighborhood.

As a participatory action research study intending to create a transformation (Brydon-Miller, 2001) and a community art curriculum intending to create social
reconstruction, the changes that occurred in the community as a result of this study are important in identifying the transformation and social reconstruction that has transpired. First, the community art project contributed to reclaiming the playground for kids. Additionally, the participants acquired a sense of possibility and recognized their ability to affect change and the murals have brought a new and ongoing life to the playground. While the participants regarded the West End as suffering from violence and drugs, their involvement in the community art project awarded them with an outlet for affecting change. Also, there is continued work in the neighborhood to develop more community art projects similar to this. For instance, the West End Community Council is working with the local PBS station, housed in the West End, to bring together arts organizations and West End organizations to consider possibilities for the arts in the West End. These workshops have continued throughout the summer of 2005, and funding has been applied for in order to create the arts activities that are being discussed. Regarding change in the community, Donna claimed, “We’re doing two things: we’re teaching kids values, at the same time giving them art skills and we’re changing the community.” Richard saw the murals and community art project as creating change, and stated:

“So the seed has been planted. That mural is a seed. When kids walked by there, their parents would probably say, ‘We are not going to that park.’ That is before that mural. Now they see that mural as a token for kids to now enter… So that mural has taken back the idea they were kids. It has probably done scared away some of the dope dealers too. So it is a double edged thing here. It is a sense of taking back without even saying a word.”

This study intended to build a community through education (see hooks, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Often, however, oppression and domination must be addressed and possibly overcome in order to strengthen community (hooks, 2003), which I encountered in this study as I encountered some fear and distrust of my intentions to work in the West End community during several community council meetings. Therefore, it is necessary to consider issues of oppression, domination and racism through the experiences of the participants of the community when attempting to engage
those participants. In this respect, we are learning from the community in order to
discover where we can start our teaching, which translates into a reciprocal relationship. I
spent a lot of time learning from the West End community in order to establish a
reciprocal learning experience (see Sigmon, 1979), show my respect to the participants,
and overcome fears and distrust. “To build community requires vigilant awareness of the
work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in
ways that perpetuate domination” (hooks, 2003, p. 36). In this study, I have applied
hooks (2003) argument that in order to change racism, theories need to be applied on a
daily basis through action. Through this research study, I have found that race was an
undeniable factor and important component in our efforts for social reconstruction in the
form of community building. The questions have thus become, Who is learning from
community? What was learned? How were participants, including myself, impacted?

The “collective identities” (Apple, 1995), strong social identity (Green & Haines,
2002) and strong sense of community (Hillier, 2002) found within the African-American
community in past studies revealed itself again in this study. However, while education
continues to teach competitive and individualistic notions (Sleeter & Grant), those I
encountered in the West End, an oppressed community, continue to teach youth the value
of community engagement. My interviews with the youth and the adults revealed a deep-
rooted commitment to improving the lives in their community, whether that meant their
neighborhood community, their African-American community, or more generally, the
community of those suffering from oppression. Many of the people I encountered in this
neighborhood, while fearful of outsiders entering their community, were still selflessly
hopeful and perhaps convinced that change would take place for their community. As I
suffered through some initial negative comments toward me, I witnessed their fear and
distrust of those they considered outsiders. At first, I was insulted by some residents’
reactions toward me, but I quickly came to realize that there had been so many people
before me, who perhaps looked like me, that had made false promises to this community.
As Donna said, “This community has been, for lack of better words, ‘pimped’ so much.”
It was apparent to me that the utilization of art education, by working with kids and art,
developed a level of trust from the community that was necessary for many reasons.
Establishing a level of trust was necessary in order to engage the community, to provide a
rich curricular experience for the youth, and to create change in the community that was visual, immediate, and lasting. I learned all of this from the community.

**Implications**

**My Further Practice in the West End**

My experience of living in the West End and implementing this study and curriculum through a PAR methodology has resulted in further opportunities for exploration in the West End community. While in much of research the researcher completes a study and moves on, as is the nature of participatory action research, the commitment to the community and reciprocal learning experience is often not finished at the culmination of the intended study. In this case, I have uncovered many themes and possibilities that now may serve as a foundation upon which to further study this community. For instance, the development of further community arts programming provides many possibilities for further research and development of additional community art curriculum. As the local PBS station hosts community art workshops for adults, the asset-based mapping exercise will be utilized with these adults. This provides an opportunity for study in examining the same approach used only with adults. This also provides an opportunity to explore the role of arts organizations in community development and educational efforts, as several of Cincinnati’s larger arts institutions have been involved with the community arts workshops by the local PBS station thus far.

The relationships I have formed also offer the opportunity to connect higher education to the West End community through service-learning methodologies. As a university teacher, my experience in and relationships with the West End community provide a unique opportunity for college students to further their own learning of art education within an urban environment.

I am eager and excited to continue my research and involvement with the West End community, as I further explore the themes and ideas that developed out of this initial study. Further, the field of art education would benefit from similar relationships between researcher and urban community, as the field would be served well from further study of art education in urban contexts.
Implications for Art Education

The implications for art education are great, and varied, as this study has implications for various methods within art education, including community-based art education and visual culture art education. Overall, the study provides an example of art education outside a typical school environment, but also offers a curriculum that could be implemented in either a school or a community setting. Additionally, this study highlights the need to bring awareness to cultural differences and social interests that can be found in art activities and education. As was unveiled during this study, African-American, urban neighborhoods are apprehensive about programs implemented by “outsiders,” so if an art education program is targeted at such a neighborhood, an understanding of their ideals is necessary. The “collective identities” (Apple, 1995) found in oppressed neighborhoods is of utmost importance when developing art curriculum for such an area as the curriculum obviously must benefit the community in a meaningful way.

The field of art education is expanding, and this study highlights the need for more research in the areas of community-based art education and methods for visual culture art education. At the same time, this study presents a community art curriculum intended to engage a community in an asset-based approach to art creation. As the results of the study suggest, it is necessary for the field of art education to examine the collective identities of lower-income and African-American communities in order to develop critical pedagogy to meet the needs of youth living in oppressed communities.

Service-learning in art education deserves further examination, by connecting the approach to the process of connecting to communities through art education, such as through the work on community-based art education (Bastos, 1998; Marché, 1998; London, 1994). Meanwhile, as visual culture art education continues to expand and grow, methods for engaging in this type of cultural exploration need to be identified. The community art curriculum in this study provides one example of a curricular model to engage a community in their own cultural exploration and development of local visual culture through active art making and asset-based mapping. The factors present in the murals represent the visual culture of the West End in 2004, as participants examined the West End through a critical lens and a “conflictive view” (Duncum, 2003), which recognizes existent power and cultural struggles. Service-learning and community-based
art education can provide the framework from which to continue similar critical examinations.

The community art curriculum, as a postmodern approach to art making and study, considers the heightened collective identity of lower-income, African-American communities. As was determined in this study, examining the needs and desires of a community promotes a more authentic and responsive art education which engages those it affects. Just as the New Negro was an image meant to replace Jim Crowe stereotypes to change African-Americans’ perceptions of themselves (Lewis, 1990), the mural project represented a similar artistic process which may have contributed to changed views by the participants of the West End community. The study of art education in urban school settings is a necessary next step to this study, as “No Child Left Behind” may threaten the existence of such programs and as students are often left without art education in school settings, especially in lower income and African-American communities. As this is the case, it is important to the field of art education to consider the expanding role of art education from schools and museum settings, to community settings and other locations.

Community-based art education (CBAE) and community art (Congdon, 2004; Lowe, 2000; Kay, 2000) have been examined for many years, while visual culture art education (VCAE) (Duncum, 2001, 2003; Smith, 2003) is at the beginning of its development. Examining VCAE in light of the methods of CBAE will serve to enhance and broaden the approach to VCAE. As was presented in this study, approaches to VCAE should include urban and African-American experiences as equally important and necessary to cultural exploration.

Examples of community art projects can help influence the curricular models developed in art education, while at the same time art education practices can serve to enhance community approaches to art education. Approaches to service-learning in art education can be enhanced by learning from successful community art projects and programs. Such educational approaches can be utilized in many settings, from schools to community centers.

**Further Research**

Although this investigative study has unveiled several themes and issues relative to the implementation of a community art curriculum, it raises several new questions as
well. For instance, it would be interesting to understand how this community’s response to the community art project might differ from other communities. What themes, issues, and assets would be important to other communities and cultures, such as suburban or rural, and Mexican or Cuban communities? How can art be used for social reconstruction in other countries? Do other communities have the same interest in greenery, cleanliness and safety, or do they have other areas of interest? What are other cultures’ or communities’ perceptions of community in general?

While this study implemented a community art curriculum to create change in a community, it does not address the specific administrative and planning components involved, including budget, oversight, or securing resources. From an arts administration perspective, it would be useful to consider issues related to funding this type of project and developing partnerships. It would also be useful and interesting to consider the impact community art projects have on audience development and increased attendance at arts-related events.

While this study examined the sense of community of the participants, it did not track any changes in individual participant’s sense of community. A longitudinal study that follows participants involved in a community art curriculum could track their changes in perceptions of community from the beginning of their involvement to the end. It could also utilize a control group to compare those changes with participants who were not involved in a community art curriculum.

The themes that emerged during this study could also be studied further. The connection of art to violence, for instance, could be examined. How can art play a role in reducing violent behavior by youth? What is the spiritual component of art and its impact on engaging a community? How does art help bring people together? What properties of art assist in bringing people together?

Further study could also investigate the impact of art in service-learning projects, and the implications for learning. What other subjects could be impacted by utilizing art in service-learning? In what other ways can art be utilized in service-learning projects? Perhaps examples of service-learning projects that utilize art could be collected and analyzed for similarities and differences and cross-curricular implications.
Another interest is in the broad definition of participation applied to community art projects. As such, a study could develop a continuum of participation, which highlights the varying levels of participation of community residents, from public art by a single artist to community art developed by residents of a neighborhood. What role should a community play in developing public art for their neighborhood? How are these differing approaches used in different settings, and for what reasons?
APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Approval Form
Office of the Vice President For Research  
Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763  
(850) 644-8633 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/26/2004

To:  
Karen Hutzel  
1092 Linn ST  
Cincinnati OH 45203-1323

Dept.: ART EDUCATION

From: John Tomkowiak, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research  
Learning from Community: Art and Social Reconstruction as a Participatory  
Examination of Sense of Community

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 4/13/2004. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 4/12/2005 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

cc: Tom Anderson  
HCO No. 0004-034
APPENDIX B
West End Neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio
APPENDIX C
Interview Questions
Interview Questions

Primary Participants

Formal Interviews with Drawings and Maps

Description
1. What images did you use in your drawing/maps?
2. What colors, shapes, textures did you choose?
3. What technique(s) did you use to create these?
4. Describe what is in the image(s)?
5. Is there movement?
6. Did you create contrast?
7. Did you create any significant spaces here?
8. What are the figures doing?
9. Where is the focus?
10. What is the mood of the work?
11. What other colors, shapes, foci could you have chosen?
12. What is or could be the title?

Interpretation
1. Why did you choose the colors, shapes, textures, placement?
2. Why did you choose to do “this” in the work? Why was “this” important to you?
3. What does the work mean to you? What could it mean to your community?
4. What were you thinking or feeling when you created the work?
5. What did you think of the exercises? What did it make you think about? What did you consider when you were given the assignment(s)?

Evaluation
1. What was your experience in creating the work?
2. What were your perceptions of the West End community when you did the work?
3. Did your perceptions of the community change? If so, how?
4. Do you view your community differently after doing these exercises?
5. What do you think of your work? Does it reflect how you really view your community?
6. What good things (assets) of your community are in the work?
7. What problems in your community have you portrayed here?
8. Was your community worth examining in this work?

Adult Participants

Interviews

1. What do you think of your community?
2. How do you spend your time in the neighborhood? What do you like to do?
3. Do you participate in any groups, organizations, clubs, etc. in your community?
4. Why have you chosen to participate in this community arts project?
5. What are the assets (good things) in your community?
6. Where are there problems?
7. What do you think you can do to improve your community?
8. How does art play a role in your community, in your life?
9. Do you attend arts events? What arts activities are you involved with?
APPENDIX D
Written Questions
Please respond, in writing, to the following questions:

1. What are your favorite things about the West End?

2. What don’t you like about the West End?

3. What things could make the West End better?

4. What things could make the West End worse?

5. What was your favorite part of the mural project?

6. What was your least favorite part of the mural project?
APPENDIX E

Article in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*
PUTTING ON A NEW FACE

Imani Sherman, 12, of College Hill, a summer camper at the Arts Consortium of Cincinnati, helps paint a mural on a wall of the renewed "Tot Lot" playground on Linn Street in the West End on Monday. The playground had inspired the name of the Tot Lot Posse, a West End gang alleged by authorities to be dealing drugs from the playground. The city has since taken back the playground and restored it for kids in the neighborhood.
APPENDIX F
Example Coding of Emergent Themes
APPENDIX G

Interview With Shanda and Lyzbeth
KAREN: I’m gonna ask you this, and then I’m gonna do several interviews throughout the project with you guys and then the other students that we work with, and this is the first one that I’m gonna do based on your drawings. And I’m gonna do them one-on-one primarily, but since you two want to do this one together, we’ll do it that way. Okay?

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: It’s nothing real personal I don’t think. Can you describe what you, picture I guess, Lyzbeth you wanna go first, describe the images you used in your drawing?

LYZBETH: Oh sure.

KAREN: Silly, silly.

LYZBETH: Well in my community I think like if it’s more clean, it’s more clean.

KAREN: What do you mean by “my community” I’m sorry.

LYZBETH: The community as we live in like as my dream community. We uhm have, we have apples in our trees, no trash, no litter, birds, we could fly, no…you can fly…no pollution in the air. The sun is just blazing hot. Buildings, no holes in the wall, no kids outside without no parents, everybody…

KAREN: In the house?

LYZBETH: In the house, chillin’ with the air conditioner on.

KAREN: …summer, huh.

LYZBETH: That’s it.

KAREN: What color shapes, textures? Can you describe your colors to me?

LYZBETH: Oh, okay, where my buildings I got ‘em brown and red just because when I go outside I see…

KAREN: …Bricks.

LYZBETH: Bricks. Normally…

KAREN: …Okay…a brown color?

LYZBETH: Yeah...

KAREN: What about the other color choices.
LYZBETH: Well trees are green so my tree is green. The bark of the tree is brown so the bark is brown.

KAREN: So you chose colors based on reality.

LYZBETH: Right.

KAREN: And what’s out there, what you would see?

LYZBETH: Right. Bright red’s the same colors that my perspective of my community.

KAREN: Regarding movement is there anything moving?

LYZBETH: The birds.

KAREN: The birds moving? What else?

LYZBETH: The wind.

KAREN: Did you draw movement in intentionally or you think you just drew what you thought you would see out there?

LYZBETH: What I thought, well this where I go see there’s like if you were goin’ outside and you took a picture and everything was paused, that’s where the…

KAREN: …Where are there things moving in this picture then?

LYZBETH: Well right now everything is still, but like it’s, if you would think, if you use your imagination you would see the birds flying.

KAREN: What are these things? I think I know what they are but I wanna hear you say it.

LYZBETH: The meters.

KAREN: Parking meters.

LYZBETH: Parking meters and the…

KAREN: …I’m not asking…it doesn’t look like but I thought it did. Did you, did you create contrast in your image?

LYZBETH: Did I what?

KAREN: Create contrast. Do you know what contrast is?

KAREN: Like if you blur your eyes like this what kinda sticks out ‘cause usually that when you blur your eyes you see the contrast on anything. You could do it on a picture like…

LYZBETH: …It’s, it not, it, the birdie doesn’t stick out ‘cause basically all over is almost the same color, and if there was more different colors maybe more things would stick out. Like if my picture was all different colors then it would stick out but it isn’t, or basically the colors that you would see every day.

KAREN: Well see ‘cause when I blur my eyes I see some contrast in there. Also I see you pushed harder on your pencil in different areas. Can you talk about that?

LYZBETH: My…

KAREN: …The brown, if you look at where you use brown, that brown versus that brown versus that brown versus this brown.

SHANDA: I used all…I only used three colors.

KAREN: What colors did you use? Let’s do yours, Shanda, while Lyzbeth thinks about her contrast.

SHANDA: I just used black, blue…

KAREN: …Why don’t you describe the images first and then talk about your colors.

SHANDA: Oh, my image is just like, that’s like downtown, the community downtown. It’s just mostly big buildings.

KAREN: There’s gonna be a loud bang when I listen to that.

SHANDA: I just got birds in the sky, but downtown our birds even hard fly, so, oh, then I got community like closer in inside the city, like a house and or apartment building. Trees, a little swing set and sometimes I wish we had a pond.

KAREN: So this is the city?

SHANDA: Yeah.

KAREN: And this is the community right next to the city.

SHANDA: Right.

KAREN: And it’s separated by the street?
SHANDA: Uh-m-hmm.

KAREN: Which is an interesting effect that you did here, this, the way you separated it. Why did you do that?

SHANDA: Just to show you that the difference between the building structures. You know what I’m sayin’?

KAREN: Uh-m-hmm.

SHANDA: Like they got tall buildings in the city, but once you come inside the city like closer to where people are you see houses and apartment buildings.

KAREN: Closer to where people live?

SHANDA: Yeah.

KAREN: You don’t think people live like downtown in the city really?

SHANDA: They live down there but not a lot of people.

LYZBETH: Majority of the people live down outside.

SHANDA: Yeah, yeah, outside of them.

KAREN: Do you think that’s common?

SHANDA: Uh-m-hmm.

KAREN: In the other cities even? No?

SHANDA: Like the pictures…

KAREN: …in your…

SHANDA: …closer to in the city part.

KAREN: I’m asking you what you think.

SHANDA: It depends on where you live at, like in the NEW YORK ‘cause I’ve been up there and it’s more people who live like around shopping malls and stuff than like farther away.
KAREN: Yeah, I kinda got off the topic by asking you that question but I couldn’t help it. Okay, let’s talk about the colorings that you chose ‘cause that’s what you were about to do when I stopped you.

LYZBETH: Oh, I was just, at first I was just using black ‘cause it was just like…I was just sketching. But then I started putting colors, clouds and sun and trees and the grass and the water. Then I got a little swing set, kids wanna play on it.

KAREN: That’s your only red thing in there.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: …you got up there, you put flags on top of the building.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: Why did you put flags on top of the building?

LYZBETH: That’s, I don’t know.

KAREN: It seems like they’re up there?

LYZBETH: Yeah. You know how people is. They just put the, they it up there for like…

KAREN: …Decoration?

LYZBETH: …they just put up flags everywhere.

KAREN: The Twin Towers had flags on there.

LYZBETH: Yeah, and our Carew Tower we got flags on the top.

KAREN: What tower?

LYZBETH: Our Carew Tower, the Carew Tower.

KAREN: …Yeah.

LYZBETH: They got a flag on the top.

KAREN: Yeah. Okay, where is there movement in yours?

LYZBETH: I really don’t have movement but.

KAREN: The birds are hangin’ in the sky?
LYZBETH: Yeah, they just fly as they want to.

KAREN: They fly, I hope they’re flyin’ ‘cause if not they’re about to drop to the ground. And did you create contrast?

LYZBETH: Not really. I tried to use the same texture over, but other than that not really.

KAREN: See if I squint my eyes I see contrast in yours. Well I think I see more contrast in yours, more different shades.

LYZBETH: What contrast you see?

KAREN: Well like I pointed out before, I see the way you pushed really hard on the brown for the birds and then you kinda sketched with the brown here. I’m sure you did that for a reason even if you didn’t think about it.

LYZBETH: Hmm, just…them what it is.

KAREN: This black right here is the only place you used black, isn’t it?

LYZBETH: No…gray too.

KAREN: But it’s…light, it’s like gray.

LYZBETH: Oh.

KAREN: Right?

LYZBETH: Sure.

KAREN: What important spaces are in yours? What points are like important points are in it?

LYZBETH: The street.

KAREN: The street’s important?

LYZBETH: Uhm.

KAREN: Why is that?

LYZBETH: Well it’s important because, it’s just important because don’t nobody play in the street ‘cause you could get hit by a car.
KAREN: So that’s why it’s like important? So it’s maybe a danger point? It can be a
dangerous point? Is that why?

LYZBETH: Yeah, because over here and it’s the side *(cough)* of the street is where the
apartment building’s at. Then the other side of the street where I didn’t finish drawing,
like going down this way with a swing set and the water fountain and everything get, the
kids over here they’re gonna try to get over here, but they gotta cross the street. So this is
the danger point.

KAREN: Cool, well that’s good. Now tell me again why you don’t have people, both of
you.

LYZBETH: Because it’s hot outside, because…most in they house…

KAREN: So they’re inside in the air conditioning.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: They’re not outside.

SHANDA: Well I had put people in mine because I really wasn’t thinking about them. I
was just thinking about more like the buildings of the community, the stuff like that, but I
wasn’t really thinking about the people in the community ‘cause when I think of
community I mean it’s people. I think for people, but it’s mostly how they’re surrounded
of the people like. You know what I’m saying?

LYZBETH: Yeah.

SHANDA: All right. I like, I don’t really think of people when they’re…

KAREN: When you think about the word like community you think of a, that place…

SHANDA: …Yeah, the place where the people are.

LYZBETH: But if you think about community, community is the people, right?

KAREN: I don’t know. What do you think?

LYZBETH: It’s people. My people chillin’.

KAREN: Your people inside, cool. What do you think the difference is in the winter
versus the summer? If you had, if I had asked you to draw this in the wintertime, what do
you think you would have?

LYZBETH: The *whole* thing?
SHANDA: *Most* of our paper would still be white.

LYZBETH: And our trees would be naked.

KAREN: There’d be naked trees?

SHANDA: I went ahead, I wouldn’t draw no trees. If she’s talkin’…

LYZBETH: No, I changed my mind. In the wintertime I draw Christmas.

KAREN: Would you?

LYZBETH: Uhm-hmm.

