



creative youth

DEVELOPMENT

Mapping a phenomenon, growing a field

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December 17, 2019*

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, community arts organizations have been championed as “safe havens” where youth create arts and media production projects as a means to support personal expression, intellectual development, and civic participation. In this terrain, we see a shift away from framing the arts as specialized training reserved for a talented few towards a focus on employing the arts to facilitate creative production and participation in various youth-driven cultural pursuits. There are now more than 400 community arts organizations throughout the United States working to develop the creative potential of young people in order to support youth as change-makers at the center of community culture and action. Since 2014, leading cultural institutions and community arts organizations across the United States have partnered to advance a broader vision of arts education centered around creative youth development.

A key aspect of the National Creative Youth Development Partnership has included a strategic planning process to identify and communicate core aspects of creative youth development programming. This task has been guided by prior efforts in the larger field of arts education, particularly practitioner-led efforts that have established frameworks¹ relevant to supporting learning and development through high quality arts programs. When taken together, these efforts suggest that when young people have access to the arts, they develop their creative skills, strengthen their identities, and build robust connections to their communities.

As it stands now, the term creative youth development refers to both a phenomenon and a growing field: the term refers to the developmental impacts associated with creative learning experiences as well as the larger ecology of practitioners and system-level leaders involved in making creative learning experiences accessible to young people. And yet, while the term creative youth development has emerged only recently, the practices associated with creative youth development enjoy a robust history in the distinct subfield of community arts education. In contrast to mainstream arts organizations dedicated to upholding Eurocentric tastes and values², community arts organizations have evolved under a fundamentally different logic. Over the past hundred years, community arts organizations have worked to amplify a fuller range of cultural expression by supporting diverse artists and honoring cultural knowledge in historically marginalized communities. As a result, community arts organizations have been key sites of opportunity—places where youth have the freedom to draw on their own funds of knowledge to challenge damage-centered narratives and exercise power in shaping the cultural lives of their communities.³

However, the distinct legacy of community arts organizations has been overlooked in the history of arts education⁴, resulting in historical narratives of arts education that are often whitewashed.⁵ This whitewashing stems from exclusionary ideas about what counts as art and who counts as an artist—ideas that implicitly and explicitly shape mainstream

¹ For two examples please see [the Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project](#) and [The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts](#)

² Gaztambide-Fernández 2008

³ Hardy 2018

⁴ Goldbard 2006

⁵ Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter 2018

approaches to arts education. As such, there is enormous opportunity for the field of creative youth development to correct historical injustices in arts education.

In this spirit, this document aims to build on the work of practitioner-led frameworks to establish connections between practitioner knowledge—knowledge that is commonly subordinated in the “master narrative” on arts education—and existing academic research on arts education. Establishing connections between these sources of knowledge has the potential to help practitioners advocate for their work to external audiences and develop a shared vocabulary that can be used to discuss creative youth development. And yet, it is important to note that the research reviewed below is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. Rather, the National Creative Youth Development Partnership’s Research and Evaluation team has focused our work with an eye towards identifying recent research that is aligned with practitioner-led frameworks. In this regard, we were especially interested in research that focused on the development of creativity, identity, and civic capacities in community arts settings. Nonetheless, developing this document has also been helpful in identifying important areas of disconnect—areas where practitioner knowledge is not adequately captured in existing academic research. Determining gaps between the forms of knowledge, values, and practices held in the field and academic research is helpful in illuminating opportunities for expanding discourses about arts education. With this in mind, we discuss some important limitations below.

Limitations

The Creative Youth Development national action blueprint articulates an ambitious research agenda. This agenda, co-developed with input from over 650 stakeholders in the field, prioritizes the development of a field-wide evaluation tool aligned with a shared conceptual framework that “build[s] on the widely-vetted Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project Impact framework.”⁶ By identifying peer-reviewed research aligned with the Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project framework, the current research review is an initial step towards this larger goal. In the section below, we articulate the core outcomes associated with high-quality creative youth development programming—as identified by both practitioners and academics—in order to guide the development of a shared evaluation tool that is tailored to the specific logic of creative youth development.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that current frameworks and research underdeveloped themes and gaps—limitations that readers will see reflected in the pages that follow. In particular, research on arts education has been limited by existing conceptions of arts education that privilege Eurocentric aesthetics and forms of cultural production. As a result, critical discussions of race, power, and privilege are underdeveloped in academic research on arts education, and these discussions are needed to inform a fuller picture of creative youth development. Therefore, the research presented below should be taken as a point of departure for future work and we seek recommendations for additional resources that expand the perspectives offered below.