SHANDA: …draw a Christmas tree outside, but I wouldn’t…

KAREN: But you people still wouldn’t be it. They’d be inside in heat.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

SHANDA: I still want people still gonna be, I really…

LYZBETH: …like going to the spring, spring into, you know what I’m saying the summer, it’d be people outside.

KAREN: Where are you cicadas?

LYZBETH: They underground still

KAREN: They’re not out yet. Where’s the cicada community?

SHANDA: Me? I…cicada *freakin’*…

KAREN: It’s a good community, huh?

LYZBETH: No bugs.

KAREN: Can you each tell me where the focus is in your drawing, and you might feel like we’re asking the same questions but I’m just sort of trying to get you to think deeper about your drawing.

SHANDA: The focus?

KAREN: Where’s the focus on yours, Lyzbeth? Where does your eye go?

LYZBETH: Oh, it goes straight to the sun.
KAREN: The sun? That’s your focus?

LYZBETH: ‘Cause it’s bright. And then you start to look at everything else.

KAREN: What about yours, Shanda? Where’s your focus?

SHANDA: Building.

KAREN: Which building ‘cause you have several.

SHANDA: Well the city buildings ‘cause that was really what I was really gonna draw was just gonna draw the city, but then I start thinking about inner city. That’s why I started drawing the house and apartment building and I, but my main focus was like the outside of the city, basically the main parts.

KAREN: So you guys talked to each other about your ideas when you were drawing or did you just look at each other, ‘cause you have similar ideas on each of your drawings. I know I heard you guys talk a little bit, which is fine. I’m just wondering whether you shared ideas.

LYZBETH: We was just lookin’ at each other and just laughing at it.

SHANDA: I was just saying like her trees and stuff that apples…

KAREN: I haven’t seen any apple trees in the city.

LYZBETH: We had apple trees.

KAREN: Did you?

LYZBETH: Yeah. I was living on Vine Street in Avondale Forest and we had apple trees and our apples was green.

SHANDA: It was a long time ago though but a lady had to plant it though; she had to plant an apple tree for, for the…and we had a peach tree too, but that was when the old like the courts was up….thinking that’s court.

KAREN: Was there a garden?

SHANDA: Yeah, it was an old lady on the end. She used to have her little backyard…and all that.

KAREN: Can you each tell me what the mood of your work is?

LYZBETH: It’s like three o’clock in the afternoon.
KAREN: Not the time but the mood, like it’s…

LYZBETH: …That’s what I’m saying. It was like…

KAREN: …What does that mean?

LYZBETH: You know in the mood, it’s like when it’s three o’clock and then you know everybody just stay outside with they, outside, ‘cause like I don’t know.

KAREN: What’s the mood at three o’clock then for you ‘cause that’s about the time you get out of school, right?

SHANDA: That’s…

KAREN: What’s that in the mood…

LYZBETH: …Everybody runnin’ in the house to change they clothes.

KAREN: That’s what they, so they’re inside cooling off changing their clothes…

LYZBETH: …Right.

KAREN: …before they come out and cross this dangerous street. What’s the mood in yours, SHANDA?

SHANDA: Everything’s still. Oh.

KAREN: Is there a mood?

SHANDA: It’s not really.

KAREN: It’s not a mood?

SHANDA: It just looks borin’.

KAREN: There might be a hopeful, if that’s a mood. You said it’s kind of your dream of, did you say that?

SHANDA: Yeah.

LYZBETH: Nah, she said it.

KAREN: Okay, I’m sorry.
SHANDA: I mean it’s just, it’s another day basically. It’s like what we had, it’s just better of what we had.

KAREN: How is it better?

SHANDA: Because it’s not dirty. We don’t got…

KAREN: …What makes it dirty?

SHANDA: ‘Cause of pollution, litter, uh.

KAREN: Why do you think there’s so much trash on the ground?

LYZBETH: Because people don’t know how to use…

SHANDA: …People…like they…

KAREN: Why do you think they don’t use it enough?

LYZBETH: Because they don’t care.

KAREN: Why don’t you think they care? Why do you think they don’t care?

LYZBETH: Because they have no self-esteem.

SHANDA: They probably don’t like…

KAREN: They probably don’t…

SHANDA: They probably don’t even like the community that they live in.

KAREN: Really? You think that’s why?

SHANDA: That’s probably why they throw their…

KAREN: …’Cause that was just something I wondered about myself. I see people throw trash, and I wonder why they do that ‘cause they live right here and they’re littering.

SHANDA: Yeah, and they don’t care.

LYZBETH: They just feel like other people to pick it up for them or they feel could…

SHANDA: …That’s probably that. That’s probably…
KAREN: …Do you think if there wasn’t, ‘cause I know the guy who, he lives in my neighborhood who goes around and picks up the trash. Do you think if he didn’t do that that people would stop throwing trash on the ground?

LYZBETH: No.

SHANDA: No.

KAREN: I don’t think so either.

LYZBETH: He probably just take it upon hisself to make his…look neat.

KAREN: No, he gets paid to do it. He does it as a job. He cleans…for city…he does it.

SHANDA: …But I think…I don’t think people would just volunteer to just clean up.

KAREN: I do around my own little area, but…

SHANDA: …I mean…

KAREN: …I can do it everyday and there’s still trash.

SHANDA: I mean yeah, it’s still gonna be trash other than that.

KAREN: It’s an interesting point from you. I’m glad you guys brought that up.

LYZBETH: Time out. TV time out.

KAREN: Commercial time.

LYZBETH: My…that but it’s like no trash where we live in, the whole street, until you get up there by Burnett. Now Burnett is not a bad place, but it is trash.

KAREN: What’s the difference do you think?

LYZBETH: People, well where I live I ain’t tryin’ to say people more, you know what I sayin’, they do this and they do that, they ain’t better on the people on Burnett but they, they won’t, they uhm surrounded they, where they live at it looks nice because my mama, she like to plant so my mom gotta got a garden in her backyard, she got flowers on her tree actually in front of her house. She got flowers; she got a rosebush and everything and she don’t like our little trash, she’ll tell me and my sisters go pick up the trash. And people up the street, they houses are neat, too.

KAREN: And so when you get to Burnett it’s trashy?
LYZBETH: Right. It’s like two, and then there’s North Avondale and they got these big houses, and their house is real clean like no trash nowhere in the street. But you come out on Red Road and *Burnett* it’s just…

KAREN: …They…roads. Do you think that’s why?

LYZBETH: Not Burnett.

KAREN: *Burnett’s* not busy?

LYZBETH: Busy, it’s busy but.

KAREN: Do you think it’s people that live there that trash or that maybe it’s people passing through?

SHANDA: People passing through.

…

KAREN: I see *people* who live by me who trash right in their own front yard.

SHANDA: Yeah, they have a double cheeseburgers they like be eatin’…there and then just walk in the house.

KAREN: Well you know I live right next to this, right across from the community center.

LYZBETH: Right.

KAREN: There’s that, and then there’s that Quick Stop, that food mart right next to it. Well people go to the food mart, walk across the street and trip their trash as they walk and they walk down the street so there’s like a trail from the food mart to wherever they’re going. It’s interesting to me. I’m gonna move onto the, could you each guys each think of what a title could be for your drawings?

LYZBETH: My dream community.

KAREN: My dream community. What about you, Shanda?

SHANDA: What is community to me.

KAREN: Why did you decide to put parking meters in yours?

LYZBETH: Well I would a have enough room to draw a car but I had…of wanted to draw a car.
KAREN: Oh, this is a good question. Why is there steam coming out of your fireplaces? It’s summer.

LYZBETH: I don’t know.

KAREN: Just didn’t think about that? Why did you decide to use apples?

LYZBETH: ‘Cause I love apples.

KAREN: Does an apple tree, is there a reason why you chose an apple tree when like SHANDA…

LYZBETH: …Yes, when I was little, when I was little they weren’t like I said before when I was little we had a little apple tree and stuff and my mom used to pick ‘em off and we can go wash ‘em, I make sure they ain’t bad and that and we could eat ‘em.

KAREN: So you have a happy memory of an apple tree maybe from when you were younger. Is this the city in the background here?

LYZBETH: No, just buildings in the background.

KAREN: Okay, it’s just a different, different… Why did you put these?

LYZBETH: So the animals can go in there.

KAREN: That where the animals live?

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: And they’re all inside right now enjoying the air conditioning too. Shanda, why did you decide to put the swing set next to the house?

SHANDA: So the kids can come out and if they wanna swing they can swing.

KAREN: They can play there. Why did you, I don’t know if you said why. Why did you decide to use a pond?

SHANDA: A pond.

KAREN: Yeah.

SHANDA: ‘Cause I wish we had a pond in our community.

KAREN: What’s so great about a pond that you want a pond?

SHANDA: It just makes the community look neat, make it look like it something to do.
KAREN: Can you think of a community in town that has a pond, like?

SHANDA: …Uhn-uh.

LYZBETH?: No. I got a pond in the back of my back of my yard.

KAREN: You do?

LYZBETH: A pond.

KAREN: Like a small one?

LYZBETH: Yes. When we first moved there we had a little deck in the back and they had a little pond and they really had fishes in there, the people they’re throw, put fishes in there and they had it everything. But they didn’t like when the winter came, so it grew over the top…..

KAREN: Are you thinking of like a real huge pond or are you thinking of one of those smaller…

LYZBETH: …smaller pond.

KAREN: Like a small one for the yard.

SHANDA: You could just walk around and you could see the pond right there.

KAREN: I think I asked you some of these questions. What does your work mean to you?

SHANDA: Just something that I want for our community, basically stuff that our community has missed basically.

KAREN: What do you think it could mean to your community? What kind of meaning do you think that would have for the people in your community?

SHANDA: What kind of meanin’ would it have?

KAREN: Yeah, what does it mean to them? Doesn’t mean anything to them, and if so what could it mean to them?

SHANDA: It depends on…in the community we’ve actually talked about. But some people don’t care about the community, like they don’t care if it’s dirty or clean. As long as they got some to live in this, they don’t care.
KAREN: So you don’t think they would, like you say this is what you wish it could be. You don’t think that some of them wish that it, it even was like that?

SHANDA: Yeah, some of ‘em do.

KAREN: Some do and some don’t?

SHANDA: Some don’t. They don’t care about their community. They just like I got somewhere to live and I’m gonna leave here. They don’t care if it’s clean or dirty or if it’s, I don’t know.

KAREN: No, I understand what you’re saying. What does yours mean to you, LYZBETH?

LYZBETH: Excuse me, what does mine mean to me?

KAREN: Uhmm-hmm.

LYZBETH: I don’t know, it just. I don’t know, this community is like a fantasy world, basically you leave your doors unlocked when you walked out, nobody, you got ain’t worry about nobody breakin’ in your house takin’ your stuff. I mean…know.

KAREN: Do you think it’s, do you wish you could draw people here more or do you, not your drawing ability, but as a part of what you wish it could be do you wish it was, you could draw people happily, happy together and?

LYZBETH: Yeah, not fightin’…

SHANDA: I…yeah, like draw people around here holding hands.

KAREN: Kind of a symbolic way to represent community, that holding hands in a circle thing…

SHANDA: …Yeah.

KAREN: …we all think about I think. Why do you think then that you chose not to…a mask and not a gun?

LYZBETH: That would the same reason as what she said, we were just thinking about the outside our community and not basically what the people, or the people that just basically have what man has made, you know what I’m sayin’, what’s around us and not necessarily the people in itself.

KAREN: So what did you guys think of this when I gave you this exercise or this assignment?
SHANDA: It’d be easy?

KAREN: That it’d be easy?

SHANDA: I ain’t expect it was gonna be easy, but I, ‘cause I ain’t…drawin’ part but then just started thinkin’ of stuff, like what I wanted a community.

KAREN: Well did it make you think about? Did it make you think about anything differently that you might not have thought about today if I had not asked you to draw this?

SHANDA: I wasn’t really been thinkin’ about…

KAREN: Now are you kinda thinking, asking yourself why you thought of buildings and not people? No. Were you thinking of your own neighborhood that you live in or the West End neighborhood or what were you thinking? Are you thinking of a specific neighborhood?

LYZBETH: No, I was just thinking of the city as one.

KAREN: You were thinkin’ of the city…

LYZBETH: …Yeah.

KAREN: …and then like the neighborhoods close to the city.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: I was thinking about, and how far is, I’m sorry, how far is your neighborhood from the city?

SHANDA: About ten minutes.

KAREN: And you lived in the West End at one point, right?

SHANDA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: So you kind of experienced living in different neighborhoods near the city.

SHANDA: Right.

KAREN: Were all those experiences similar or different?

SHANDA: Similar but different…

KAREN: How is that?
SHANDA: Because we, I mean when I used to live in the Lincoln Court, I think it was better because no nobody ever fights every day. You ain’t heard that ain’t, you ain’t never heard nobody arguing.

KAREN: At Lincoln Court?

SHANDA: Yeah.

KAREN: And that’s in the West End technically?

SHANDA: Right. And you don’t, you don’t really hear people you know what I’m sayin’ gossipin’ about everybody ‘cause everybody was friends like. But now people changin’.

KAREN: …You’re in a different neighborhood. Is that why or is it?

SHANDA: I mean I’m basically still in the same neighborhood, it’s just outside of.

KAREN: A little further?

SHANDA: Yeah, up the street a little bit.

KAREN: So the same people you used to live by, did they all move to the same area or is it all new neighborhoods?

SHANDA: Most of the people is people I already knew. But some people, they probably move from out of town and move down here, but other than that it’s still the same people.

KAREN: What about you? When you were thinking, were you thinking of a specific neighborhood? Were you thinking of the neighborhood you live in or the West End?

LYZBETH: At first I started, at first I started thinking about down here in the West End, ‘cause you know I just let…them…and look how cute down here. Then I start thinking about like…like where like when the neighborhoods is just clean. Like you go out like almost in Montgomery Road or something way out there, and now you gonna ride down the street, you can leave your bikes outside…

SHANDA: …When you say people, yeah, see people leave bikes outside.

KAREN: Do you think the West End, this new city West End neighborhood that looks clean?

SHANDA: Yeah. In the middle it looked clean but for some reason I just don’t think it’s gonna stay like this because they move in basically the same people who live in Lincoln
Court; that’s basically the same people you gonna see… And Lincoln Courts, they just now…down.

...

SHANDA: This far, it just started.

KAREN: You think it’s nice now because it’s just been built but it’s…

SHANDA: …Yeah.

KAREN: again?

SHANDA: It’s like I don’t think it’s gonna be as bad as the old Lincoln Court, but it might be similar.

KAREN: Bad meaning dirty or…

SHANDA: …Yeah.

KAREN: …not picked…

LYZBETH: …Not…the holes in the wall.

SHANDA: …Yeah ‘cause, yeah.

KAREN: Have you seen lots of this sort of developments get built and then fall apart? Have you seen that happen? I mean have you seen developments getting, being built?

SHANDA: Nah, not really.

KAREN: It happens, I mean it happens kind of regularly but you’re still pretty young so you might not have seen…

SHANDA: Right.

KAREN: They always have a new plan, a new idea.

LYZBETH: Everything looks good in Lincoln Court. But since my sister died then everybody start movin’ out.

KAREN: When?

LYZBETH: I mean every like, when I was little everybody that was…was friends. But my sister was a tomboy and she was around all the boys in the neighborhood like, so but after she died it was like everybody started movin’ away.
KAREN: How did she die?

LYZBETH: She got hit by a car.

KAREN: She did? Right next to the neighborhood?

LYZBETH: Yeah, on the expressway…right there by…

KAREN: …On the expressway?

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: What was she doin’ on the expressway?

LYZBETH: She was at a…the gas station that used to be near her. Like right down the street from, these girls there. I all the way down the street.

KAREN: She was walking…

LYZBETH: Like goin’ towards Kentucky. Going towards Gest Street right there by…

KAREN: There was a gas, there are gas stations right there.

LYZBETH: Yeah, but it used to be a gas station down like sort of this way like, used to be five gas stations.

KAREN: And she was…

LYZBETH: …It was her and…

KAREN: …walking?

LYZBETH: It was her and all her little friends, and they’d hang next to the gas station. And I guess somebody stole something and they ran out, and when they ran out she ran in the street and everybody was across the street. She ran in the street and somebody had called her name, and when she turned around and see who had called her name she just got hit by a car...

KAREN: So it was on the expressway or it was on, on that, on Linn Street?

LYZBETH: No, it was on the expressway.

KAREN: So there was like at that point there was like an expressway ramp…

LYZBETH: …Yeah.
KAREN: …right there by, okay that’s what I meant. Well I’m sorry. How old was she?

LYZBETH: She was ten.

KAREN: She was, and how old were you?

LYZBETH: Six.

KAREN: So you were younger.

LYZBETH: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: I’m sorry to hear that. So after that happened, you think people started movin’ out?

LYZBETH: Yeah, ‘cause this was like, we was the last people to move out, out of West Court yeah, our court. Everybody had moved out. But the little boy who called her name, they think that those people would move out that court like.

KAREN: You think that’s why though?

LYZBETH: …

KAREN: Why do you think that it’d make people wanna move out?

LYZBETH: …hurt the communities. Like when she died that hurt the community ‘cause everybody in our, everybody who was down there was at… And most of her best friends was, they lived down there, so they parents moved them away so they won’t remember like we all mad, everything, come outside, but.

KAREN: You wanna kind of start over somewhere new.

LYZBETH: Yeah.

KAREN: That makes sense.

LYZBETH: Moment of silence.

KAREN: I’m thinking about what, I know. I can’t follow that up; that’s too sad. Do either of you guys think about your community differently after doing these drawings or do you look at it…

SHANDA: I just want it to be like this.
KAREN: Do you look at your community then and think, ”Oh, you know we’re a long way off but we’re almost there?”

SHANDA: We a long way off.

KAREN: It might, do you think your community could become like that?

LYZBETH: It depends on where you live at.

SHANDA: No, it depends on the people who live where you wanna, to be clean.

KAREN: Depends on the people? Do you think that people in your community could do that or do you think you could get the community to that point or do you think…

SHANDA: …Well we had a man who cleaned up around our apartment building every day, so I mean all, where we lived at is clean.

KAREN: What needs to change in your community for it to get to this point?

SHANDA: People need to care more about where they live and what they do and that’s…

KAREN: …What about you, Lyzbeth? What will need to change in your community for it to get to this point do you think?

LYZBETH: What…need to change so my community would…? People need to pick up their trash, be more respectful for where they live it and their surroundings are. You just learn how to be neat at some point in time. You know what I mean, ya ain’t gotta be neat all your life but just, you know what I’m saying, just give respect to where live at. Don’t let all that trash build around your house ‘cause the trash around your house make it look like you nasty within yourself, within your house.

KAREN: Well I think you guys did a great job. Thank you.

SHANDA: You’re welcome.

KAREN: Have some very enlightening thoughts beyond your age. You know that? Did you write your name on yours?

LYZBETH: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: Did you guys both write the date? You did.

LYZBETH: I did too.
KAREN: Great, thank you. Do you think colored pencils were a good thing to use for this exercise or you think something else?

LYZBETH: Colored pencils, yeah it…

KAREN: What about with the younger kids when I do it? I’m going to be doing the same things I think I told you guys, the same things I told you guys I’m gonna do with them.

LYZBETH: Yeah…

KAREN: In a couple weeks we’re gonna have the younger kids joining us. I can turn this off now.
APPENDIX H

Interview With Shai
KAREN: Let me see I’m trying to remember your name. Shawna?

SHAI: Shayana.

KAREN: Shayana, okay. Shayana how old are you?

SHAI: Ten, but they put me in eleven and twelve because I’m going to the sixth grade.

KAREN: Oh because you are so smart, huh? Did you skip a grade? No?

SHAI: No.

KAREN: You just started younger? I see your drawings. That is real nice, you are good. Have you been taking classes here for a while? Yes. Are you, you are not the one going to SCPA are you? No, that was one of the other girls. Can you tell me what images you used? Sort of point to the different images and tell me what they are.

SHAI: These are windows. There is the roof in the house and this is the garage, with the cloud in the front. This is a girl, and this is her home.

KAREN: Okay so that is where she lives. What colors did you use?

SHAI: Pink, I used blue black, gray (inaudible) yellow, green, and orange.

KAREN: A lot of colors. Can you describe some of those images for me? You told me what they were but can you maybe describe them to me too?

SHAI: What?

KAREN: Can you describe some of your images? Maybe the different shapes that you used.

SHAI: I used real big (inaudible) and but I made the windows different shapes. (Inaudible)

KAREN: Yes, are those (inaudible)?

SHAI: See they are all bright colors and they (inaudible).

KAREN: Why? Is there anything moving in here, any movement that you tried to create?

SHAI: No. Had the arms every color.

KAREN: Okay and do you know what contrast is? It is when some things, two colors next to each other look really light or really dark. So black next to white is a high
contrast. So did you create any contrast here? It doesn’t have to be black but maybe like a dark color next to a light color?

SHAI: Yes, light (inaudible)…

KAREN: …Yes, that is probably the highest. That is where my eye was. Was yours?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: That is probably very high contrast isn’t it? Did you create any significant spaces here? Anything that is really important? A certain area that is really important?

SHAI: Yes, her.

KAREN: Her, she is the head of the focus huh? Yes, I agree. If you could describe a mood for this piece what would you say? Is there a mood to it?

SHAI: She is happy I think like she is happy that that is her home.

KAREN: Why is she happy that is her home?

SHAI: She likes it.

KAREN: Yes. What do you think could be a title of this?

SHAI: New home.

KAREN: The New Home. That is a good title. So she just moved here then?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Where did she move from?

SHAI: Oklahoma.

KAREN: Oklahoma? Where is that? Is this here in Cincinnati?

SHAI: What this house?

KAREN: Yes.

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Okay so she moved from Oklahoma to Cincinnati? That is pretty cool. Is there a reason why you chose certain colors? You did say that you wanted her clothes to be bright. Is there a reason for the other colors that you chose?
SHAI: No.

KAREN: No. Just sort of random? Yes. I’m guessing you chose this color for a reason.

SHAI: Because the sun is bright.

KAREN: Yellow, exactly the sun is yellow and the clouds are blue right?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: So that makes sense. Why did you make this purple and pink?

SHAI: Because I think some apples have different colors on them.