⁶ From <https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org/national-action-blueprint/strategic-priority-visibility-impact/>

Creative Youth Development

The summaries below are intended to provide a window into what academic research says about the developmental impacts associated with sustained participation in high quality creative learning communities in the arts. As such, the focus here is on youth, rather than the organizational conditions and teaching practices that engender positive outcomes. Here's what we know:

CREATE: WHAT CAN I DO?

Creative Learning Experiences and Cognitive Development

The development of creative cognition is central to arts education. Through sustained participation in the arts, young people learn to use the technical and aesthetic tools of artistic media as a language to support creative expression, a process that involves conceptualizing, producing, and reflecting upon new ideas. As creative producers, young people are routinely engaged in developing projects that encourage them to apply existing skills and knowledge as they pursue new projects. When given freedom and support to explore their own cultural interests, young people learn to formulate their own learning goals, reflect on their progress, and design strategies for artistic action—work that is central to the development of metacognition and creativity. As a result, the processes embedded in artistic production enable young people to develop considerable expertise over time. Young people become skilled at thinking critically and imaginatively about the world around them, confident in their abilities to perform and communicate original ideas to new audiences, and able to pursue new learning in other domains.

CONNECT: WHO AM I AND WHERE DO I BELONG?

Creative Learning Experiences and Personal Development

Creative learning experiences in the arts provide opportunities for young people to cultivate strong identities—a task that is critically important in adolescence. The creative skills young people develop through arts experiences, i.e. meaning-making, expression, and reflection are key to helping young people understand themselves, understand how they fit in their communities, and imagine their desired futures. When young people participate in creative learning communities that provide opportunities to share personally meaningful stories and have dialogue about social issues, young people are able to place their experiences in a broader social context and learn to make themselves seen and heard in new ways. In the arts, research finds that this work involves interrogating cultural stereotypes and assumptions and developing and performing new narratives. Because sharing and performing provides opportunities for new forms of recognition, studies suggest that arts experiences provide a valuable pathway for experiencing a fuller sense of accomplishment, and more robust sense of belonging in their communities. Through sustained participation in high quality arts experiences, young people increase their self-awareness, their ability to self-reflect, and their sense of self-efficacy—all of which strengthens how they feel about themselves and their future.

CATALYZE: HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

Creative Learning Experiences and Civic Development

Recent scholarship suggests informal, interest-driven arts experiences provide new opportunities for youth to engage in public discourse and advance a variety of civic purposes. Through participation in community arts organizations, young people are involved in creating art and performances that are shared publicly, and in co-constructing

shared cultural space through creative expression. As a result, young people become skilled in using the arts and communications media as a way to express their voices on issues that matter to them, learn to make the concerns of their communities visible, and become leaders in disseminating more diverse forms of cultural expression.

Future Directions for Research

When taken together, recent scholarship points toward an under-appreciated truth about arts education in the twenty-first century. In communities throughout the United States, arts organizations and practitioners are working to cultivate technical and aesthetic abilities not as ends in and of themselves—but as a means to support multiple cognitive, personal, and civic learning goals relevant to youth development. Because high quality programs often pursue these goals simultaneously, this begins to suggest the possibility of unique developmental pathways⁷ supported by creative youth development programs.