KAREN: Yes, there are some. They are like painted different colors aren’t they?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Why did you choose to make the windows different shapes?

SHAI: Because it would be different from other drawings.

KAREN: Yes so it would make it look a little bit more interesting, huh?

SHAI: Yep.

KAREN: Why did you choose to just put a garage next to the house?

SHAI: Because this, it um, I got it because I wanted to add something else to it, and this (inaudible).

KAREN: Oh okay. Really? So you had put the house in first and then decided it needed something else next to it?

SHAI: Yep.

KAREN: Okay, that is a good. What is this? Does this word mean anything to you? No, there is no meaning? Do you think it means anything to your community where you live?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: What?

SHAI: That um we should appreciate where we live and stuff.
KAREN: Yes, why is that?

SHAI: Because some people don’t have homes.


SHAI: Um, I live by here.

KAREN: You live around here, real close? Do you live in the west end? Or downtown?

SHAI: Nope I live um you know right here. It is probably like it is, I live behind it.

KAREN: Oh you do? You live back here in the apartments?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Okay so you live in the West End. What were you thinking or feeling when you created this artwork? What did you think when I gave you that assignment? To draw your idea of community.

SHAI: It was an easy assignment.

KAREN: It was?

SHAI: Because I know what a community is and know what to draw.

KAREN: Really? What is a community to you then?

SHAI: A place where people should be happy, but they are not happy.

KAREN: They are not? Why not?

SHAI: Because it’s too much violence and.

KAREN: Yes, so you don’t think they are happy because of all the violence? Are you happy in your community?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Yea, do you think some other kids are too?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Yes. Who do you think is unhappy then?
SHAI: A lot of adults.

KAREN: You think so. I just have a few more questions. You are doing really well. You are really smart. What did this, did this exercise make you think of anything differently? You sort of said you thought it was going to be easy because you knew what a community was, but does it make you think of anything else?

SHAI: No.

KAREN: No. What are, what do you think of the community you live in?

SHAI: I think that um, I think that we should (inaudible) because it is not, it is not, it is not that great where I live.

KAREN: Why? Why is that?

SHAI: Because everybody is being loud all night and stuff.

KAREN: Is it hard to sleep?

SHAI: Yep. That is why I mean our home is happy.

KAREN: Is that, why aren’t there any other homes around your home? Okay so this is all her yard. So think there is another house maybe, you know? And her yard is right next door?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: What do you think, what do you think could be done to make your community better than? Huh?

SHAI: (Inaudible) Spread the word.

KAREN: Spread the word? That is a good idea.

SHAI: (Inaudible) to the little kids.

KAREN: Say what?

SHAI: To um try to be a more example to the little kids.

KAREN: Oh yea? Are you an example to any little kids?

SHAI: Not really.
KAREN: Any other brothers or sisters than you?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: You are not an example for them? You seem to be a pretty good example.

SHAI: Yes. Sometimes I, sometimes I be an example for them (inaudible).

KAREN: Yes, I think it is okay to do bad stuff every now and then, if it is not too bad. Don’t you? Yes. Because you are a kid. You play in the park, down the street here by the community center?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Yes. I go over there sometimes with my dog and my step-daughter who is four. What do you think of that, your work do you like it?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Are you proud of it? Did you put a lot of effort into it when you did it?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Do you do a lot of drawing at school? Yes. So you feel pretty comfortable drawing?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: So you chose to draw a community that is not necessarily the one you live in but one you might wish you lived in? Or that you have seen?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: Have you seen a community like this before?

SHAI: No.

KAREN: No. You just wish that you maybe lived in a community like that?

SHAI: Yes, kind of.

KAREN: Kind of.

SHAI: But not with those windows.
KAREN: Not with the windows though? You did the windows to make it look different but you wouldn’t want those on your house right?

SHAI: Right.

KAREN: Why is that?

SHAI: They be crazy.

KAREN: They are interesting. I like that idea but that is interesting that you wouldn’t want them on your own house. So out of the, the City West buildings right across the street. You know those new buildings?

SHAI: (Inaudible) circles.

KAREN: They have some circle windows don’t they?

SHAI: Yes.

KAREN: I always thought it was kind of weird. How would you put a curtain on a circle window? You know. Is that where you got that idea maybe?

SHAI: Yep.

KAREN: Well I think this is beautiful, Shayana right?

SHAI: Shayana.

KAREN: Shayana, Shayana. I will remember that. Well thank you Shayana.
APPENDIX I

Interview With Amber
KAREN: Can you tell me what images you used in your drawing?

AMBER: Pictures of rafts is to help the kids float around in the pool without any help.

KAREN: Why?

AMBER: To help them save themselves.

KAREN: Okay. What colors did you use?

AMBER: Orange, red, green, brown.

KAREN: Can you describe those images that you used? You kind of did already but…

AMBER: Float. A beach ball. It is a lifeboat and a kid standing there.

KAREN: Who is the lifeguard?

AMBER: I don’t know.

KAREN: You don’t know? Did you create any movement? Is there anything kind of moving in the image?

AMBER: Well, the little boy is swimming.

KAREN: Why?

AMBER: Her arms are going in the air. She threw the ball.

KAREN: Yes, she threw the ball and he is swimming. Do you know what contrast is? When something dark is next to something light, it creates contrast. Kind of like on your shirt right here, this dark stripe next to the white creates contrast. I don’t have any on me. Is there any contrast in your drawing?

AMBER: Yes.

KAREN: What is it?

AMBER: There is contrast right there.

KAREN: The paint next to the white? Okay. Is there any significant spaces here? Is there something like a focus or something important in this drawing? Like a main focus? What is it?

AMBER: She should be real. I mean she should be (inaudible).
KAREN: So that is the main focus for you? What is the mood of the work? Is there a mood? You don’t think so? No. What about, what could the title be if you had to give it a title?

AMBER: *Swimming*.

KAREN: *Swimming*. So why did you choose those color?

AMBER: That being the color of a regular swimming pool.

KAREN: You went on what you thought you would find in a swimming pool? So like this pink and yellow ball, you think you would find that kind of a ball? Why did you choose to put the lifeboat outside of the water?

AMBER: He is not going to use it.

KAREN: Huh?

AMBER: He didn’t want to use it.

KAREN: He didn’t want to use it so he put it up on the side? Why isn’t there a lifeguard?

AMBER: Because that is…

KAREN: Why is the safety part really important to you? The floaties and the safety and stuff?

AMBER: I don’t know. Because they can save little kids who swim.

KAREN: Yes, little kids going out to swim they need to be more careful? What does this work mean to you? I mean why did you choose to do a swimming pool when I talked about community?

AMBER: That is what you will find in a community also.

KAREN: Do you think there are lots of pools in the community? Now it is summer too so a lot of them are being used. So what does this mean to you? Does that mean anything to you? Is swimming important to you? Are the swimming pools an important part of the community?

AMBER: Yes.

KAREN: Why is that?

AMBER: Because it would be hot outside and you want to keep cool and go swimming.
KAREN: That is a happy place to be maybe and because it cools you off. What were you feeling when you created this? Were you feeling anything? No. Just really tired? What did you think when I asked you to do this exercise, to draw your idea of community? What were your thoughts?

AMBER: I didn’t know how to draw.

KAREN: You didn’t know what to do? Did you think about it for a while? Yes, and then you finally settled on the idea of doing a swimming pool. Did Ron help you with that idea or no?

AMBER: He was trying to…

KAREN: Was he? What did it make you think about when you were thinking about all of those different ideas? What were you thinking? What were some of the things?

AMBER: I was just trying to think of what you think of when you think of a community.

KAREN: Before you decided to do a swimming pool, what were some of your ideas?

AMBER: Well trees around a house or apartments on a street.

KAREN: You decided to do a pool over that because, because why?

AMBER: It would be easier.

KAREN: You thought it would be easier to draw. Interesting. What community do you live in? What neighborhood do you live in?

AMBER: Westwood.

KAREN: Westwood. Does this, do you think, represent that community or is this, did you choose a specific community or just in general?

AMBER: It's my community.

KAREN: That is your community? So this might be the pool that you go swimming in in Westwood? What do you think of your artwork? Does it reflect how you really view your community?

AMBER: Um hmm.

KAREN: Yes? How is that?

AMBER: About Westwood?
KAREN: Yes.

AMBER: It’s the way it is supposed to be.

KAREN: Okay and that is what really happens in your neighborhood? Especially now in the summer huh?

AMBER: Um hmm.

KAREN: What good things have you portrayed here from your community? What are some of the good things?

AMBER: The things how they protect you.

KAREN: So they are being safe and having fun maybe? What problems do you think you might have shown about your community here in this drawing? Any problems? No, no problems? Do you think your community is worth considering and examining in this drawing? Yes? Why is that? What do you think about your neighborhood?

AMBER: I don’t like it.

KAREN: You don’t like it? You don’t like it like that?

AMBER: Just moved.

KAREN: Oh you don’t, you just moved? You maybe don’t know very many people? Where did you move from? Where?

AMBER: Winton Terrace.

KAREN: Did you like Winton Terrace better? You just felt more comfortable there? How long have you lived in Westwood?

AMBER: About a month.

KAREN: A month so you probably don’t know that many people yet. Are you going to change schools or go to the same school? Well that is a good deal. You have you some friends there right?

AMBER: Um hmm.

KAREN: Okay Amber thank you.
APPENDIX J
Interview With Ki’cure
KI’CURE: Well I, you mean my work pictures?

KI’CURE: People.

KI’CURE: Yes.

KI’CURE: I used red, pale green, a little yellow, and maroon like.

KI’CURE: This picture, the grass was blowing…

KI’CURE: No not, well she swings on the swing and when she jumps down…

KI’CURE: Yes.

KI’CURE: Well where is it?
KI’CURE: The swing set is very dark and this is like light and…

KAREN: Yes, and that is probably the darkest thing on there isn’t it? Did you create any significant spaces yet? Anything further or significant stands out?

KI’CURE: That would be kids are having a good time and they are not doing something they shouldn’t be doing.

KAREN: What is the purple? On the two chests, you know? And is there a mood? What is the mood of the artwork?

KI’CURE: That they have to look good and time unless… has to know that they are not in trouble and just happy.

KAREN: Happy and that is why they both have smiles on their faces? If you had to give this a title, what would it be?

KI’CURE: I wrote it down.

KAREN: You already did do this title huh? Have you got a title for us? Okay. So why did you choose those color? Is there a reason?

KI’CURE: No it just a community with the same colors.

KAREN: So it is nice and colorful? When you talk clouds are blue and the sun is yellow. That is pretty much what you see outside right? Why did you choose to make it, called *Keep our Kids Safe*?

KI’CURE: Because the kids are being good. Staying out of trouble, or doing something they shouldn’t be doing.

KAREN: Yes, but what is that? What is something they could be doing that they shouldn’t be doing?

KI’CURE: Like going to the store and stealing or…

KAREN: Is that from your neighborhood?

KI’CURE: Or doing something they shouldn’t be doing. Doing drugs and drinking or being in somebody’s house when their parents ain’t home. Or walking somewhere without telling a parent where you are going.

KAREN: Instead of them playing here on the playground.

KI’CURE: Yep.
KAREN: What does this piece of work mean to you?

KI’CURE: That, just that I know that these kids won’t be, they can’t be killed well they can be but at this situation they can’t be because they just…

KAREN: …They are safe there? Does it make you happy when you kind of think of those kids then, the ones that are going to be okay?

KI’CURE: Um hmm.

KAREN: What were you feeling when you, what did you think when I gave you this assignment? To draw your idea of community?

KI’CURE: To think about the kids more than what is built...

KAREN: So you thought first of the kids versus buildings? What were you feeling when you created this then?

KI’CURE: Happy.

KAREN: Happy. What did you think about doing this exercise?

KI’CURE: First I didn’t want to do it.

KAREN: I noticed that with you, but you seemed to get over it quickly.

KI’CURE: Um hmm.

KAREN: Yep, so did you enjoy it after you got over that? Yep? What community do you live in? What neighborhood do you live?

KI’CURE: College Hill.

KAREN: College Hill. So, do you think this represents College Hill or just community in general?

KI’CURE: Community in general.

KAREN: So you were just thinking of different neighborhoods? Because this is a pretty common theme throughout different neighborhoods. What do you think about your artwork here?

KI’CURE: It is not the best but it represents what I am trying to say.

KAREN: Why? Why is it not the best?
KI’CURE: Because I can’t draw.

KAREN: You don’t think you can draw?

KI’CURE: No.

KAREN: So you feel like you could have made it look better? But you got your point across? Yes. What are the good things that you are representing here about community?

KI’CURE: It’s a clean neighborhood. They have flowers on the side of the street and the windows ain’t broken.

KAREN: Yes those are the good things over there. Any problems that you have represented here about the community?

KI’CURE: No.

KAREN: No. So you focused all on positive things?

KI’CURE: Um hmm.

KAREN: Do you think that community was worth examining or thinking about?

KI’CURE: Yes.

KAREN: Why? Is it important?

KI’CURE: Um hmm.

KAREN: Why is it important?

KI’CURE: Because we need to keep our community safe away from people who don’t need to be in there.

KAREN: Yes, what sort of people?

KI’CURE: Away from people who are selling and bringing in drugs and guns.

KAREN: Where should they be?

KI’CURE: In jail or getting help.

KAREN: Yes. I think this looks, I think your drawing is nice. You think you can’t draw but you have made a slide look three dimensional and that is pretty good. How old are you?
KI’CURE: Twelve.

KAREN: Twelve, I think you are doing a good job. Thank you very much for…
APPENDIX K
Interview With Bria
KAREN: I am just going to ask you some questions about your drawing. It won’t take very long if you don’t mind. I am tape recording it so that I don’t have to write notes and I don’t miss anything that you say. You can hold the drawing after I put the pins. Can you tell me what images you used in your drawings and you can kind of point to them while you tell me. Hold it down so I can see it real good though. Can you tell me what images you used?

BRIA: A playground and a church because, because I thought because my little cousin she lives by a church and then there is a park next door.

KAREN: Okay, what is that? Tell me what these are. A slide…

BRIA: …This is monkey bars, slide and a swing. This is like where they have the preaching and when they eat.

KAREN: Okay, what colors did you use?

BRIA: Brown, black and...

KAREN: Can you describe the images a little bit? Describe what is in the images? Can you describe this church to me and the swings?

BRIA: This church is.

KAREN: You can just describe what is there maybe say you know there is a crack, there are windows.

BRIA: *(Bria was speaking very quietly, so much of what she said was inaudible.)* There is a car (inaudible) at the (inaudible) and when I go (inaudible) right like to get those (inaudible). Um (inaudible) roll out so they can get them. The things they (inaudible) to home. Then where they eat at is like a lot of tables.

KAREN: Did you create any movement here? No? Do you know what contrast is? Contrast is when something dark is next to something very light. It creates contrast. So like this white next to the black is contrast there. Did you create any contrast? Anything dark next to light?

BRIA: A little bit.

KAREN: Yea where?

BRIA: The brown and the black.

KAREN: Yes that really looks pretty dark next to the white picture. Did you create any significant spaces? Is there anything important? A space somewhere that is important? Where is the focus?
BRIA: I don’t know.

KAREN: You don’t know? Let’s see. Where do you think your eye goes to first? That is probably the focus then. I think you are right. What is the mood of the artwork?

BRIA: Happy I think.

KAREN: Happy you think. Why is that happy?

BRIA: Because (inaudible).

KAREN: Okay, the park makes you happy. What would the title be, if you had to give it a title what would it be?

BRIA: *Next to the Church and the Park.*

KAREN: Okay, why did you choose to use the Church and the park when I asked you to draw your idea of community?

BRIA: Because I like, sometimes I like Church and when I get out of Church I go to the park and I like the park.

KAREN: Does Church represent community somehow? Yes, how is that?

BRIA: Because some of my friends are in the Church in the neighborhood, around the corner from me.

KAREN: So the neighbors all sort of go get together in the Church?

BRIA: Um hmm.

KAREN: What does this work mean to you? You sort of already told me but. You don’t know. What were you thinking when I gave you that assignment to draw your idea of community? What did you think about it?

BRIA: *(Again, difficult to hear).* I just thought of... She is like my favorite cousin (inaudible).

KAREN: Yes, is she your age? Yes. What neighborhood do you live in?

BRIA: I live in Westwood.

KAREN: Westwood. Is the picture from Westwood then? Okay. All right, what do you think about Westwood.
BRIA: I love it.

KAREN: You love it?

BRIA: Um hmm.

KAREN: Why is that?

BRIA: Because my friends are there…

KAREN: Have you lived there your whole life? No. What do you think about this, your artwork?

BRIA: I don’t know.

KAREN: You don’t know what you think about it? Do you like it? Yes. Why do you like it?

BRIA: Because…

KAREN: …Does it mean anything to you? No. Why do you like it?

BRIA: I just like it because I drew it.

KAREN: Proud of it? Yes. What good things did you represent about your community in the drawing?

BRIA: I liked it.

KAREN: Do you know what good things you drew? What were the good things about your community here? Is Church, is the Church a good thing?

BRIA: Yes it is.

KAREN: And is the playground a good thing?

BRIA: Sometimes.

KAREN: Sometimes, sometimes not? Why not? When is it not a good thing?

BRIA: When it is raining.

KAREN: Oh because you can’t play on it then huh? Did you draw any problems or bad things about your community in there?

BRIA: No.
KAREN: Nope, just good things? Do you think your community was worth thinking about and drawing?

BRIA: Um hmm.

KAREN: Why is that?

BRIA: Just because I think I like that Church.

KAREN: Yes, and you like your community too you said. Okay well thank you Bria. I like your drawing.
APPENDIX L
Interviews With Richard
First Interview with Richard

This interview was conducted in the community center, since Richard had to be around to be responsible for the youth at the center. For this reason, some of the interview was inaudible.

RICHARD: Okay now we can get started.

KAREN: Put them back in and I will be finished. (Inaudible) think I said with my research and my dissertation and I think I told you that when we started this, since I started this project as my dissertation research. I am interviewing the kids. I am having them do drawings and I am sort of keeping notes as I can. I am looking at (inaudible) community. On how residents or non residents feel a part of the community. So the questions sort of relate to that and then the role of the arts. So do you live in the West End?

RICHARD: No I actually I live in Sharonville.

KAREN: Okay, so what is your connection to the West End?

RICHARD: Job related.

KAREN: Working where?

RICHARD: Working here at the center and working with the kids.

KAREN: Do you have any other connections to the West End? Family or friends or anybody?

RICHARD: I grew up in the West End. Born and raised in the West End, back in the day in fifty six. I was born in fifty six in the West End on Eighth Street. Eighth and Melvin, it is named was Melvin Street. I don’t know where it is now maybe towards (inaudible) if I can find it. (Inaudible).

KAREN: Okay, I guess that was to thirteenth.

RICHARD: (Inaudible) So yes that did become that and that Yvonne takes one of the kids here. She is one of ten. So I guess that history from my family still exists throughout town.

KAREN: Yes, I think so.

RICHARD: Maybe a cycle of you know for sibling kind of residence down here. I mean she will her (inaudible) down with a large number of kids (inaudible).
KAREN: I’m noticing a lot of people have connections to West End, Over-the-Rhine. Like my family even. My grandfather grew up in Fairmont right here and he has lived in Over-the-Rhine and I think we all have through some sort of connection passed through our families. So what was it like then living in the West End then growing up?

RICHARD: Wow, now that was a lot making a lot out of nothing, pure (inaudible). We had plastic bags for games and toys. We had rubber bags fights, you know I would be on my brother’s back and you know we had bags of water and you know. That was you know on a hot day in August and that is how we played. We did a lot with less compared to today’s (inaudible). Discipline, structure, I could be (inaudible) and certain times. Nothing to eat. You know you come to my house at six o’clock you sat and eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches I mean compared to (inaudible).

KAREN: Do you think (inaudible) experiences that they had?

RICHARD: No. It was a really difference in the value systems and (inaudible) structured working. I don’t know if that was by design or not but. They say you can’t have (inaudible) in the home if you want to feel benefits. So the mother would pretty much change after she say, “Ya’ll need to stay here, because I want to see the baby.” Now some are sneaky and allowing them to stay there but it is for (inaudible). Versus that (inaudible) you know that word that (inaudible) they don’t know. They choose to be like this. That is a big difference.

KAREN: How do you feel that you fit into the West End? Either now or when you were a kid, however you want to address that question.

RICHARD: It’s a comfort zone to me. Even though I know now other people (inaudible) you know to get away from the chaos of downtown. Downtown has a lot of unmanaged (inaudible) quick reactions to situations where otherwise you process something to try to come to a solution. Other communities do that. Downtown is like where every kid has a bunch of things to do and too much time. That is when it happens.

KAREN: When you say downtown you mean West End?

RICHARD: Yes, West End (inaudible). That talks about (inaudible) because people don’t mediate. No mediation process. Their mediation process is fighting, that is the mediation process. It is not any good.

KAREN: So is that why then you chose to move out?

RICHARD: I didn’t have a choice when my mom moved, but my journey took me out of downtown when I was in the third grade. So from the third grade I moved to Cummingsville. I went to North Hill Elementary in Cummingsville. Behind junior high school and (inaudible) high school. Then I went off to college and then after college minor league baseball. Then marriage (inaudible) Nebraska.
KAREN: Oh okay, you left?

RICHARD: Left a lot. My wife said she wanted to find herself after being (inaudible). So I moved to Columbus Ohio. I mean I was not going to be able to (inaudible) to raise my son by myself. Then I preferred to come back to Cincinnati. I wanted to get back to working with kids. I worked with kids when I was in Columbus for eleven years. So I wanted to really, I got a lot of ideas that I wanted to bring back, and downtown appeals to me as targeting area community. Because downtown is rough. I said, ‘Let me build things to get in this and try to get back downtown.’ I come, I play baseball down there. I know just about everybody and so it was just a matter of him saying, “Hey Richard.” Because he hadn’t seen me in eleven years. I was telling Mike I was semi professional baseball downtown so I played with all of his uncles and cousins. They don’t realize that, they don’t know that until we see each other and they speak. Yes, so it was, “Oh you know everybody.” Because they all would see me speaking to them.

KAREN: They loved that too. Yep.

(PAUSE IN TAPE)

RICHARD: Yes, you have got to give them a choice. You have got a choice to make and…

KAREN: …As you might have learned now that this is the better choice, which she might not have.

RICHARD: I tell you I had put her out for the whole summer because of her behavior. So her mama wrote a note telling me she won’t misbehave like that anymore. So I hold on to that note and remind her from time to time you know. This is not (inaudible) and mom is trying to work. She has got to behave. Otherwise I am going to have to put her out. I’m not going to tolerate it. I mean if I have to.

KAREN: You might know my boyfriend I was thinking because he is about your age. He has lived in Cincinnati his whole life, well since he was eighteen. We live right across from here, his name is Ricky Dotson and his brother is about the same age too (inaudible).

RICHARD: I know some Dotson’s.

KAREN: You might know them by their faces. They play basketball...

RICHARD: That name sounds familiar.

KAREN: So what are your two favorite things about the West End?
RICHARD: Everything. Sense of family that is one thing that is really big for me. So I mean they were bringing these families, you know sense of family. Closeness. Cincinnati Reds.

KAREN: What do you mean by closeness?

RICHARD: Well everybody knows each other. I mean there are, back in the day if there was a situation where there was a disagreement families solved it. You took it to the family. You just didn’t go fight in the street. No, that didn’t happen. I mean it happened but it was very seldom happen. I mean you know families would mediate the process. Then you know this child stays away from this child. They end up getting back together but at least the parents had that…

KAREN: …There are no heads banging into the cement. That was horrible.

RICHARD: Right, now it is just the opposite, they shoot guns.

KAREN: Yes.

RICHARD: We have already that (inaudible).

KAREN: Well that family whose kid was brain damaged from the other kid beating him, they are now losing their home. Their home caught on fire yesterday or the day before, it was on the news. So now they are homeless and they have a child who just got released from the hospital with brain damage. That is sad.

RICHARD: A lot of stuff going around that doesn’t make sense today, but it does but it doesn’t because there are a lot of parents today who don’t know how to parent. Their (inaudible) manifested themselves. I mean you know there are fifteen year olds having babies. Fourteen year olds and they don’t know what it takes. When they grow up to twenty-one twenty-two and they think beating the child is the answer. I just read where they had a child being in a dog cage as punishment. That is…

KAREN: Often times it seems like the grandmothers raise the kids too.

RICHARD: Yes, there is a lot of that.

KAREN: It is probably a better situation but. So what two things don’t you like about the West End?

RICHARD: Violence and lack of visibility in the community.

KAREN: The lack of visibility?

RICHARD: The lack of visibility, yes. We had a press conference here just last week with the vice mayor, what is her name Alicia?
KAREN: Reese.

RICHARD: Reese? She came to the center. Now there needs to be more of that. Maybe it is spending the afternoon in a summer program and actually helping with some sports and you know getting involved and sitting down and reading a story. On a lunch hour. If you go back to that, it sounds unrealistic because it needs to be realistic. Do you know what I am saying? I am going to bring police officers in here to talk to kids about the dangers of violence and just dealing in dope and stuff. There needs to be a sense of connectedness. I need to do that with the older kids. People may not want to show up but guess what I may have three or four or five. If it is mandatory for them to show up then that is what it is going to take. We need to have that closeness where a police officer knew our mother back in the day. They knew, they walked in the community we knew officer’s found you. We knew them and…

KAREN: …They come to the Community Council meetings. I don’t them…

RICHARD: …But refuse to go beyond.

KAREN: Exactly.

RICHARD: See that is the extra step. Once an officer knows kids, that kid will respect the officer. That kid will tell another kid to do right because he knows the officer. See there is where it grows right there.

KAREN: I have my step daughter who is four, she lives here with us and I have made her really like the cops. Now she wants to say hi to every single one we see. I had her out, the other day we were at the park right here and there was a man going around picking up trash with the stick and she, I taught her not to throw trash on the ground, so she went around with him picking up trash and putting it in. She would go right next to somebody who is throwing trash on the ground, pick it up under their feet and throw it away… which would make them feel you know.

RICHARD: So you know that would grow in a way with her and her community and that will broaden her horizon. You know when she gets older to get into that public.

KAREN: I think see her do it though as a small impact. So what do you think are two things that could make the West End better?

RICHARD: Community relations, which is something they are still talking about today, community relations. A sense of pride, of caring. Caring about the community. People and police need each other. Today you could snitch and you have got Crime Stoppers who keep your identity revealed but back during the day if you did something wrong you got told on plain as day. You know somebody is doing drugs, he got told on and he got busted and just point blank.
KAREN: There is almost a sense of fear to reveal.

RICHARD: Yes, right. So you know we need to speak up. A lot of times we feel if we tell then there are repercussions from that. People don’t say nothing. They just turn their back. That is why this crime and violence has gotten so out of hand. You know a fifteen year old shooting a twenty-one or a thirty year old, fifteen year old shooting. I have never heard of that, never. That is daily. Number one that creates prison or death for the community and then it leaves the women without a man. It is a whole cycle. That is why I be all I don’t knock relationships… women are dating women because the men are all locked up. Come on I mean to each his own on that you know that is a personal thing. If you look at what is happening we have got men going to jail or dying over proudness. So the population out here shrinks in the inner city. There are not a lot of good men out here. So women has to migrate elsewhere to find happiness. You know you have got to look at that. To me I don’t care what anyone does as far as relationships, as long as they are happy. That is their business. I choose to have a woman in my life and that is how I feel about me personally. Anyone can have anybody as long as they are happy. I won’t be prejudice against it but back to the original problem if you get if you know the violent (inaudible) there is not enough men out here to enforce community. I mean we tend to mind our own business because if we get outspoken there are repercussions to us, our cars, families and that sort of thing. That would mean if we even step up.

KAREN: Teenagers are funny. I had a group of seven teens I worked with. Four boys and three girls. Six of the seven were dating each other.

RICHARD: Why?

KAREN: Because there were the three couples and then there was the poor odd man out, I felt bad so I (inaudible).

RICHARD: That is something (inaudible).

KAREN: What are two things that could make the West End worse?


KAREN: More violence?

RICHARD: Yes, more violence. I would say prevention programs. Prevention, drug and alcohol prevention programs need to be incorporated.

KAREN: So not having anything makes it worse?

RICHARD: Yes, not having any prevention programs. You have got to start at the middle school level.

KAREN: What could you do or what do you do to improve life in the West End?
RICHARD: Speak out against violence. Teach drug and alcohol prevention. Show that I care and communicate with parents.

KAREN: When you say that though you mean to be working with kids?

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: Is there anywhere that you spend time in the West End, I know you do here at the Community Center? Is there anywhere else that you?

RICHARD: Baseball diamonds, you will find me there. I am trying to get connected to Taft high school. I want to form a coalition that gets a couple of school (inaudible). I would like to form a youth committee. That is really my project that I am going to try to complete by next summer.

KAREN: We are working on creating a community arts youth council across the district with a focus on the inner city neighborhood with teenagers in it.

RICHARD: Once we get our committee together then we will be able to network and collaborate.

KAREN: I am hiring an Americorps through Public Allies to connect, to create this committee of kids across the district in SCPA in this area, West End and Over-the-Rhine. To do something, using the arts to improve the community.

RICHARD: Right, now Miss Sharon has asked me to stay on full-time.

KAREN: Good, so you are going to do it through the Lincoln Center, you are going to create…

RICHARD: …Yes.

KAREN: Great.

RICHARD: We are going to get our youth council and we will be able to network.

KAREN: Are you working with the City West person on that?

RICHARD: I will be working with her, yes.

KAREN: We have gotten flyers from like all these different team things.

RICHARD: Yes, I just met with her yesterday. I can’t think of her name but yes. I just met with a couple of people who works with the teen council in City West and we are all going to act as one. We are going to meet next Tuesday about five, you know just for
more information. We are going to talk about, I’m going to bring in, I have some
information material from a drug and alcohol prevention that I am going to share with
them. How we can all get the kids together. So that is going to be a project. Once we
get this up and running because City West gets that way, already has ideas and suddenly
again they value (inaudible). I am just going to try to draw into what I am doing or what
I have done and see if we can’t all just merge into something.

KAREN: Yes, I know there is a lot going on with this.

RICHARD: Yes, so it is the only one we are going to be doing the fall year round.
College tours, different things. Positive things. How to prepare and elect a status
(inaudible). Because these are kids who are leaving the nest so to speak. You know
graduating and then going off to college. That is where I (inaudible), that is my niche
right there. I think this is driving me crazy but I am handling it.

KAREN: I am with you on that one.

RICHARD: I keep (inaudible) handle this but my niche is sending the kids up.

KAREN: I know I find joy in that too. I just saw one of my girls was going, she lives in
Over-the-Rhine, and she has gotten into fashion design at UC. The fashion design
program at DAAP, which is one of the best in the country.

RICHARD: Right and that is where you know if you even have to write a reference letter
or you know for a scholarship or whatever, then I feel good about doing that for that
individual because I know how hard that they worked. So that is where I have some kids
right now. I see one playing basketball for the University of Oklahoma. He started as a
freshman. We used to (inaudible) one that would make this play at Notre Dame. These
are kids that were in my program, and I am seeing them on T.V.. This is there, you know
what I am saying... These kids here you know making them last (inaudible). I told him I
know (inaudible). Yes he was in my program so can you get him to come? I said, ‘Well
his schedule.’ You know it was just a matter of me writing him, getting on his waiting
list and all this other thing. Before he can even answer my letter. Those are the things
that I am proud about. The same thing that can happen here. Like in the same thing that
I have got an up and coming list so I know how tough it is to reach some of these kids
because some of them don’t have dads. Some of them are angry inside at their dads and
you know lash out at me or lash out at mom or just have anger in general. The only way
that they can get attention is by acting out.

KAREN: Do you find that Cincinnati is any better or any worse or the same or is it?

RICHARD: It is about the same as Cincinnati, it is about the same. I mean I lived up
there for eleven years and those kids can probably kick my behind. When I first moved,
oh God yes. They (inaudible) and I am in a, or in my neighborhood I just wasn’t from
there. I am from the, you know I am an outsider. I am an outsider there. I feel more
conducive here because (inaudible). I have that confidence level here and up there I didn’t know how I was going to act.

KEVIN: Time to go to work.

KAREN: Okay, good to see you.

KEVIN: What time (inaudible)?

KAREN: For me again Monday. All right I forgot some (inaudible). Then probably start painting on the wall.

KEVIN: This is so, I am too excited. I really am and I appreciate, truly appreciate it. (Inaudible) I look forward to this project being a success. Thank you God for everything. We will see you next time. I will call you.

KAREN: Good to see you, okay. I met him outside a Community Council meeting. He really wanted to get involved in the project so I told him to come on down. Have you had any experience with the arts in the West End? Or what are your thoughts on how the arts benefit the West End?

RICHARD: I see it uplifting areas or sore spots.

KAREN: Like music, performance, all of the arts.

RICHARD: All of them contribute to the development of downtown. (more inaudible)

KAREN: Well I think that is it.

Second Interview with Richard

KAREN: It is going to be similar. Some of the questions will be the same that I have already asked you. This is kind of now after the project is done and looking back over the process of it since you were…. I don’t know if it was necessarily your choice to be involved. Sharon sort of suggested that you get the kids involved. So I am really curious as to how you felt about that process about being in your role and that sort of thing. So I think that asked you that question.

RICHARD: So that is the question?

KAREN: Okay, let’s start there.

RICHARD: Well basically she is the director. She felt that my group would be the most responsible group out of the Community Center to represent the Community Center and basically we were going to incorporate arts and crafts in our program from the beginning.
So I took that opportunity to incorporate the Arts Consortium into our program as suggested by Miss Sharon. That just kills two birds with one stone. I incorporate the arts program into the Center and I included the Arts Consortium which Sharon suggested. Yes that was okay with me.

KAREN: So I was really in a rut. I will tell you when I first started planning this project the Lincoln, I approached the Lincoln Center with it. That was even before I approached Arts Consortium, because I knew I could do it through the Arts Consortium. Since I lived across the street I sort of knew there were lots of kids here from the neighborhood I thought, you know I am going to approach the Lincoln Center first. It was still sort of new. I mean I think Sharon was still getting a grasp on things so I didn’t get much of a response. So then I took it to the Arts Consortium but through the process of trying to involve more groups and kids I presented at a Community Council meeting that she was at. She said that she was very interested. I initially did it with the intent of having this be like the main place and then I don’t think they were quite ready to take that on yet. I knew she wanted to but I think they weren’t quite ready. When I came back at it with a second time having the Arts Consortium as my point of contact she was able to jump on board then. So I was really glad that I was able to do it with both places really.

RICHARD: Right, our group was just formulating into maybe the first or second week of its program. So when you approached Miss Sharon and she approached me then I was easily and ready and available to join to do a project. We had just begun our summer program so you came at a good time. You communication with the director was on point because she knew as well our program was just kicking off. So when we suggested getting together on Wednesdays and that set the format for us to automatically just instead of using our art project time in the summer program we just shifted it over to what you guys were doing. So that was just fine.

KAREN: It worked out well. I can tell you on the Art Consortium’s end you know I think that sort of sharing of resources and having kids come together at different places and interests that there is now it seems too. So it would be interesting because I know like I am going to be working with the West End Y and planning for the new YMCA. We are thinking of programming and the arts are one of those things. So it seems to me that with the Arts Consortium right here, why not tap into that but then offer in exchange you know that those kids can come here and do something that is sort of more recreational. I don’t think that at the Arts Consortium in their summer camp, they don’t get recreational stuff. Just like the kids here and at the West End Y probably don’t get much art. They get some I’m sure but. I think that is a partnership that, some partnerships that will be really beneficially on both ends.

RICHARD: That is what you call community networking and that is what we all need to do. We are so close in proximity and we all share basically different kids but same families, if you will. Downtown is an extended family tree branch connection. They could be cousins, grown up at school together and a whole lot. So even though you have three different programs, the West End Y the Lincoln Center and Arts Consortium. We still can connect them all to do a project. That is good.
KAREN: I’m hoping that comes of it. That is not, since I don’t work for any well I guess I do represent the West End Y because I am on the board. I don’t work for any of them I can’t necessarily make that happen myself but I am hoping that this project may give them an example of what could be, what continues to be done. What did you think the kids got from the art, the other group of kids got from this art project this summer?

RICHARD: Well, before getting them actually to go there every Monday and Wednesday because it became repetitious on Monday and Wednesday I would be here at nine o’clock and say it was time to go. Once they got there and were awake you know because it is summer time and they want to sleep. I think some of them got a sense of pride. Some of them it took more, more times coming to the program to appreciate it. Late bloomers of appreciation of art. Some didn’t want to do it at first and then some did. Then there were a few who didn’t want to do anything. I think they got a feeling of connection. A sense of belonging because they had to do part of the actual drawing. Once they came to understand that part that they drew was going to be in the mirror then they became more connected with the program. I took some of them up there the other day and they said, “Oh we did this. Where is my football at?” You know and Devante had the numbers on the football field. So they felt a sense of belonging and connection.

KAREN: You think part of what made that take place was the fact that it was their drawings and ideas that made it into the mural?

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: Do you think that that was more so than the fact that they helped paint? For instance if we hadn’t gotten, if we had done it and we came up with the design on our own and then said, “Hey kids do you want to help us paint, fill in the painting?” Do you think they would have had the same?

RICHARD: Yes, I think actually the painting really topped it off. I mean because you could see them grabbing paint brushes, wanting to color what they had done.

KAREN: Okay I didn’t notice that they gravitated towards their ideas.

RICHARD: Yes towards their ideas. Wanting to paint the T-shirt on the kid. Wanting to paint the volleyball net, you know because they drew the volleyball net but they wanted to be connected to that volleyball net. So they were going to, drifting off to what they actually had done. They will be able to go by that wall for the rest of their life and say, “This is what we had done.”

KAREN: So do you think that perhaps they might not get their full understanding or appreciation of what they did until later in their life? I sort of sensed that as you go on and you keep going by your piece of work that it is really…
RICHARD: …Some of them, some of them is going to mature and think like they have that sense of connection. Some of them are going to mature faster than others. Some of them won’t hit them until they are eighteen or nineteen and say, “This is what I did when I was twelve and thirteen.” Some of them may just stop by that wall and play because they helped put that together. Some of them may tell mom and dad, let’s stop and play there because I want to show you something. This is what we had done in the summer program with Miss Karen and Mister Richard. They will be able to reflect on that. So that is very important. It is just funny to see who that might be. We know some that maybe more mature than others.

KAREN: Some have already had those feelings.

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: Yes. Do you think that their perceptions of themselves have changed at all as a result of it?

RICHARD: They are kids and you can’t see that yet. You can’t see it yet. I would say if we were to monitor them through their years of high school and we ask them those questions, we might get a better answer from them.

KAREN: Yes, we go back to them five years later and see.

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: Do you think that perceptions of others may leave their parents, their parents that they show or people that don’t even know them that maybe saw this painting changed about what they were able to do, what their abilities are as kids?

RICHARD: Well that is a two fold question because a lot of times parents aren’t or don’t seem as interested in their children in this area, but say if they interested a teacher. If they share it with a teacher what they had done over the summer and that teacher comes to that site and sees that. That teacher could be able to take that positive image that that child showed in that mural and encourage that child. I have seen that type of stuff happen before where the teacher takes…

KAREN: …The teacher picks up on (inaudible) the parents (inaudible).

RICHARD: Yes passing the parents. That student puts so much trust in that teacher. From the teachers that are interested. Not the ones of them that say, “I will see you later.” I’m talking about the ones that will take them home. You know what I am saying you know you find teacher that will take a child home if they are late or whatever if they have to stay and do a project. That child would say, “Oh I want to show you what we did during the summer.” That is all you need to light that fuel for that child and that can take off from that. That wall and that mural can do that.
KAREN: Do you think it is something in the child or something in the…

RICHARD: …Both.

KAREN: Both?

RICHARD: I would say it is a spiritual connection because you know just the word spiritual. Things happen in a way where a higher power kinds of helps out even when we don’t know that it is happening. I use spiritual principles today in my life. Art is another spiritual connection. What is her name, the red head?

KAREN: Alex.

RICHARD: Alex. She is very articulate, blessed. That is a skill. She was a center piece of the whole program along with you putting it together. See I mean everybody came together and my willingness to involve the children as well. We all came together to create one common thing and that is the finishing touch. There is a spiritual piece to all of that. I don’t question it. I just, this is the right thing for the right reason and everything will go right. I trusted one of our (inaudible) with that because kids did it. I don’t work for nobody you know. It is already protected from a spirituality piece. So it spirit natured thing and what you have done with brining all of this together is, I hope it doesn’t stop. I hope you can maybe find another project. Slowly we could put this thing together. There was a funeral for some young kid that got killed, and this Center was empty almost because all the kids went to the funeral.

KAREN: A kid from around here?

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: What happened?

RICHARD: Argument, misunderstanding, shooting and that is how it happens.

KAREN: Were they shooting here?

RICHARD: Not here.

KAREN: It didn’t take place here.

RICHARD: In the community. I don’t know on maybe on Twelve and (inaudible) or something like that.

KAREN: That was maybe like a week ago?

RICHARD: Yes, they had a funeral yesterday. All the kids were upset, you know walking around…
KAREN: …Did they know him?

RICHARD: Yes they knew him. We have got a whole list of murders around here. So what we are doing is therapeutic in nature. Because a lot of kids have a lot of issues on the playground around here. What we do is cut through to get to them. I think that art was a way to help take their minds off of some of the things that are going on in their life. One of our students is Devante, he lost his father.

KAREN: Recently?

RICHARD: Well two years ago.

KAREN: That is recent.

RICHARD: Yes, but he still carries anger. He has anger, a lot of anger. Look what therapeutically it had done for him. He was one of the best painters that we had according to Alex…

KAREN: …(Inaudible).

RICHARD: Yes. They said he was a real good kid and he gave him his number and was willing to help.

KAREN: Did he?

RICHARD: Yes.

KAREN: He gave it to Devante or to you?

RICHARD: Devante to make sure to help him out tutoring. So see there was another connection. That is what I am talking about. Whether it is one or five or ten that felt a connection and I am going to call Devante to make sure he gave that information to his mother to reinforce that. So that is what I am talking about. That is what this mural has done, some therapeutic.

KAREN: What do you think it is about art, be it music, murals, painting that is able to do this? The connection or the reaching of the kids, that is something you know we try to grasp we don’t really, it is hard to put into words. What is it, do you think, about this process the mural process? Or music as you were talking about before that does this?

RICHARD: Well it is a form of, the music is a form of entertainment based on reality. Art is a form that is based on reality. It took a childhood dream of theirs of playing in a park or swinging on a swing and interjected that into their future goals. So it is a reality piece that could be put in a cartoon figurine because it is coming from a child. It is not a real serious thing of emphasis. It is a childhood thought process of what do you like to
do? What would you like your career to be? They just went with that and just did a little whole dream type of a thing all on one piece. So reality, cartoon figuring, innocent very innocent.

KAREN: That was something that we wanted to, especially the matter of the park because of the perceptions of that specific park. Having from what I have heard a lot of parents don’t want their kids to go to that playground because of the perceptions around it. So-called gang that hang out there and hung out there. So one of our goals was for me, once we chose that site and I think it happened to all of us on a level that we weren’t aware of was we need to reclaim this so that it is recognized that this a kids place for innocence, for play, for dreaming. Not for guns, not for gangs, not for violence.

RICHARD: So the seed has been planted. That mural is a seed. When kids walk by there, their parents would probably say, “We are not going to that park.” That is before that mural. Now they see that mural as a token for kids to now enter. “Okay let’s stop by and let the kids swing on the Barney and go through the little things. Let’s sit there for a half and hour and let them play.” Before they wouldn’t. So that mural has taken back the idea they were kids. It has probably done scared away some of the dope dealers too. So it is a double edged thing here. It is a sense of taking back without even saying a word.

KAREN: How do you think it has scared away the dope dealers?

RICHARD: Well because they saw a bunch of kids doing that work and that was their stake. That was their stake and we claimed it. That was their stake and we claimed it. They see all those kids up there painting. When those dope dealers walked by and they saw that, so this is ours. Without even saying a word to them, this is ours. Now they are able to respect that. Even if they sit up there and park. Sit up there and you see kids come up there. They might just push them away. Where as before they took full ownership. That mural will be working even when no kids are up there. So it has had a very positive effect.

KAREN: We were at the West End Y for a meeting and a friend of mine was leaving and she saw a drug transaction taking place. In the parking lot behind the Y, behind the chicken joint. She and I didn’t know if that was something that happened in that area a lot so I said something to J.C., who is the director. He said that it does happen a lot. She took offense to it because of the kids, the YMCA is like an innocent child. He had said they put cameras and stuff up on the chicken joint to monitor it.

RICHARD: Are you talking about that Rich’s?

KAREN: Um hmm, behind Rich’s place there is a parking lot.

RICHARD: There is no light on that left end right here where that playground is at, right. There is this playground right here on the corner where the Regal is. Now if you go down that street where the Regal is, it is an open basketball court on this side…
KAREN: …Right back behind here basically…

RICHARD: …Yes, then there is…

KAREN: …Then the Y’s parking lot is on the other side…

RICHARD: …Outside of the chicken place…

KAREN: …And they do drug…

RICHARD: …Yes that is what I am saying, right back in between there. Right back in there, right back in there.

KAREN: The police are involved, they have been monitoring and that sort of thing but to me it doesn’t seem like it is effective. It is interesting to me that you are saying here that the mural has done the work to rid an area of drug dealers while the police are involved here and they have cameras and they are trying to enforce and it is still not doing anything. So what is the, like why isn’t that working and why does the mural work?

RICHARD: See there is a playground there. There is a playground. There is a little slide and little things kids can run up on…

KAREN: …The one right here?

RICHARD: No I’m talking about the one where we were at. That is a playground area. That is no playground area over there. Maybe they need to move some of that stuff back there and make a playground over there if the city owns that. Maybe they need to put a playground back behind there so the kids can relight the wire and play back there. Then start your mural. Something needs to be to upset, because see they don’t want to be around the kids doing the drugs. They don’t want to be around the kids. They have a sense of respect for that.

KAREN: See we looked at as that they did it because they were on the property of the YMCA. I guess because there aren’t actually kids present.

RICHARD: They are inside most of the time. They don’t have any structured tools back there for kids do they? Do they have a playground back over there?

KAREN: No, I know that the drum line practices in that parking lot sometimes but that is about it.

RICHARD: They need to put a fence around it probably and put up some things that kids like to do and put that up there. That is the investment. Put up some positive images like we did. That is going to chase them out of there. They aren’t going to want…
KAREN: …They don’t want to be around it all.

RICHARD: No, one thing they do respect is kids.

KAREN: Which is interesting to me because in this neighborhood thirty percent of the residents of this neighborhood is kids. You would think that is a big enough force, two thousand we have eight thousand people in this neighborhood and more than two thousand are kids. That is a big enough force almost to overcome the drugs.

RICHARD: Right here on the corner right there, you don’t see any transactions over there. Right next door.

KAREN: I can’ (inaudible) there last.

RICHARD: It is because there are kids there. That is what they need to do.

KAREN: There are some five year olds that scare me that I won’t go to that park.

RICHARD: Yes. They see what their relatives do and they do act on that. That is the difference on that. That is the scary part because some of them imitate them.

KAREN: What are even, you know when I take Brianna there she will watch these five, six, seven year olds acting in a way that they have learned from somebody in their family. She might even start replicating or she might be saying the same words. So even if it is not, even if the kids’ own family isn’t doing it. They get it from another kid whose family is.

RICHARD: Peer pressure of proportionate, peer pressure from a variety. That is what happens today with children. They can live in Kenwood Montgomery area and still get the same waxed up on BET and be dressing just like them. I mean it is across the board.

KAREN: It is not even just among the African American children (inaudible). It is not even (inaudible) anymore.

RICHARD: Right that is what I am saying. No it is just a fact and what I am saying the dope boy that he won’t run around them where, because he doesn’t want them seeing it. Even if some of them see it. They don’t want them seeing it so they won’t stay in the area. We have to think literally as protection to keep building up children things. I really truly believe that if we keep building up around the children that that will weed them out of certain areas. They help push them out. We have to find an antidote. Just like superman, he had kryptonite. That was his weakness. We need to find a weakness for the dope boy and it is the children. So if we can come around the children and protect the children, just like you have got a double penalty at a school or around a school. Those are serious consequences. That is why you don’t sell around school. We need to keep building stuff around the children.
KAREN: The new YMCA which is going into the old school is going to be, the first floor will be the YMCA and the top two floors will be the Charter School. So that whole area is going to be…

RICHARD: …So they probably will make some like swings and different things like that.

KAREN: I’m sure that they are going to do something at the new Y, but the old Y now is up for sale but it might be purchased by a Charter School so then I mean now we mainly have the Lincoln Center, the Arts Consortium, the YMCA we have two Charter Schools all.

RICHARD: See that is going to clean out his whole project. See what I am saying. Then that is going to run, they can’t run over there because these buildings are (inaudible). They are going to scatter back over there on Race Street.

KAREN: They are gong to go either Over-the-Rhine or up to lower Price Hill.

RICHARD: Yes, so you keep building the same type of things you know what I am saying. I dropped in on Northside in August and there were dope boys in there that are trying to stop selling drugs. That is a whole different environment. I had not heard that before. You have heard about people trying to get off dope.

KAREN: Trying to get to stop selling.

RICHARD: Yes, they are trying to stop selling dope.

KAREN: Well that is (inaudible) on that money.

RICHARD: Yes it is.

KAREN: You know you go to (inaudible) you are not going to make what you were making.

RICHARD: Right. Some of the stuff is changing. It is a slow process. Sometimes we don’t see it because we are always having a death or a shooting or child struggling in school but we are turning a corner. We are turning a corner and I really truly believe if my vision is just a key putting up power structures around kids in the community. I mean that is our investment. The more we do that and the more we are visible, the more we allow our children to be a part of the process like we did with the mural.

KAREN: I think that is the part that gets left out a lot is the process. They need to be a part of it.

RICHARD: Yes, they need to be a part of the process. As long as we kind of just let them, we give them the suggestions. Suggestions are positive and taken and generally
you know runs the structure like it was and it could stay structured then we would get positive results. The spirituality piece well just coming home and as long as we are doing it like that it is like. Here is what Marvin Lewis says, “When you turn out the lights the roaches will scatter.” That is what the dope boys will do, they will scatter. Now you turn out the lights, the ants will keep working. Okay now my point is if we keep putting up positive structures for the kids then the dope boys are going to scatter. They will have to find them a new home. That will make them more visible to the police. If we are working, we are the ants, you turn the lights on we are still working. We are going to put up and do the right thing. I do believe in that. Sometimes we don’t seem like we are getting just due. It seems like I work it seems like it don’t…

KAREN: …If you want to calculate it in money you don’t.

RICHARD: Right but it is an investment. It really is an investment in the children. I am talking about you have got to go beyond the elementary. You have got to go to preschool, day cares. You have got to give up stuff like that. Age four, five, six, seven and eight. Those age groups are who we need to shelter because some of the ones around twelve thirteen are lost, and they are thirteen. That is, they are going to prison. You know they are locked up until they are twenty one because they bound over when they get twenty one. That is what is happening with thirteen year olds. I just met a mother today who she had to fight her son because her son wanted to whip her behind. She went to jail. Her son beat the crap out of her. How do you get a fix out of that and she tried to protect herself.

KAREN: That was a lose lose situation. What do you think about the process that we went through? You talked about them fitting, something involving them in the process. What, can you name a specific parts of that process that they went through in the mural that you thought was important to the success of it. If we want to look at it as a success.

RICHARD: Picking their brain for what they liked to do as children, at the park. Or what they would like to do when they grow up. That part of the process. They seemed confused at first some of them but once we really got to going over, giving them examples, they were able to put their ideas on paper. Which was the ground for making the mural.

KAREN: You spent a lot of time in the beginning doing things like walking around in the neighborhood looking at assets, looking for walls. Which I could have come in and just said, ‘This is the wall we are going to do.’ I didn’t, I had the kids go through the steps of considering all of the walls that we could consider and considering what the good things are in the neighborhood. That was probably a good half of our summer was doing those sorts of activities. The actual painting only lasted a couple of weeks really. Do you think those things were important really?

RICHARD: Yes, that was another part that gave them a sense of belonging in the process because once you gave them the cameras and we took off in all of our directions then it was automatic. They were taking pictures, “Oo-wee this would be a site.” So we
wrote down the street, the streets that the site was on and took pictures. We did that process for about what three weeks maybe. About three or four times when the weather was nice. We had total cooperation even I mean you know we took breaks. We had to learn to take breaks. We had to utilize the time. What do you just sit around for a minute? Just take a break from walking. I told them I said, ‘Hey I’m an old man here. Let’s take a break here and then we will continue our journey.’ Once we got that all of us went in different directions. We had some people over here we had some people here, here…

KAREN: …Of the groups you mean?

RICHARD: Yes and we all shared where we went the following week or the following day. Then we had pictures on top of it. We all had some good general ideas where we could put a mural and that was the whole process right there. Once we got the okay on the wall. Then we started. Then we went into the classroom to put our ideas on paper. So it is a complete process.

KAREN: Do you think that they could possibly now look at a wall for instance and look at it for the possibility now? Because if they are walking around looking at blank walls, considering them for the mural. Something they have probably never done before looked at a blank wall and thought…

RICHARD: …Yes I think we all developed that and keep that. Very it is artistic. You know they will drive by and whoever they are with they would probably say, “This could be, we could do a mural on this wall.” Yes.

KAREN: Talking about possibility versus what is, and I think that is something. Some people develop a sense of activism or wanting to make things better. Which you and I share. Obviously because we work with kids we want to make something better for them. Some people grow into thinking that things are as they are and I can’t do anything about it. I am sort of comparing that to okay looking at a bunch of walls that might not look so nice. Kids might not normally think, “This could look really cool if I, this is a possibility here not just a problem.”

RICHARD: I think with the kids that we work with and there was probably a good twenty-five or thirty if not more. They will all remember this process because of the structure. There was a beginning, there was a middle, and there was an end. One thing that children and youth always remember is if you tell them they are going to do something and finish it they will always respect you and they will always remember that. We made an impact on at least thirty to forty kids. We put a seed in their head about what a wall an empty wall can look like with art. They may already share that in art. Every last one of them may share that in art that we did a mural and then take that teacher to it if possible if they can. Or tell that teacher where it is at so that teacher can go back and see it. That will start that kid, you know develop. Really give that kid high self esteem in that area. Which is a good thing. Regardless of how you chill and acting having a bad day that art class can pick them up. That is what we have done to these
children. I am talking about we have had probably sixth grade fifth grade all the way up to high school.

KAREN: Well those are all of my questions, is there anything else?

RICHARD: No not at this moment. I am just glad to be a part of it and I hope that I can be a part of it next year and develop a working relationship that I can automatically include the Arts Consortium into. You know I don’t know what your work schedule will be but whoever may be with you or whatever. I know jobs changes.
APPENDIX M
Interview With Donna
KAREN: This is already the thirteenth?

DONNA: Uhm-hmm, ah-hah.

KAREN: Time flies.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: Well I have interview questions put together but they don’t necessarily apply to the role you played.

DONNA: Okay.

KAREN: So I’m sort of gonna ask you other questions as we go, but first of all can you tell me why you were willing to work with me on this project in the beginning not knowing me very well and not really knowing what the project was going to be?

DONNA: Well I thought it would be a good challenge for the kids, something for them to participate in other than just general classes that we offer here. And I knew it was gonna be something that was gonna impact the community and I wanted them to be a part of that.

KAREN: How do you think it impacted the community?

DONNA: Uhm, I think it always makes a difference in the community’s perspective when you see people coming into the community and beautify their community by taking responsibility for doing things that they should be doing but someone else cares enough to come into the community. So it’s not like uhm you have a group of people who are just doing it for show but you’ve been there for a long period of time and put some thought into it, and it was something that’s gonna stay there for a long period of time. It wasn’t temporary, so it was something permanent. And I think that when residents see, residents whose often feel empowered or who don’t have the ability to make change, see someone else comin’ in to change it… uhm I think that makes them feel good.

KAREN: When I first started this project my goal was to have students from the neighborhood sort of play the primary roles and obviously that’s, you know those kids from here weren’t all, there was maybe one or two that live in the West End…

DONNA: …Right.

KAREN: …from the Arts Consortium and then there was the Lincoln group.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: How do you think that?
DONNA: I think that worked well. I think as far as how that played as far as…

KAREN: …The two groups and then…

DONNA: …working together.

KAREN: …you know having one group that was primarily not from the neighborhood.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: And then the other group that I’d say like fifty percent of the Lincoln group was from the neighborhood.

DONNA: Was from the neighborhood. Well just definitely taught them, when they had to go in the planning process I felt that you have one group that’s probably saying, “This would be great to have” and another group knowing what’s needed in the community. So I think that gives them two different perspectives of how you can look at things. But having to work and share the work ethic and I think there may have been difference there, and this is not our, our community but we wanna be a part of it. We really wanna make a difference. And then you have the, this is our community but they have to get over some of the stigmatisms that go along with that park, with the area you know, and you know in your thought that you can fix it up. It may get torn up anyway, so what’s the use in, so you have to overcome some, some myths…things I would say…

KAREN: …On both sides or on one side versus the other?

DONNA: I’ll say on both sides, ‘cause you know on one side you may have had the fear of, of knowing what goes on down there at that park and have to go down there, but then getting down there and it’s fun, it’s a park. A park is a park no matter where it’s located at or what kind of community, what kind of area, it’s a park and it’s fun. And you have to overcome just the stereotypes of what you’ve heard about the area and to enjoy it, but I think all of them enjoy in doing and very proud of…

KAREN: What do you think, do you think that the project changed based on us choosing that particular location? You know we sort of went around looking at all different kinds of locations and sort of choosing that one, which was sort of a you know hot, a hot spot right, you know currently…

DONNA: …Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: …it’s sort of an interest spot right now. Do you think that changed the project or what effect do you think that had on it?

DONNA: Choosing that spot?

KAREN: Yeah.
DONNA: Well I don’t think, I think that you know the West End unfortunately has a reputation that you know precedes anything, so you know you have to get over that, the, what you’ve been taught or what you’ve been told. And some of the kids have been down here for so long that they don’t, you know they hear things that happen but they don’t connect them. And we have kids who live in the community that know what actually happens, what goes on so they have a, a sense of fear but not a fear of not going different places that they knew when to go to them or when not to go to them, I should say. So I don’t think choosing, I don’t really think choosing that, that spot made a difference, I really don’t think it did. I think it helped ‘cause I think it’s appropriate, more appropriate for the kids, something they can relate to better than a wall or an area makes a….

KAREN: Do you think the kids struggled through the process?

DONNA: I really don’t, hmm. I think in the beginning you know because you had to use a lot of thought and critical thinking and you had to use your imagination. I think today it’s difficult for kids to be very imaginative because everything’s given to them, so they’re used to you putting something in front of them and then telling them to create from that. But now you’re saying, “Well what do you want to do?” You know just getting them to think and not be afraid to say and suggest; I think that was probably the biggest obstacle I’m sure.

KAREN: What do you think, what do you think your group of kids learned from the project? I mean I’ve talked to them but I think it’s hard for them at that age to really know what they’ve gotten…

DONNA: …Out of it.

KAREN: …on such a project, yeah.

DONNA: I think the, once they started with the hands-on because our kids here are doing everything hands-on, and they see you know their results come that way. You know they take pride in what they do and that’s where they get their sense of you know of completion, I should say. So I think that what they got out of it is “Look what we started; look what we did; look at what we were able to complete.” I think they really enjoyed doing a lot of the painting. I think they really enjoyed that you know and being the group that’s always down there a lot, you know I think they took a lot of pride in that you know. They felt like “We did this” and you know “It was us. You know we carried the paint,” so I think it’s the labor of love for them because they were hands-on. I don’t think they would have gotten much out of it if all they had to do is come up with an idea, then someone else complete the project. So I think that, that hardest part for them was coming up with what to do and then, but the hands-on, I think that’s, they really got a lot out of that.

KAREN: And they have those skills that they’ve been learning…
DONNA: …Uhm-hmm, for years.

KAREN: …different, yeah.

DONNA: Yes.

KAREN: There’s definitely a difference between their comfort level of painting and the other…

DONNA: …Right.

KAREN: …comfort level of and their abilities too.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: What do you think, what role do you think art plays in improving a neighborhood like the West End? I mean the Art Consortium’s been in this neighborhood for a long time and you’ve been a part of that, so what role do you think art plays, the arts play, not just visual?

DONNA: I think the role of the arts can play in neighborhood in some you know family pride, you know parents watching their growing grow through the arts and establishing artistic skills and finding that there’s other needs and other ways for them to be successful and expressing themselves through instead of violence. Uhm and I think it’s difficult when you grow up in a community that’s under-served to especially be yourself, and that’s what I think the arts does for under-served populations is teaching you it’s okay to be yourself; it’s okay to think the way that you think; it’s okay to act you know that way as far as your personality because it’s too broad, and you get you know more self confidence out of the arts because it’s an the individual type of activity. And I think the sad part about it is that when you are in a under-served population people tend to utilize the arts as long as it benefits or it meets the needs that they have. So if you have a after school arts program where the kids can go at the school and the parents know that they can utilize that at the schools…

KAREN: …Yeah, baby-sitting.

DONNA: Daycare in the arts is, you know it’s quite a bit more in tune to the service that you’re providing and not really what the kids are actually getting out of it. But the blessing is that they understand both and appreciate both if you’ve got it. But yeah, I think right now the arts in the African-American population is still at a disadvantage because we haven’t yet learned to value art for art’s sake and to really teach our kids to value arts, value all kinds of music and not just hip-hop and not just what you’re used to hearing on the radio but to teach them the value of art and creating, just the creating I should say, creating, creative, period. So I think this organization could do, could be
utilized and could serve as a main catalyst for that, but it’s just you know getting them to come in and utilize the services.

KAREN: And you think they would only do that for, that…would only do that for free baby-sitting, so to speak?

DONNA: Yes and or free and you’ve found that in, that in the past that free is not always valued. You know you give ’em free dance classes. You can give someone free art classes, then there’s no commitment because it’s free so whether I show up today or not don’t mat, I get paid for it so who cares?

KAREN: Doesn’t matter. What role do you think that Uptown Arts is playing then? Do you know much about their classes or?

DONNA: I think Uptown Arts, they’re meeting a need. I think they are giving kids, I don’t know how they get there, first of all. I don’t know if parents have to be responsible for getting them there, so parents do, that’s a commitment right there. So I think that it is you know a valued service. I know they don’t do homework when they get there, so that’s the difference between a after school program that includes the arts and you know after school arts program where you’re going there, you’re only gonna get involved in the arts. You’re not doing homework or anything like that, which they don’t have time… So I think these parents, if they’re taking them there they’ve made a commitment to do that and they really value and want their kids to be involved. The only thing I wish was that Uptown Arts could be open during the summer where the need is really greater in the summer, but hey I can’t, you know we can have summers off, great. They do such a great job during the year.

KAREN: Why do you think that so many people took such an interest in the mural like you know the news and like Frank and like C.G.…

DONNA: …C.G.…

KAREN: I just met her for the first time finally face-to-face and we talked about it a little bit.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: But it just seemed like there was this, I don’t know this interest in it for some reason when they knew there was an interest and now that areas that you know arts education is serving.

DONNA: Uhm, because it’s making a change. It was making a visual change that you can see; it’s a instant change. It’s not something where you started in September and by hopefully by May you’ll see the change in their attitude or maybe their grades will get better, but this is an instant change. And hopefully by having a positive part, a positive images in it and people are involved in there so it’ll be positive things. It is such a, you
know *park* is such a great controversy you know its reputations for you know *Murderer’s Park* and the gangs and so it’s like we’re trying to clean up; we’re doing two things, we teaching kids values. At the same time with giving ‘em art skills and, but we’re changing the community’s, you know how they’re perceived and how that park is being perceived.

KAREN: So you think it was more the physical change or the combination of physical and person/social or?

DONNA: No, I think it was all of the above. I think you know finding someone who, who actually did something about it ‘cause everybody’s been talking about doing something about the park and what is the, you know, but no one’s actually gone in and did something, and when finally somebody did it was yourself and kids.

KAREN: Do you think it would have been different if a mural was, just went in and did a mural versus having kids involved?

DONNA: I think it’s, it has more sentiment when kids do it, but I think it would have had, having that mural was just going to say, “You know what? I just want to do something for this park.” I think people would have seen ‘em but it probably wouldn’t have gotten that much attention you know. People would have gave ‘em a lot of respect for doing it, but as far as the coverage and I don’t think it would have received as much coverage, hmm-uhm.

KAREN: What do you think about the different partnerships that were involved in it and obviously that partnerships are considered collaboration and partnership, so that’s a hot thing right now. But aside from that you know for funding or whatever purposes, what meaning do you think that has in a community project like this?

DONNA: Well I, sometimes the communities come, try to come together, they’re not successful because everybody has their own agenda or they think some different way. But I think it’s really good that everyone, that the two, you know the organizations could come together for a common cause and everyone got along and it worked just well. I think that just shows that the power of collaboration and what we can do with kids if you, if you really want to. So I think it had a strong impact on community unity; that’s what it showed.

KAREN: What impact do you think it had on a project that, here I am this white chick comin’ in tryin’ to do a project in an African-American neighborhood? I mean I got different, especially sitting in here I’m remembering a couple of the West End community council meetings and one not going so well, and I think that might have been part of it. But do you think that was something I had to overcome or you think it was something that was never an issue?

DONNA: Well I think it’s always an issue. I know that it doesn’t matter whether you’re black or white. I just think anyone coming into this community; this community has been for a lack of better words pimped so much, you know under-served population, especially
this community. Groups coming in saying, “We’re gonna do this,” and they’ll come and they’ll, from this is what the residents are saying to me. They come in and then they do a good month. They’re supposed to be here for the whole ten months but they only do one month, and then the next month they’re in and out barely or you know so they, once they get the money that they want for the press or whatever it is they’re trying to get, once they get that then they have no regard to be involved with the neighborhood at all. Or they really, their agendas when they come in are not for the community, so they’ve experienced a lot of that. This neighborhood is, particularly the councils are so protective of this community and how comes in and, and you just, white individual or someone whose not of African-American descent is going to be scrutinized even, even more. And if you can handle that scrutiny during a couple meetings and you still stick in there, then they, they have respect for you.

KAREN: It’s a level of commitment then you think…

DONNA: …Yeah, it’s definitely a level of commitment. And someone’s just what is their, what’s the purpose you know? What was your motivation behind this? Are they really serious? Do you really wanna make a change? You know you may be committed but do you really, are you really serious about it? Do you really care?

KAREN: They wanna know why I went through agenda, and I noticed in under-served populations, they’re quick to see right through you.

DONNA: Right, uhm-hmm.

KAREN: Yeah, they know.

DONNA: They know. And you don’t have a relationship with someone else in the community prior to coming in, you know you just comin’ in here they know it’s about money; they know it’s about dollars. They know there’s money, especially if you know it’s time or moneys were readily available for anyone who…under-served populations and do activities. And they, they pimp so much that they, they do it to me when I go in and try to introduce new programming. You know they, “Well why are you?” you know and I’m like ‘I’ve been here for so long so why are you treating me this way?’ But if you can go through the (coughing) if you can make it through those meetings you know…

KAREN: …Yeah.

DONNA: …you can make it, so but it’s…

KAREN: How do you think this community’s changing, the West End? Do you think it’s changing or do you think it’s new developments not doing, I mean it’s not changing; it’s gonna go back to the way it was?

DONNA: Well it’s definitely changing. I mean what type of change may be the question. You know it’s changing from the fact that in this West End between Laurel Holmes and Lincoln Courts the murder is down, the drug trafficking rates you know so
you don’t have those, you know in Lincoln Court you don’t hear about someone being murdered or killed or drug tracking bust. In rural homes you don’t hear that anymore. You don’t hear (coughing) down the street there may be some murders but you, those were, those happened, nothing has happened in six months maybe or so. But as far as change, as far as that’s concerned that has changed. But the repu, you know its reputations has preceded itself so I think it’s, you, you know you’re gonna have nice housing; it may not be quality housing and that’s a question, too. And I think the residents you know still feel the same about it, you know it’s still housing, they feel treated the same and so there may not be a difference. You know if they’re hoping that it’ll be a very mixed population, I think it’s gonna be a long time before that happens. I think more diverse population will come in frequent in the neighborhood more, but it’s gonna be up to the media to make that happen. And then we’ll see a big change…the media…drawing forces and by positive things about the community and about the positive changes that are going on. They start doin’ that, then you could see…people coming down there. But other than that they don’t have…

KAREN: Well I think the services offered aren’t even for mixed income...

DONNA: …Hmm-uhm.

KAREN: …populations, just the services are for those who, who have low or…low income.

DONNA: Right.

KAREN: Which I…this past year. You know there’s, there’s a great school right across the street but I can’t use it. I can’t send my stepdaughter there.

DONNA: Wow, you can’t?

KAREN: Well the Head Start program…

DONNA: …Oh yeah, yeah.

KAREN: …there’s no, and this is, there’s no grocery store.

DONNA: There’s nothin’.

KAREN: …Just a little quick markets which everybody goes to every morning and gets their chips and pop.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm, that’s breakfast to…

KAREN: Yeah.

DONNA: Yeah, it’s changing but it…
KAREN: …You know once the services I think, and when I say services I mean like a grocery store or like schools and they took Sands Montessori and moved it out to Mount Washington and now that’s where Brianna is going. And there was a letter in the last newsletter, a little article about how the school’s now becoming less diverse because it’s out in Mount Washington; what can we do to make it more diverse?

DONNA: …Can’t…

KAREN: …Can’t move it way out.

DONNA: Try…

KAREN: …Mount Washington because families out here can’t…

DONNA: …They don’t wanna catch…at that time. I mean they don’t trust…

KAREN: …Too hard for them to get up and they don’t wanna put their kids on a bus…

DONNA: …That’s right.

KAREN: …to go that far.

DONNA: That’s right. They knew that, they knew that when they did it because they couldn’t get the number of families…that they wanted to, so.

KAREN: Interesting. So do you think this project was a success?

DONNA: I think it was a success. I’m hoping that each summer there will be a project to help beautify the community in some way, shape, or form. There will always be something, and I think once that’s done, you know ‘cause it’s interesting last year we did the trash cans outside. This year you come, you do the park, maybe next year you know there’s something else or there’s something else, they do the street scapes or if they do, you know they continue to build on that, but uh I think you’ll have, a more impact.

KAREN: When you had shared some ideas with me, one that I think was sports-related even…

DONNA: …Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: …like something around, around sports…

DONNA: …Right.

KAREN: …and connecting with the recreation part and maybe it’s something arts related and I thought that was a really great idea. And in my interview with Richard at
the Lincoln Center I talked about that a little bit, so he got real excited about that idea of you know connecting sports with the arts and doing something along those lines. So what do you think it would take to continue doing something like that every summer?

DONNA: Continually meeting. You know you’d probably have to start meeting like in January and start planning and trying to find the right resources ‘cause it’s all, get the right sponsorship and funding and then you can make it better at it, not bigger but just better.

KAREN: Yeah, I think people confuse those sometimes.

DONNA: They do… because they wanted *(phone ringing)* make it better, ‘cause maybe we can add stipends that they could use. You know if not stipends use…gift certificates at the end or they can be treated to, you know I kind of thought about it ‘cause we should have you know tried to get them to get to Kings Island and take the whole group to Kings Island, you know ‘cause we probably could have gotten tickets easily or the project that they did,…the background for the park and you know what it’s done and how it mobilized the community and what we tried to do in collaboration of the kids and kids from out of the community and kids in the community change…the perspective. And you know I think they could have gotten tickets, you know but it’s just something like that to reward them…

KAREN: …More celebration.

DONNA: Right.

KAREN: And Jolynn suggested doing like a weekly or a monthly student of the you know doing, sending their picture to like the media, seeing if they’ll just do something on that one kid each month or something. You know there’s different ideas to really highlight each of the kids or all of them, all of their involvement, so I think that I agree. I think the problems often times is though you know these organizations try to go bigger and bigger, bigger and they don’t do these meaningful…

DONNA: …Right.

KAREN: …components and those sort of, they tend to get lost. And we were more inclined to how many kids we’ve served instead of how long we’ve served them.

DONNA: Right, and that’s the…

KAREN: Yeah.

DONNA: …‘cause I think about artwork sometimes. They serve a lot of kids but how well do you serve them you know. But I think they’ve changed now, kind of scaled back.

KAREN: They’re trying. I feel like, I’ve gotten that sense that they’re…
DONNA: …They’re really trying to serve ‘em well now.

KAREN: Yeah.

DONNA: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: Well it’s almost time for you to disappear.

DONNA: Do you have anymore questions for me?

KAREN: I think that…
APPENDIX N
Interview With Jolynn
KAREN: I am going to tape it though if that is okay.

JOLYNN: Yes, that is fine.

KAREN: Then hopefully you talk loud enough and we will both be able to talk louder. Even though you were not directly involved with it like some of the other people I am interviewing I think because you were really the first person to say, “Yes I will do this with you.” That was key to me in the beginning, because if I hadn’t gotten that from you the, “Okay I will do this with you and I am going to put you in touch with Paula and then we are going to get it started.” I would have never gotten that part and I would have and the Lincoln center I think still would have never really come into it until that part.

JOLYNN: That was the firm.

KAREN: So I guess when I explain it to people you know, ‘I have been working with the Arts Consortium on this.’ You know and I say, ‘I think it is because I have worked with JOLYNN in the past but you know I think I have found that they are much more willing to take a risk with me and collaborate with me but I can’t really put into words.’ So I am wondering I guess from your end why you felt it was something worthy of taking a risk with and seeing the kids involved with.

JOLYNN: What I think, what I felt? Well I think the main reason why I thought that it would be for the teens that I work with which are a mixture of public school and private school kids. Those young people that you particular had were young people who were actually part of a year round CCY program. So I kind of had, at least two of them, a little exposure with them and about kind of some of their things they had been used to with the art. I think that your project, a lot of kids don’t understand that large I guess large aspects of doing art. They kind of know what painting and drawing a picture is but really what goes behind doing installation piece or behind doing art. They kind of see me do that here with the shows but they don’t really understand the process. I thought it would be interesting to kind of enlighten them on the work that goes behind producing something. As an additive to the stuff they would learn with me. Which actually I think helps them to do better work for the smaller projects because they were actually working with something were they are going to use a lot more brain power and a lot more thinking. Which when they got into some of the easier stuff that typically is where most people would start with kids, it was kind of like, “Oh this is, I can do this. I have actually we have done a mural.” You know which was a large project. Then I think too that kids need to kind of understand, particularly the kids which we work with which is mostly African American kids. That there are a lot of the people in the community that are involved with trying make their neighborhoods better or their environments better. That are not just Black people, are not just African American people. That there are a lot of people consistently in our community thinking of ways to improve things. As small as a mural project, I guess what they call the Tot Lot or whatever they call that lot.

KAREN: That is the Raymond Jackson Park that was right next to that lot.
JOLYNN: Yes in the area where it usually has a very negative stereotype and the kids were very familiar with. They actually called it the stereotype name versus after Mr. Jackson who was a more positive person that they had a lot of pride in completing the project I guess and seeing that they had made an impact. I always try to push the kids good to be exposed with a lot of different individuals that are creative.

KAREN: What do you think Jazmyn and SHANDA got out of that project? Because you had a pretty big group of kids this summer and those were the only two other than Amber who sort of fell off.

JOLYNN: Yes, was off the wagon.

KAREN: Maybe also address why she didn’t get out it what the other two did.

JOLYNN: I think those in particular, I think they were very proud of the accomplishment of doing it. I think they were more proud of it as they walked away from it than while they were doing it and I think they were definitely more proud of it after it got recognition from other people. After externally from us. I think they didn’t really learn to appreciate it. I think probably maybe the week after you did it and we were talking about it, they were very much wanting and encouraging the other kids to go see it. You know, everybody needs to go see it. I think that that experience for them where some of the kids did go see it and saw it made a difference to them and kind of a peer acceptance feet was so important. I think that too they will be, I don’t know regardless of what they decide to do from now on with working or whatever. They actually have a discipline to them they are not aware they had because they did complete it. Those two in particular. They still are a little bit young and trying to figure out what they should do with their life, but I think that the next thing they go into that is concentrated they are going to be they are going to benefit from having a structured project. Even compared to the other kids who were here with us doing other things. Amber (inaudible), I think Amber unfortunately, she just started off on the wrong foot from day one and was never able to come back in and get on the right foot. Her whole CCY process and I curled the CCY process started her off on the wrong foot and not our progress. You know that sending her to a psych and then her just kind of feeling like, I think she really felt like she didn’t have a purpose. She wasn’t jailed to the program at all because of her indoctrination with it. She didn’t choose it and so therefore she was kind of put in it and she felt that way I think through the whole thing. There was nothing we could do to change that. I just think the other two girls benefited from that. I think they, they got to meet a lot more people than the others just got to meet as far as on a closer level.

KAREN: What do you think it is about the art that reached the kids that we worked with versus sports or versus something else that they could be involved with?

JOLYNN: I think like the arts, the arts are something that most of the kids don’t know that they have capabilities in. some kids know they can draw but they don’t know the value of that and I don’t think they really comprehend how innately and (inaudible) they
have a lot of stuff that goes on with them that they don’t really realize they can execute things like that. I think they are, they take very much for granted. Their artistic talents because it is not over promoted in their community. Particular the two girls you had, they come from communities where art is probably at the not even on the list as something for them to be exposed to. I think they actually were able to see that they could do something besides just work or just that they could make product and they could have a result of paying attention and listening. I think definitely that art gels people. Regardless of where they come from and what age they are. It is an easy way to educate people on bigger things.

KAREN: Why did you think then, you said it is in the innately but art is not necessarily promoted or explored? Why do you think that is? Why is it in them when they aren’t necessarily going the ones going to the museums or going and taking official classes?

JOLYNN: I think it is economics and almost a social economics whole theory that what promotes those two is based on their economics and where they come from. Most inner city youths are not exposed to art at a very young age due to the fact that economically it is expensive. In going to museums and going to cultural institutions and attending stuff that is free is usually not within their reach. They are not aware of it. There is no one saying, “Go visit this space it is free. Or be part of something that is free.” There are lot of other programs like sports programs and the inner city community. There are a lot of camp type programs or education programs that deal with tutoring and things like that. So there are not many programs that are out there that say here is a community program that you can come in a learn something and this is how you can use it later on. I think that it is just really about accessibility and then priority wise, you know this whole generation no matter inner city, rich, poor it is materialistic and it is vision and technology has kind of taken away the hands on activities. Meaning that most kids are not hands on. They are playing with the joystick or typing into the computer or text messaging. Also technology has also kind of better technology generation, the Y2K kids. They call it generation Y. You know we are generation X.

KAREN: I have heard them called generation XXL…

JOLYNN: I can see that. They are because they are just basically they are caught up into television because the art stuff is like not even on the list of people to know if they are just artistically.

KAREN: Maybe music.

JOLYNN: Music and it is a certain type of music. It is not a variety.

KAREN: Not exploring different forms of music.

JOLYNN: I think that is kind of the biggest reason I wanted to (inaudible) social economic and then it is generation that really is technology based. A lot of the stuff that we do are particularly is not the computer thing yet.
KAREN: Do you think our society values arts? Kind of a loaded question probably.

JOLYNN: I don’t think our society values art but I don’t know if our society, who we value who we choose that could be part of the arts is specific to me. Meaning that we value art. We have lots of museums and lots of cultural institutions but when we let in them who we choose to participate in our programs is very selective. So I think there is a great large community that is involved in the arts supportive but we are not, not everybody is reaching out to every aspect of our community with the arts.

KAREN: I can value art institutions and the art within it but we don’t value the artist or the incremental development of the artist.

JOLYNN: Definitely the development more than anything. They have no clue on and when that school says education system had no arts (interruption someone came into office and discusses unrelated topic)

KAREN: I have gotten a lot of really good feedback from this project. The partnerships that were developed within it and the possibility of doing more, doing more art. I am wondering what sort of role do you think the Art Consortium could play in that or if there is a role.

JOLYNN: I would think that our role would be is maybe help use the source to maybe attract the young people. I don’t know if screen them I should say. It is almost like, I like to compare it to Artworks I don’t know how familiar you are with that process where people submit application, I don’t know submit an application in or audition or whatever. Depending on how, what level of this project, how professional it became and its execution and the demand you know I see that we could still be a doorway to getting young people to work with you. Similar to what we were before and even being what you were saying earlier how it was a little bit more assessable when you say you were with such and such to get some of the resources that you need to do what you need to do. I think that we can still facilitate that. That is also…

KAREN: …What if there is no me? What if I stepped away and the energy of this is carried on somehow?

JOLYNN: It would definitely need to have a someone like you or a person in the middle (inaudible). So it has to have a mediation. Unfortunately I think we are not, our organization is just not in the position to do anything else new. We can facilitate support but we just have no, (inaudible) to say this out loud. We have no more energy in our people. (Interruption someone came into office and discusses unrelated topic) I think that that would have to be the case. We would have to have some kind of person that spearheaded and we could be a support network.
KAREN: Do you think that, you know I know a little bit about what Artworks does. Most of it is not community specific from my understanding. It is more like art for hire a little bit.

JOLYNN: It is. I think they were neighborhood but they do like, they like do their own stuff.

KAREN: They do what they do well but I don’t feel like. I mean because when we think about continuing a project like this say in the West End or you know like Art in the Market, in the Findlay Market area. Some people look at that as repeating what Art Works does but I don’t. I don’t feel like Art Works is tapping into more community stuff…

JOLYNN: …There is not as much money. Their kids are not, their kids are more diverse than community kids I would say. I mean I think I guess you have to be specific on what we are saying with community kids, inner city youth. Their focus is not inner city youth. Their focus is kids that can do art. So if you happen to be an inner city kid that can do art. You can do, if you come from the inner city and you can do art then it is great. If you don’t I mean their productivity is ninety percent Performing Arts, five percent inner city and then five percent West Chester. I mean you know it is just basically it depends on how successful parents are.

KAREN: Well I don’t, it wouldn’t have the same community focus. If you don’t have kids from the community actually do it then it is not the same.

JOLYNN: The only way they would fit in it would be if you said specifically to them that we have a certain amount of economics for you to have the kids that are part of these communities that are part of your program to do this project. Which I think there are, they are capable of that because they could actually say, “We are going to rehire these certain kids to be part of this.” They do have inner city kids involved in that. I think that whether the funding was coming from, they could specifically say this is what we are looking for. You know we want so many kids from this West End. So many kids from Over-the-Rhine. So many kids from these neighborhoods and then you have to. You have number one found them, and that might be the difference if they were looking at them as an opportunity to work with them.

KAREN: I’m not sure that that would be even necessary. I just wouldn’t want it to be something competing with them either.

JOLYNN: Um hmm, and I don’t think this would be competing (inaudible) because I think unfortunately there are a lot more kids that need opportunities than there are places for them available.

KAREN: Exactly well and that is what I always hear is when I was at a West End council meeting and I presenting them the addendum for the mural being finished but then I talked about how we were planning programming for the new Carl H. Lindner
Family YMCA and one guy asked, “Are these programs, you know the Arts Consortium, the Lincoln Center, the West End Y do they compete for kids?” I don’t think that there is any way. I said the West End in itself is thirty percent kids. That is more than two thousand kids that live in this very small community. There is no way that we are competing for those kids. There is never enough for them to do.

JOLYNN: Now you are saying we are competing for the kids that we can deal with?

KAREN: Well that is the story.

JOLYNN: Maybe, but is there enough kids? Yes. Is everybody, can everybody deal with all of the kids that are available? Probably not. I think there are a certain type of kids that want to get into Art Works. I think we can do both. We can deal with it at a rest and (inaudible) and the other kids too that are wanting to do this. Everybody can’t deal with that. The Y deals with a certain type of child compared to what we deal with but just because of the people who work there not because of the institution. Because I work a deal with those other kids too if they hired somebody that has that type of personality.

KAREN: (Inaudible) they usually let them go.

JOLYNN: So they don’t have a choice, they don’t have the time or the…

KAREN: …It takes a lot more energy and focus to deal with the so called average than to deal with the ones that are going to make it easy for you.

JOLYNN: Well it takes somebody that knows how to handle them and you can’t handle them if you are thinking only that I am looking at artistic kids. Here is the deal with that, their mama their daddy their cousin, the whole tribe.

KAREN: What worked well for us this summer was, you know I had one group from the Lincoln Center and one adult who was over mainly the hard to deal with kids. He was there to work with them. He had the relationships with them already that I wasn’t going to be able to develop in a summer’s work. Then we had the group from the Arts Consortium that Alex was basically over.

JOLYNN: You need to come in? Let’s go out here. (Interview moved tape break)

KAREN: One of the questions in my, I have gone through two defenses now for my research. My last defense would be defending the whole dissertation, my results. One of the questions how to create some sort of a ‘How To’ or a model or something on how to engage kids. I’m wondering what your response would have been.

JOLYNN: The problem with that is there is no model to engage kids. I mean you can’t even make up one. There are lots of books that talk about (inaudible) strategies on how to get kids involved but the reality it is whole about the individual. That is what makes
us different and our success with working with children is how you interact with them. You could say if you are being passionate and involving the kids like beyond just the center of the institution it does give them more confidence. You know that you have to be active in every aspect. That doesn’t work for every person. So I would say to someone like that is the only thing you could do is hire someone like me or Karen to get this done. Other than that.

KAREN: Do you think it is a personality thing or is it passion and…?

JOLYNN: I think it is the person, I think it is also a life experience thing. Meaning that my only trick is, is say to somebody who can lead, what is it what is that place the Greenpeace or whatever when you go over seas and you get out of college and…

KAREN: …Peace Corps.

JOLYNN: Peace Corps, people that go to the Peace Corps it has been proved that when they come back into the working mainstream that they have a different insight and they make very good employees because they have had this international perspective. Working with the community is always the same way to me. I would use the comparison like the Peace Corps. If you have got an individual in that type who never interfaced with the community except with the charity work you have a tendency not to be able to feel the perspective of individual you are serving. So they are going to (inaudible) and that is your goal. You have to start to involve yourself in their communities in their environment. Not just specifically to children but just being aware of the environment in which you are saying your serving. The model would be that you have to be proactive in being involved in the community prior to approaching the community with your program or activity. If you don’t, what happens is you do not fit into the trust fact which it takes for a child to be productive in a community based program. Because they are going to look at you is that you are just coming here for the first time and I have never seen you I have never known of you. It is not really personal but it is the attitude in which you bring to the environment. So it is not that they have never been volunteering at St. Joseph’s down here at the West End. It is almost like when you say to a child, “I live up the street.” And they live down the street and they say, you know and I am just using you for example, you say, “I have worked with a program like Art in the Market. I have worked in Over-the-Rhine. I have lived in another community. I have been out of Cincinnati.” You know I mean the perspective has to be broadened that this child is seeing that you are not a stereotypical person (inaudible) their culture or their environment. That really is just not, it just don’t not have true intent of why you are here. You have to have true intent and true intent does take that research and it does take you being proactive in their environment. So my thing is that if their working model would be well life. You know actually involving yourself and the people that you are trying to work with and beyond charity work. There are a lot of other things that is an assessment to volunteerism or the donation to make us assessable to at risk or low income individuals or community and that is not what it takes. You don’t have to be interacting you don’t have to be of the culture for the people to embrace you in culture. It makes it harder sometimes…
KAREN: …And that has been my lesson. I mean when I start with any I mean when I did, when I moved to Tallahassee and started in a program the first month is spent gaining trust and letting people learn that I am not coming and thinking I am all knowing all powering, I am going to save you. Which I think is what a lot of outsiders do. They come in thinking, “Well they are just going to be happy I am here to save them.”

JOLYNN: They didn’t even know they even needed to be saved. I guess the perspective of people looking at where you are coming from. I have noticed people observed more, a lot of people have learned more about me then I am inclined to let them see. They see how I am dressed and the people in the community. From all different levels, from the (inaudible) to the rich, to the poor, to the man on the street hanging out. I think those observations of how you handle those different people is what builds their trust. More than you doing trustworthy things. If they see that you could go from a personality of being with the rich and mingling and social able to just being just as comfortable talking to the guy on the street with the bottle of wine that you happen to know if he has been in the neighborhood and not treating him any different than the other people. That builds their trust a lot more than you just following through. You know follow through is not enough. It is that you have to be, your personality has to be such that they have credibility in you that you are not doing this for just publicity or to get pat on the back. You know that you are genuinely involved with them because you want to be.

KAREN: I had a one kind of difficult Community Council encounter.

JOLYNN: I know the West End, West End? Um hmm.

KAREN: I presented three times to the Community Council and getting involved with J.C. which is what you helped, you set me up with that helped a lot because his name goes far. He allowed me to use it when I need to. Then I met P.S.H., very sweet. He was, I used him to get into the, I didn’t mean to but I started talking to him because he lives in the West End about the Community Council and he told me he was on that. So I told him I wanted to present about this project. So I was able to through him to get in with Frank who helped me in getting permission from the city to work on the wall and when I encountered some hostile people at the second Community Council meeting that I presented at because it was a small room and it was hot and people were crabby and anything you said. But I all of a sudden one woman thought I was an outsider trying to come inside to help. She didn’t know I lived in the neighborhood, but that doesn’t matter even because I am not one of them. I am not her. I don’t have her same experiences. She doesn’t know me, she just knew that this white chick was trying to come and do something.

JOLYNN: Do something that actually opposes the Black (inaudible).

KAREN: Yep and so Frank stood up for me not knowing what was going to come of my project, because I had built these other relationships. I feel like he was trusting me based on other things. After the project was finished and I went back and I wasn’t even planning on presenting and I was asked to present them on the project. Frank wasn’t
there but he came to our celebration, gave me a hug and thanked me and now all of a sudden everybody wants to keep doing it and they all like me now. It is all good.

JOLYNN: (inaudible) who was nasty to you before?

KAREN: She wasn’t there this time, but.

JOLYNN: The first time I went to the Community Council meeting was rough for me and I am from the West End. I live in the part of town where we have (inaudible) for ever. Everybody knows my dad, and everybody knows my mom because I think there is a terra (inaudible) concept about neighborhoods in Cincinnati. It is really a Cincinnati situation. It is not a national situation that neighborhoods have this much connective energy and that people are so standoffish about people invading their neighborhood. It is real here and I think that you know depending on how you come into the meeting. You know if you found a way to perfect on anything because that is over their heads…

KAREN: …I think that time, the first time I went I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt and a baseball cap. I got up and I presented my idea to them and said we were looking at walls and looking for assistance with getting a wall, and I wanted it to be the Regal Theater at that time. If anybody can help me get the Regal Theater, if anybody can help me get plywood donated, try to bring them for help from day one. Second presentation I made the assumption that everybody had heard me the first time. I was dressed nicer.

JOLYNN: And you are dressed in your work clothes.

KAREN: I presented about it as if they all heard my first presentation so I think a couple of people who weren’t there the first time and that saw me as you know that this (inaudible). A couple of people sort of felt like, you know made their comments…

JOLYNN: …Here they come.

KAREN: Every time I came I brought pictures that either that Jasmine and SHANDA had done or that my other kids had done. Passed them around because I know people need visuals to understand because I can tell you every single time I asked people for their idea, because I said I was looking for ideas too. What they always wanted to be was about famous Black people of the past.

JOLYNN: Yes, because that is who they are. The whole group is of famous Black folks who lived during that time. Those people they want to be.

KAREN: That is what they have always wanted and that it was like they didn’t understand what they mural, at the point where we got the theme of this, you know playing and dreaming of what you are going to become. I mean the importance of people playing. They didn’t get it still. I had a couple of women pull me aside and talk to me about that there aren’t enough Black teachers and that Black kids need to learn from
Black teachers. She was saying it to me with trying to let me know that I couldn’t teach
Black kids about Black culture. I can’t well, I know that but.

JOLYNN: You can.

KAREN: I can but not in the same, you know. So she was the one who wanted me to
make sure that there were Black famous well known people. We had cartoon faces of
kids playing. After the mural was done you know Frank was like they needed to see it to
understand what was going on.

JOLYNN: Yes what you are trying to do.

KAREN: But then everybody thought it was great and everybody has a wall for me now.

JOLYNN: Interesting because for that time in history you know and it is not a Black I
say it is a cultural thing. You have to convince people of your ability to be for them.
You can be you know if you look around at history around the abolitionist and people
that helped people do things through hard times. It is always a struggle for the person
trying to do it. You know trying to be the absolute. I think that, unfortunately that has not
changed over the years. You know the advocate, the one working hard advocate is
always the one that gets the last, this love last. You know as you are trying to do it. I
mean Dr. King was like that. As you are trying to do all of this great stuff, a lot of people
are against you and your judgment of what your goals or what is your reason behind what
you are doing. I think that definitely I always wanted to see and I guess another reason
why I thought the project was interesting was that, I think I have a friend down in
Birmingham who does murals in inner city communities. She got grant money and stuff
and she is an artist herself. An African American woman and she cuts with the same
(inaudible) as you or things that you had but definitely when they got done with it, I mean
each one was more professional and more elaborate to the point where it was like mosaic.
They started getting more intense into different arts and stuff and murals are a good way
to bring a community together. The Art Consortium, when we did our first mural when I
was a baby. That mural always meant something to the community, it had a story. So I
think the concept of the substance behind the mural is just significant as they are at work.
I can agree with what people are wanting to see. You know it is great that we have
murals about famous Black people but we need to have more things about the community
that is here. You know children playing is what you see in our communities here. The
Art Consortium’s mural that J.Y. did showed the neighborhood through a transition. I
was here until when that left because that was the only thing that we had to document the
West End. So you know…

KAREN: …So that mural is not around anymore?

JOLYNN: No, it got painted over. That mural actually had four different periods of
West End scenery. It had its beginning, it had its growth, it had the prosperity part, there
were like four different areas and it was powerful. I think we need things to make our
kids think so that they can have processes of thinking that goes with their education. Art
is a good way to do it because it is not as obvious for kids who would be objective and try to run away from thinking. So it was not cool to think. If you have processes like this that tend to be a little bit more complicated for them, our (inaudible) they did this year was more complicated for them. It was something that I knew they had not been exposed to. So I think that would be part of the goal of the community’s interest in arts or in murals and projects like that then we need to work hard to find someone to be the facilitator.

KAREN: I have Alex worked with me and then I had a volunteer Ron who has been in the advertising for a long time. He is working on his master in Art Ed right now. The three of us are very much interested in doing something to continue. Richard who is from the Lincoln Center and we worked with him and his group of kids. He would elect to keep doing something each summer. So we are sort of looking at it as you know what is, and Donna has come to me with ideas for things to collaborate. If the kids that the Arts Consortium in the summer can do recreational stuff at the Lincoln Center and then those kids can do, and maybe there is she was looking at you know maybe we like do research on, I don’t know if she suggested this or I did, but she brought up sports. I said, ‘You know what if we look at the history of African Americans and their effect on say basketball. We bring in some well known basketball player or we bring in one of the UC basketball players and they play some and they do some research on them what…

JOLYNN: …Oscar Robinson.

KAREN: Yes, and we do, we have them do a little bit of research on what the significance an African American had in basketball. Then there is an art project that developed out of it. So then you have the recreational part, you have the social studies, you have the English. I mean you do all these things and then out of it comes these art projects. That is a collaboration between say the Lincoln Center group where they can go play basketball and then that group comes to the Art Consortium where they do some of the art stuff. I thought that was a great idea. That she had really been thinking of some similar things to keep doing. It doesn’t have to murals. I mean I went into this that is not necessarily going to be a mural. Knowing in the back of my mind that the mural was going to be the easiest quickest way to do it, but that we could do anything.

JOLYNN: It could be positive, it could be anything.

KAREN: Art in the Market showed how varied it can be I think. I really like that idea of Donna’s to do something along those lines of (inaudible)…

JOLYNN: …Well Donna definitely has the hub of the control of what (inaudible). She has those schools together. She knows who to talk to. My world is more of a, it is a little bit of both, but more of the older kids and not cause of, they may be at risk but they are really not. Meaning that they are in the middle where some of the crisis kids are living at that risk communities and an average environment but they have a little bit of…

KAREN: …Family life is a little different.
JOLYNN: Parental support and then the ones that don’t have support like my public school kids where the kids would have a little bit of insight within them. It is not our (inaudible) to keep them on the right path. So you know I got over my savior complex a couple of years ago. Right before I volunteered. Then you know you have to be really specific.

KAREN: I had that complex too.

JOLYNN: You have got to be specific on who you are trying to serve that is not benefit at risk children that are extremely rare or negative that you do have to recognize if you want to make an impact you have to deal with those that you can impact. So if you were a person that could serve that and risk and you impact them, that is great. I am going to need a medium to medium person. My kids are always in the middle.

KAREN: Well we had a tough time with Richard’s group, a tougher time, but I think they got a lot more out of it than the Arts Consortium group. Other than Lyzbeth and Shanda but Donna’s kids. They didn’t have as much insight on the, unless they lived in the North End, which one or two of them did. They seemed to have more, I interviewed them already. They seemed to have more of an understanding and an insight of…

JOLYNN: …Did he have the littler kids?

KAREN: Yep. Richard’s group, the Lincoln Center you know that was a hard group. He and because he was involved in a part of it he was able to make it successful. Successful to sort of blend and that was important. I think despite some of the glitches along the way with his kids, fights and what not that you know they got a lot out of it. Because he was…

JOLYNN: …It was probably closer to home for them, meaning that again it is that end result. That is all to me goes with that technology age. This technology age everything is immediate. The art project of doing something like a mural is you have to finish it to see it. When you get to the end their gratification, even if you were to knuckle head fighting for the whole project versus the whole process is stressful. I guess my thing would be if this gets done again, that it would be done more similar on the processes like, where they would have to have some type of other art exposure to the other things. The mural still is a constant concept but that they would be exposed to other things which would (inaudible) elect cause the unofficial attention deficit. You know where there is no dead moment because this was over here while we are talking about images and concepts is doing another project. Or there is some other art thing that is going on that leads them to be doing whatever project they need to complete (inaudible). Because that attention deficit situation is a fallacy because they are insinuating results.

KAREN: With the mural it takes, with Art in the Market that is what we did was to try to improve that is by having. When I taught during the fall and winter which was just art skills to get them, what I did is try to build up their attention span on a project. In the
beginning I had them doing within a two hour period I met them twice a week for about two hours. I would have four stations set up in the beginning. They could move among the stations as they finished projects so it was a lot of things. As time went on I took stations away and by the last quarter I had them work on one project for half of the quarter. They had worked up to that. Working with this group this summer I didn’t have that ability to build up their skills or their attention span which is really important.

JOLYNN: Now that immediate gratification like you know got immediate gratification of having something that is a product. It is so powerful and I think in my program some extra kids respect me because it is like I’m respecting that what they are doing is not just doing it to do art. So I am respecting it that you are going to do it quality so that we have something that we can share and sell and make money. They kind of gain respect because what I like to do we have common goals. They won’t learn, I make them do it great so they get money. It took me a long time to figure it out that I could get what I wanted from them by coming to where they are. You know they are a materialistic generation so if you put a price tag on it. Even if it is not the value that I’m concerned about it is the value that they need to see. That you know the kids who did I know (inaudible) for example. They did fabulous jobs and they probably wouldn’t have never thought about it but they thought of it as, this is something they could sell and make some money. Then you might not ever see that money. You know meaning that a high product could sell itself and they would never be around to see it. Then how would they know they completed something that someone may buy. I have kids that have been here about eight years where they would say, “Oh you saw my vase?” You know they are excited about me selling a five dollar vase.

KAREN: But he wants the (inaudible).

JOLYNN: If somebody has a piece of them in their home, very much like the adult artist but a different way of translating it.

KAREN: I agree with you on that and understand that I look at the mural process or the doing the community process as it can be difficult at times through the process but that end that gratification of the recognition which is important. I think both you and Richard both have said that. That after the fact. Now they look back and they realize that they did something that really impacted other people. That they are a part of something that they got beyond the idea of money.

JOLYNN: They may even say it the recognition process can be done, maybe not as big. Like at the end where you have the meeting and stuff, but may be done innately where you could feature each of those kids throughout the process. Like every week you may feature two kids that are part of that process and a community flyer that has the kid’s picture and information about the kid and what they think about the mural process. That goes out to their family and friends and they take home as well as to the other kid’s family and friends. It will still be a small intimate group but you could send it to the media. Maybe they would pick it up, maybe they wouldn’t. To all the non-profit organizations you want to be sponsored and if you feature each kid at a different time so
they are getting gratification throughout the whole project. So I think then your kids would be like, “Well man I got featured the first week. Why am I doing this?” Because it is that, it is not a, to me it is not a negative thing. It is the kids want to be patted on the back. They have so much other stuff that is so negative that they get talked about. So here is something positive and you probably would find that the media would love that. There may be some media that would pick that up and would really keep that going for them. Or you create your own.

KAREN: I forgot what I was going to say now. Well I think that is all the questions I have for you. Thanks for listening.
APPENDIX O
Interview With Alex
KAREN: I have like this questionnaire I developed for…

ALEX: …Should I get real close to…? Do you think it’d pick up our voice?

KAREN: I think so, as long as we talk…it’s gonna pick up everything else but. These questions are more for like community members who became involved, and I’m interviewing you and Ron just a little bit different so I’m not gonna really ask these questions. I don’t really have an agenda but I thought we could like chat about the progress, specifically some of the…I’m trying to get from this project. Since it’s a qualitative study, I’m like sort of looking for themes to come out, too, and maybe I can even share with you some of the themes I’m starting to see and see what you think of certain things. Why don’t you first just tell me what you thought about the project as a whole; start where you wanna start.

ALEX: As a whole I think the project was very successful in that the kids were the ones that came up with the idea and worked to the end to finish it. I feel like I played and you played a big role in facilitating that process but not to the degree where it was just solely our work, and I think that’s the most essential part when you’re working with community and projects of this nature is to allow room for other ideas, not just your own agenda. So I was very happy with the way that it turned out. I was very happy with the steps in between from start to finish. I feel like there was a definite progression from original ideas to final project. I feel like there was a sequence there that was followed and was, the kids understood what we were doing and how each step related to the one before and the one after, and I think that at the end you could see a line of progression. I mean what happens when, from that first idea to the final product, they could, after seeing that final product they could look back and see how much it takes to really put something like that together, that it’s just not an arbitrary painting. But since they were a part of it, they had they could look and see like there’s evidence of their hand in this big, collaborative work. And I think that that in itself makes the project worthwhile because bringing all these kids together to work towards something that’s special or just better the community as a whole. And already people gave us a lot of positive feedback about the mural. I think it’s totally changed the space, the feeling of the space that we used. They’re getting a new life to the playground that was otherwise kind of dull and boring, made it very inviting to the kids. And by the end of the project I think they had a lot of fun playing in that playground. At first I think they were kind of embarrassed or didn’t wanna act like kids, but by the end of it I think that they would all kinda come around and really enjoy the area that we had worked on. I felt really comfortable down there. I didn’t feel unsafe; I didn’t feel unwanted. I felt like the people really appreciated what we were doing and didn’t see it as us trying to come fix a problem but us just doing something positive you know. We didn’t come trying to solve the community’s problems or anything like that. We came with a purpose of inviting the community to make the community a more beautiful place, and I think that in itself was very successful. Didn’t feel like, there was a couple not negative comments but besides just a few opinions, I think overall the feedback was very good and everybody’s very glad to see what we did.
KAREN: You mentioned like we’re not coming in to solve their problems or to speak. Why do you think that’s, what do you think that, how do I word this? Why is it good that we aren’t coming in to solve their problems?

ALEX: Because I think me personally, I’m from Cincinnati but I don’t live in the West End. I’ve worked in the West End for three years but unfortunately I’m always gonna be seen as an outsider I think. Not, it could change but that’s just, that’s okay too, you know what I mean I guess? So I don’t think that we’re trying to solve problems. I think we would do the same thing in any community, you know? It wasn’t, I think this was a good place to start though. But I think that any community, it’s good to come and do a project like this with, you know it’s just unfortunately that area seems to have a lot of negative press associated with it and a lot of people are scared to go into that area. But I see that changing, you know, I really do, and you know, I don’t know, I see that changing, which is a positive thing.

KAREN: Why do you think the community responded to us positively then since, I mean I would like…to go out…considered an outsider.

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: And I don’t…because it’s the color of my skin…educational level or you know but obviously I’m not like most of the residents in that community. So why do you think that’s that there were positive, there was a positive embrace of us?

ALEX: Because I think that people, their hearts are ready for a change and it’s, there are people in that community trying to do something right, doing something positive. I think that people generally will see that as something that’s a genuine thing and not just a quick fix. Working with the kids is a genuine thing. It’s not just goin’ in and just trying to change somethin’ up. We’re workin’ with kids and teaching them, you know what I mean? We’re teachin’ children, and anyone who teaches children no matter where they come from I mean has a good agenda I think. So I think the fact that we worked with the kids specifically, let them see that we were comin’ from a good place, we’re coming with good intentions. Just like you had said one time and I think I’ll always remember that you said when you were trying to teach something that some adults, you started with the children first and you taught them and then they got excited about it and then they talked to their parents and things like that. And I think that’s really true and that’s where we were startin’ from. And I think with their involvement it made the adults more interested; it made the adults more appreciative because they saw these children out there workin’. They didn’t see us doin’ all the work and the kids doing, they saw the kids doin’ it so they could see that it meant something to them, not just us as outsiders or whatever. We worked with kids who were on the inside.

KAREN: What do you think about the struggles throughout that process? Because I go back and forth and think you know people will make comments about the struggle that the kids go through ’cause it’s, it is work and sometimes it’s hard but I tend to think that that’s okay?
ALEX: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: That that’s a good lesson because in the end something good and they can look back. But we can also probably look at it and say, “Well how do we get rid of those struggles?”

ALEX: Uhm-hmm. The struggle I saw really was a, it seemed at certain points there was just too many people involved. There was some people who were involved who did not wanna be involved, and those were the people who were making it a struggle I think. The people who wanted to be involved would like the idea…to me only added to the process and there weren’t a problem with discipline or keepin’ ‘em on track. I mean every once in a while every kid’s gonna stray a little bit. But I think if the kids whose hearts were really in it, those were the ones that made it easier, the kids who just wanted to do anything but, those were the ones that made it a struggle you know, so and that is hard because no matter what situation you’re in, unless you get something where you have kids who, only kids who wanna do it, I mean but it, the more involvement you have the more risk you own with that, you know, which is, I think we worked with it, you know having the adults there to keep them on track. But that was I think was the biggest struggle was the kids who weren’t really into the whole, they didn’t buy into it you know.

KAREN: Do you think though that maybe perhaps down the road this experience will benefit them down the road?

ALEX: Yeah, ‘cause I think they’re gonna walk by that mural someday and it might actually hit ‘em at that point now that they have some distance from it like now. They’ll be walkin’, somebody say, “I painted this; that was my idea.”

KAREN: So even they were difficult and didn’t contribute nearly as much as some of the other kids, I sort of look at them as how we’re gaining the most experience.

ALEX: Right. Well that’s the truth.

KAREN: Which is why I always go back to, well is it worth that struggle then in having some kids who don’t do much or probably cause problems for the kids who do a lot? But those are the ones who I think down the road are gonna get more out of it.

ALEX: It’s probably true.

KAREN: But that’s my personal view.

ALEX: No, I actually, that’s probably very true. So yeah the struggle, it’s worth the struggle. And I think with more experience dealing with those struggles as they arise will be handled appropriately. You know this is only my second year doin’ things like this you know so I could see myself doing it more and more and more and getting better and better and better. You know as, as the adult on the situation you know? I think the
struggle’s are definitely worth it. I wouldn’t exclude anybody just because I thought they would be a problem.

KAREN: My committee asked in my last defense, my last defense for my dissertation they asked me for a model of engagement. How do you engage these kids? …

ALEX: Uhm, so like if I was, if I have somebody teach you the same thing what would I tell them to say?

KAREN: Not even what would you tell them to say, but if you could sort of outline on paper the methods you would use to engage at-risk youths. Do you think that’s possible or do you think it’s something within a person’s personality, experiences, et cetera that…

ALEX: …Yeah.

KAREN: …sort of. I mean what do you think it is about that some people can engage you better than others or some programs engage you to do better than others? However you wanna look at it I guess.

ALEX: Yeah because not everyone could do it probably, so I think it’s definitely something within the person that, a quality that the kids see, quality that, probably that they know that you care about them. If you don’t care, if it was a job to you then they’re gonna pick up on that, you know what I mean? If you just treat it as whatever. I don’t care if you guys are people or a product, you know what I mean? If they can’t tell that you care for them, then they’re not gonna respond to you.

KAREN: No.

ALEX: For me to get the kids engaged is to bring myself into the situation, to let them know who I am, to pour out myself and that’s really hard, you know what I mean, ‘cause you never know what they’re gonna do with it once you pour it out and that’s really hard. And I’m learning that the more that I give the more that I get back, I mean you know, so you have to be willing to give, you know give the chance, give trust, give all those things in order to receive them back. And I think that that’s really what they need, what they want you know? They want somebody who cares, somebody who isn’t a pushover, you know? They don’t want somebody who’s gonna let ‘em, but they might like it but I find that they feel safe when they know that there’s boundaries. But I don’t know, is that kind of answering the question or am I just?

KAREN: That was good.

ALEX: Okay. Am I just dancin’ around here?

KAREN: You’re dancin’. One of the other themes that I’m seeing come out of this is the part about religion. Sometimes it’s spirituality religion, however you wanna look at it, but that’s something and through the arts in general that sort of always seems to come
out for some... And when I was interviewing Richard the idea of spirituality came out, and I don’t know if there’s something, but there’s just like a similar similarity between the two, like religion as a way to better a community or whatever or if they’re somehow meshed. But do you see that component, too?

ALEX: Well I see that in the community in general; it’s an integral part of their community, and I don’t think you know the political correctness as it is, it’s hard to sometimes be politically correct and reach an integral part of their community at the same time. And I found that to be true in my own classroom, you know? And I always feel like I had to be really careful what I say, you know whether I believe and not to press my beliefs on anyone but to let them you know feel comfortable in their belief also. So you know it’s a shame that it’s gotten to the point where we can’t even discuss God without feeling like you gotta watch your back; I think that’s a shame in a country where freedom of speech is protected under the Constitution but we have to be so careful about that. But you know I feel like it comes out because it’s there. You know I feel like that’s the reason it comes out is ‘cause it’s there. If it wasn’t there it wouldn’t be comin’ out, so the fact that it’s comin’ out means that it’s there and can even probably benefit, to its benefit, you know what I mean? I think it would only help. When kids understand that you believe that they believe or understand what they believe, you got another way to communicate with them, you know?

KAREN: What about the spirituality component, ‘cause I think they were two different things, really. And Richard described our experience as the four of us as…there was some spiritual connection and that’s why we worked well together on the project. That, that art is spiritual and that’s why that this project was so powerful. And he went on to say that the project or the mural and the fact that the kids were there working on it is going to now be a barrier to any drug dealer being anywhere that mural, that there will not be drug deals in that neighbor, in that park ever now because of the fact that the mural was there and they saw that kids did it and that spirit, that spirit of that is going, will prevent them from, they will make them not wanna be there ‘cause they know. And he described like he said, you know, “Alex, she’s very spiritual and that’s why she was able to, that’s why she’s so good at this.”

ALEX: See Richard never talks about that.

KAREN: No, but he got that.

ALEX: I know.

KAREN: He picked up on that. Then without even hesitating…religion or anything about that, but he talked about the spiritual component, that art is spiritual just like religion is about this process of, that there was some sort of a spiritual bind between all of us and he described you specifically as being very spiritual I mean and because of that that’s why it was so successful.
ALEX: Well I guess to be spiritual was to be patient and kind and giving and considerate and all things that are good, and so I’m being myself. I’m glad that he could see those things and I like the, he had never said that to me about you know keepin’ out, but I really think that that could be true you know and I hope that it is. I mean we could go really deep here and we don’t probably need to, but you know seriously I mean if you break it all down that’s all it really is, everything is spiritual. Everything and art is definitely spiritual. It’s creation, I mean what a better way to express spirituality but by creating. It’s what we were made to do I think, so I don’t know. Yeah, I think it was a spiritual process. Whether or not I see it specifically as that I don’t know. Would I say it was? Sure, definitely, you know what I mean? I mean I consider a brief encounter with every person every part of the day a spiritual journey, so this was just another part of that you know?

KAREN: Do you think kids have that experience?

ALEX: I…I was like…

KAREN: Yeah.

ALEX: But I wasn’t really brought up this, in this, I was brought up with spirit, some sense of spirituality but I wasn’t completely surrounded by it all the time. So I don’t know if I would have picked up on it as a kid, but I think that if kids pick up on positive things and they want positive things, and if you’re bring a very positive spirit to this project then positive thing, they’ll pick up, and that’s what they wanna pick up on you know because you know people can generally tell I think if something’s right or something’s wrong. You know I think that’s something that human beings are capable of doing and you know we were doing the right think and I think they could pick up on that. So I think they, they definitely saw it as a positive experience, and even more so I…get some distance from it you know even more so and then can look, but that kind of thinkin’ all the work beside, besides you know look at what they did and just be amazed by it I think you know.

KAREN: Yeah, Richard said he thought some kids might not get it through longer time than others.

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: It might, for some of them, and I think he meant…but it might be five years down the road and they drive by and it’s there and like that they get it…

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: …all of a sudden. But it might not be for, they might not, he didn’t think some of ‘em are mature to really like get it on a conscience level now, maybe on a subconscious level.

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ALEX: I don’t know that I did anything of this, the significance when I was that young, you know, where, I mean these kids are doing something really significant when they’re…is paintin’ the mural but I think it’s lot more than that.

KAREN: What do you think impact do you think the recognition of that, I mean you think they, that helped reinforce that?

ALEX: The recognition?

KAREN: That, yeah.

ALEX: That it was important.

KAREN: Right the importance part.

ALEX: Definitely. The only thing I would have done differently is our piñata.

KAREN: We’ve had a piñata experience for Brianna’s birthday party. It was fine; it was much better but a lot of the community members around ‘cause we did it outside behind my townhome and there were some people hangin’ around and some of the boys wanna go participate or you know getting’ a little too close and when candy flew out they ran. And I said, ‘No, this is just for this party.’ I felt bad, like it should be a community thing but they were getting a little bit more wild.

ALEX: You knew they were gonna take it out if you didn’t stop ‘em.

KAREN: I, I was thinking back to our experience and seeing that bat go right over the heads of small children…

ALEX: Oh my goodness. Me and Ron were right by her and she was still swinging the…

KAREN: Yeah.

ALEX: And she wouldn’t stop until it was stopped.

KAREN: Yeah, that was the scary part.

ALEX: That’ll never happen again with that many kids, oh my gosh.

KAREN: It was a way to try to make it fun though, I mean.

ALEX: …It was, you had good in…

KAREN: …Yes. I think it was a poorly, we didn’t put enough rules around it and there was so many kids that…more rules.
ALEX: Right. That’s scary.

KAREN: Then Ron grabbing her.

ALEX: Oh I know. Nightmares about that piñata.

KAREN: I know. I was just imagining the other kids heads like flying off. It was horrible but oh well. We recovered Everybody got candy and nobody got…

ALEX: …Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: What are one of the other things?

ALEX: You know what I said, the main thing about it, the mural probably really was spiritual that was keeping there like, oh, when Kevin came there I felt like I had something to learn from him, you know what I mean? I was just like this guy’s something else. And at first the kids really liked him and then I think they just kinda got annoyed with him but…

KAREN: They did?

ALEX: Yeah, and I look back on it like I should just, I should have said something. I heard them same things…

KAREN: …Richard said something to the kids.

ALEX: You know I actually…

KAREN: …couple…

ALEX: …I felt *uhm* like I didn’t stick up for somebody who was doing something positive.

KAREN: You know when Frank came and he saw the wall, he’s like, “How did you guys get the green under the chair?”

ALEX: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: He’s like, “Who?” I’m like “Kevin from the community council meetings, he came like three or four times,” I said, “and he got…under that chair...” And he was like okay. But that was like his question, “How did you guys get the green…”

ALEX: …Right.
KAREN: …And I was thinking how it wouldn’t have gotten it under there if he hadn’t come?

ALEX: …people are good at drawing straws like “I don’t wanna do this.”

KAREN: Nobody, you weren’t offering to crawl under there but you know.

ALEX: …

KAREN: Yeah. Then he kinda disappeared there ‘cause he left real fast to go outside one day ‘cause his mother was in the hospital. And if I had, I had his number on my caller ID but it’s been, you know it holds so many numbers so it’s, so I don’t have it anymore and he wasn’t at the last meeting, council meeting. And I feel bad ‘cause I sort of missed the whole ending. That’s one thing on my mind, too.

ALEX: Yeah, I’ve thought about him since. Thought about everybody since.

KAREN: I worry about him too ‘cause I think he could easily go back to the…he was…

ALEX: Yeah I felt…yeah. But I felt when I met him I felt like I need to learn something from this person and I actually wanted to gain something for myself like as a tool to use teaching. Like he had something that I don’t have, you know, and what do I wanna be just like him? No, but there’s something about him that I would like to have for myself, you know a way that he, I thought he was very engaging, especially at first and I liked that, I really did. And every once in a while I’ll meet somebody who has that quality; I wanna know what it is, what is like beneath all that, you know?

KAREN: Well apparently he goes to, doesn’t he go to Lynch’s Church? He said? I think so. Maybe that’s the place we could find him someday on Sunday, he goes on Sundays. It was sounded like, I don’t know. …what I wanted to know some other points.

ALEX: But is that, is that something that you’re gonna write about in your dissertation?

KAREN: The spiritual part?

ALEX: Uhm-hmm.

KAREN: …That’s the thing that keeps coming…and I can’t ignore…so that person, I’m, I was raised, raised Catholic but I don’t consider myself religious anymore, but I consider myself spiritual but I don’t consider myself religious.

ALEX: Well religion…

KAREN: … I just don’t participate in any, in a like a group prayer you know the church for instance. But I don’t, anyway, but yeah I hang out… It’s…to like talk about that in
the context of art education and the context of community arts and not make it sound you
know.

ALEX: Well I’m just at the point where you know this is who I am and I’m getting to be
very successful what I do, and I can’t ignore that this is a huge part of my, this is my
success. You want me to tell you why; it’s because of my faith. It’s not religion, it’s
faith, and you know it’s, that’s why and that’s why I love kids and that’s why I’m here
right now. That’s exactly why. I would have never thought to bring myself on this little
journey, and you’ve actually seen part of that journey you know and that’s, that’s cool.
We can share that you know? So I don’t know, I’m very happy to be where I am though.
And it’s like kind of amazing, kind of like I feel like you want me to be entrusted with
this? I mean this is big…

KAREN: …you mean?

ALEX: Right, so you obviously, I’m talking about God, think that I’m qualified to do
this and that’s like kind of amazing when you stop and think about it. Like you want me
to do, okay…but you know it’s just like I would have never thought that I could do this,
ever would have thought. So it was, get my little experiences one right after another,
it’s got me where I got to be, you know.

KAREN: And you were looking for those experiences, whether you knew it or not you
were looking for them.

ALEX: Uhm-hmm, ‘cause I wanted to grow you know? And I think if you’re not
growing then you’re dead. You don’t wanna be dead; you wanna keep growing, so yeah,
I was looking for the next step, the next part of…

KAREN: Yeah. What role do you think schools have in this sort of community
engagements?

ALEX: That is something I’m looking for myself. I’m actually gonna do two, two
activities with each school. One is like a paper recycling activity that we’ll…like a
community to use our dumpster. But as far as going out into the community and doing
something like we did with the school setting, I don’t think it’s gonna happen, not unless
they have specific classes that do that. You know what I mean? They can’t be, unless
it’s like a focus group of high school students, I don’t think it could ever be like a class in
the school you know to just…’cause I’m…I’m gonna start two after school programs
where we’ll paint a mural somewhere, right? You’ll take it out, you know into the
community. But I think we’re gonna keep it in the building. So it would need to be, in
order for schools to do it they would probably need to do it after school sometime, small
group, focused group, to do the same thing that we did you know, so I could see it
happening as a part of like…

KAREN: …The current, the current set-up of schools. I worked in a school in Florida
where we went on and on, a block schedule?
ALEX: Yeah.

KAREN: There were four classes a day for an hour and-a-half and we had to serve as a class, and I also worked with the art teacher and we did community projects during the school day.

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: Because we had enough time.

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: Yeah, we have forty minutes, and you also go through kids too rapidly to be able to do that.

ALEX: And I don’t see them frequently enough.

KAREN: No, and that’s some of the drawbacks I think that I think, after working with a class schedule it’s… And then the teacher gets a quarter of their day…because you get one of those four classes is planning so you get more planning time. I guess…I probably …districts more.

ALEX: Yeah, this, those last few projects that I’ve worked with, it just makes me, I really like it. I really like working with a focus group of students on a long term goal you know because it’s like you can have enough time to get deep enough to have something worthwhile, whereas I feel like I’m going so fast with so many things. So many, you know so many, I would like to get to the point where that’s all I did was projects like that.

KAREN: I know teachers who do that, art teachers, but I’m guessing they’re on a different situation there.

ALEX: I mean I don’t know how…

KAREN: …Like they don’t even have their students don’t do any like personal artwork that they take home and that’s their trade-off. They traded that off for doing like community based projects always.

ALEX: Right.

KAREN: You know and it’s a choice and it’s only if you have the opportunity in your situation, and it doesn’t sound like you do. Well we’re putting together, my job, we’re creating a community art youth council in the district. Primarily kids from SCPA but across the…district we’re gonna do community art projects with that group, but they’re gonna elicit participation from other students. So maybe when you put your group together there can be…
ALEX: The main thing that would enrich and…

KAREN: …It’s gonna be after school stuff. We’re gonna work with other teachers at CPS and C.M. sent out e-mails to art teachers. I don’t know if you’ve gotten any of those, but Siobhan is her name and she’s working with me on getting this group of primarily I think we’re looking at six through twelfth graders right now. We were saying high school but we decided to go down a little bit because that age group really likes the stuff so…I…enjoy it. And so we’re gonna put like twenty to thirty kids on this…have them develop projects and then do those projects bringing kids, other kids from their school ‘cause they’ll be from across the district, so hopefully you know we’ll get some pretty big…community…

ALEX: So I’m gonna have ten from each school, so that would, that would, that would make me feel even more like what…is very beneficial, not just, just sit around and paint a mural you know but that it has a lot of content…you know meaning to that to even go to another place and work with students who were doing the same thing.

KAREN: Connections. And that was our big point; we wanted to make our connections.

ALEX: Yeah…

KAREN: …Connections between in the schools, kids in the schools who then connect to bigger you know and then connections in the communities.

ALEX: Yeah.

KAREN: …be real cool.

ALEX: I really, I really like that…It’s a good idea.

KAREN: I can’t imagine you would like that stuff. Now what else do I wanna ask you?

ALEX: You’re not taking very good notes, Karen.

KAREN: I know but I’ve got it on here. If I do I don’t get it down anyway. What do you think, what do you think the kids from the community center got out of it ‘cause I saw like two different groups obviously there were two different groups. But I, my sense was that each group got something different out of it. Maybe I’m wrong, maybe they got some…that was my sentence.

ALEX: Well the kids from the Lincoln Center live there, right? They live now but…

KAREN: Yeah.
ALEX: …about half of ‘em… Get some arts consortium…might have even gotten less out of it. And at the end they felt cheated when they didn’t get as much candy as they did, you know? To them not getting’ no candy is probably really, I’m serious, I think they were really upset about that. And I felt so bad because this whole summer was nothin’ but then…they…get some candy at the end, they were just, they were really upset. They felt like they did the most work but got the less, least amount of recognition. Even though my name was in the newspaper they were all on TV. I think that they got just like everyone who worked on it, they got the satisfaction of see it finished, being a part of it, having something to walk by or see next time they’re in the community and having the memories that they’ve…if they’re positive or negative. Uhm I think that it is beneficial for anyone who’s involved so that’s, I mean they’re getting something you know. I wish they could have towards at the end, I feel like, I feel like they didn’t connect with the other group at all and I wish that wasn’t that way. I feel like they didn’t, I feel like they wanted to be…they do it on their own you know? I feel like that they, I feel like they thought that the other group was just kinda takin’ away from what they were doing, so I don’t know. I guess they just got the satisfaction of seeing it and working hard and seeing it pay off, and that’s something I don’t think kids understand when they’re doing it, but eventually…

KAREN: …After?

ALEX: Yeah, they’ll see it and remember it and XXX will always have that time she was in the newspaper painting.

KAREN: Even though she acted like she was mad about it?

ALEX: Right. She’s gonna look back on that like, “You know I was in the newspaper this summer, you know? I made the news this summer.” I think that’s really cool, so.

KAREN: Do you have anything else?

ALEX: I don’t think so.

KAREN: Why do you think, why was it important enough that your husband at some point and your friends got involved?

ALEX: For the same reason I’m doing it, because they can see the value in it. They can see that it’s not just an arbitrary project; that there’s value in the process, there’s value in the product; there’s value in the community; there’s value in the people; that all in all they really, there’s not a lot of that goin’ on in the community. I mean artists tend to be pretty to themselves and when they make art it’s about their own agenda and it’s neat to see to go using the, there’s that creativity to share with other people and to bring other people in you know. Everybody’s tryin’ to do somethin’, do their own thing, keeping people… It gives you the… It’s like there’s a way for, for my husband and Eric to share their talents with a lot of people. And they were really excited about working the kids
and the meeting the kids, but I think once they did, they were kind of nervous you know. The whole idea of it though seemed really fascinating to them.

KAREN: …showed up and they were scared.

ALEX: “How do you do this? What am I supposed to say?” No, but they had a little bit more… Uhm, but it’s just a valuable, invaluable project you know? They, it was just because it, you’re dealin’ what peoples’ hearts and any time you do that people grow and people see change in people. You know are they different people now? Probably not, but did it spark something in them? Hopefully, you know? So I think anybody who was involved with it probably felt that way hopefully, and even if they haven’t yet they may eventually when they get a little perspective on it you know.

KAREN: You think the permanence of that mural is important? Like we were talking, at one point we were talking about doing ‘em on panels or on a wall, and I remember Lyzbeth saying to me, “I wanna do it on a wall so when I’m old I can come and show my kids. I don’t wanna do it on a panel ‘cause they’ll take it down at some point.”

ALEX: It’s true. I mean just think of all the Art in the Market projects that are movable, they end up moving ‘em somewhere where you can’t see ‘em anymore. The permanent ones are the ones that people you know come back to see or know that are always gonna be there, can kinda like count on ‘em to recall the memories from ‘em. But like the quilt unfortunately nobody’s probably even since it since it’s been made you know.

KAREN: It’s hanging in Impact right now.

ALEX: Oh, okay. No I mean people see it but it’s like…

KAREN: …Those who made it don’t know where it is.

ALEX: Right, exactly. They can’t go back and say, “Oh, it’s here if you wanna come see it; look at what I did.” You know to them it’s kinda lost probably, you know.

KAREN: …we need to put it somewhere and let them know where it is.

ALEX: So that they can come at it and have that you know? I would like go look at it.

KAREN: …You had a hard time giving it up.

ALEX: Man, that thing was so cool.

KAREN: Remember when you had to, you were handing it over and you were like, “I don’t want to.”

ALEX: Because I knew that I wasn’t doing what should be done with it because I was really busy, but I also was hoping that whoever did get it will do something with it. And
I didn’t, I felt like it wasn’t, I didn’t know what was gonna happen to it, that’s why I was nervous about it. I mean someone who knows anything about quilts, that’s who it should belong to or not belong to, be in the care of you know, ‘cause that thing is part of our history now as a city, it seriously is. And I can, I had no idea what that was going to be until it was finished, seriously.

KAREN: You know now.

ALEX: I had no, I mean how could you? When we, when I sat and told you I was gonna make a quilt would you ever in your wildest dreams imagined that it would have looked like that? No way.

KAREN: Nobody did.

ALEX: Hmm-uhm. So it’s just like I think this turned out, I mean it’s amazing. It’s one of the things I look back on, I couldn’t believe we did that. We got that…

KAREN: …The whole time people were like, “Alex, you gonna finish this?” “Oh yeah, yeah, I know what I’m doin’”

ALEX: And they were so…

KAREN: …I know I just kept saying, “Let it go,” right? “You gotta trust her. I don’t know her very well but I have faith she’s gonna do it.”

ALEX: So I think that’s, I really wanna put that somewhere where, especially people who quilt and…

KAREN: They do…at the African-American museum so…get someone to put it up there.

ALEX: Yeah, I think that would be very good, so.

KAREN: So that’s all I got for you, Alex. I appreciate it.
APPENDIX P
Lists from Asset-Based Mapping Exercise
Bria
Shaianna
Kaila

1. Fire Station - Linn / Liberty
2. Nursing Home - Linn
3. Playground - Linn / Livingston
4. First Church - Cincinlay
5. Day Care Center - Cincinlay / Bay Miller / J. Hills
6. Row Houses - Bay Miller
7. Church - Bay Miller
8. Epic House - York
9. Renovated Houses

10. Lafayette Bunn School - Bay Miller / Dayton
    Back on Track / Accelerated Middle School

11. Community Church - Dayton
12. School / Public Dayton - Freeman
13. Redevelopment Dayton - Freeman
14. St. Paul Church - Freeman / York
Regal Movie
West End Food Mart, Next to Lincoln
Old Lincoln Ctr.
Cain Laundry
Car Wash
Haynes - Porter
Hostess Cup Cake
Clark & John St. (Brunis Bldg)
Taft High
Barb Al & Bauer St Building
Lobby Lounge
Mini Mart, Oliver St.
Behind Mini Mart, Duke's Place
Just Cuttin' Barber Shop Lynn St.
Four Mini Mart, Finley St.
APPENDIX Q
Photographs of Assets
Music Hall, located on the border between the West End and Over-the-Rhine.

Police memorial.

The Betts House: the oldest building in the West End.
In-home day care center located in historic home.

Raymond Jackson Park, eventually chosen as the site of one of the murals.

Old church.
Laundry facilities.

Mural.

Barbershop and owner.
Store, clerk, and sign reading, “Peace in the streets No Violence.”

Baptist church.

Mural located on the wall of The Arts Consortium.
Mural.

The abandoned Regal Theatre.

The public library.
Historic church.

The new development, City West.
APPENDIX R

Flyer about the Recognition Ceremony for the Mural
You are invited to a celebration of art and recognition of youth artists from the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center. We will be presenting a summer’s worth of hard work in two murals meant to celebrate the kids of the West End. All are welcome.

**Thursday, August 12, 12:30 – 1:30**
Raymond Jackson Park, West End
(On Linn St. North of Liberty St.)

Photos of the walls BEFORE the murals. Join us to see what the walls look like now!
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen Hutzel is a visiting assistant professor in the department of art education at The Ohio State University. Her areas of interest include community arts and community-based art education, community development, and multicultural and urban education. She completed her Master’s degree in art education at the University of Cincinnati and Bachelor’s of fine art degree in visual communication design at the University of Dayton. She also serves on several boards and is the volunteer facilitator of community arts programming with the West End Community Council. She is a member of the National Art Education Association and the Ohio Art Education Association. She resides in Cincinnati, Ohio.