Generating a clearer picture of the developmental pathways associated with participation in creative youth development programs can have multiple practical benefits. This allows us to develop assessments tailored to the specific logic that governs the field, which helps us identify the specific methods and mechanisms that make it possible to connect short-term outcomes to longer-term outcomes. Ideally, future research efforts will be geared towards **research and development** efforts that involve meaningful partnerships between researchers and practitioners. Supporting the development of robust research-practice partnerships can help both parties: (1) develop knowledge that better reflects the values that guides the field of creative youth development (2) tie program aspirations to specific teaching and learning practices; (3) develop and refine a shared set of best practices; and (4) disseminate evidence-based practices to a wider field.

Considerations for the Field

Clarifying developmental pathways and identifying the practices that contribute to the most robust forms of creative youth development is an important task for future research and development. And yet, before we can understand the pathways through which creative youth development unfolds, it may be necessary to address a more fundamental question: what counts as a creative youth development program? At present, it is difficult to formally and reliably distinguish creative youth development programs from other kinds of arts education programs. For instance, although there are several general characteristics associated with creative youth development programs, it is difficult to imagine programs that would not readily identify with this broad set of characteristics. This challenge has implications for future field-building efforts. Lessons gleaned from sociological research⁸ in the arts suggest that artistic fields are successful in attracting resources needed for development when they have a clear set of values, generate shared understandings about how to enact key values in practice, and develop a shared vocabulary used to communicate with others about their work. As the field of creative youth development continues to coalesce, clarifying these issues through future field-building efforts will be instrumental in developing the conceptual foundations needed to sustain future research and development.

⁷ As per Allen et al. (2016), a developmental pathway can be understood as a series of causal connections that practitioners expect will lead to desired long-term outcomes.

⁸ Lena 2019

About the Author

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List of Annotated References

Members of the Creative Youth Development Research and Evaluation action team have reviewed conceptual and empirical research to identify what is currently known about arts-based creative learning environments and cognitive, socio-emotional, and civic development. This list of annotated summaries describes in further detail the highlights that emerge from individual studies and is intended to provide documentation of the underlying evidentiary based that supports the preceding analyses. However, it is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of existing research on arts education. For more information, please see the Arts Education Partnership's ArtsEdSearch, www.artsedsearch.org.

CREATE: WHAT CAN I DO?

Creative Learning Experiences and Cognitive Development

Goldstein, T. R. (2011). Correlations Among Social-Cognitive Skills in Adolescents Involved in Acting or Arts Classes. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 5(2), 97-103.

This study reports on quasi-experimental investigation of relationships between empathy, theory of mind, and emotional regulation among students studying theater, music and visual arts at a specialized arts high school. Together, empathy, theory of mind, and emotional regulation are key social cognitive skills needed to build healthy relationships and function in life. The goal of this study was to investigate developmental changes in correlations among theory of mind, empathy and adaptive emotional regulation over the course of one year and to understand whether specific forms of arts participation differentially impacted correlations among these skills. The author administered pretest and posttest measures to 28 students involved in drama and 25 students involved in either music or the visual arts. Notably, the author found that actors increased their theory of mind and empathy over and above the other arts students, and had higher levels of adaptive emotion regulation at the outset. In addition, the author found that among students involved in drama, empathy and theory of mind were correlated at pretest, however these measures were no longer correlated at posttest. In contrast, the author found that among students involved in music or the visual arts, none of the measures correlated at the pretest, however after one year, theory of mind was correlated with adaptive emotion regulation and empathy—as would be expected in the general population. Therefore, the author found that arts training can have differential effects on absolute levels of social cognitive skills, and in addition, this study provides initial evidence about a unique relationship between drama training and social cognition. With training, actors may learn to develop theory of mind as its own skill and are therefore able to separate their understandings of mental and emotional states from their emotional

reactions to others.

Halverson, E. R., & Sheridan, K. (2014). Arts education and the learning sciences. In K. Sawyer (Ed.) The Cambridge handbook of the learning sciences (pp. 626-648). London: Cambridge University Press.

The authors of this article conducted a systematic literature review of scholarship on how educational experiences in drama and narrative arts, dance and movement, visual arts, music, and digital media arts, help young people acquire disciplinary knowledge—knowledge that supports advanced understanding and subject matter mastery. Through both in school and out of school visual and performing arts experiences, the researchers' literature review reveals that the process of artistic production requires young people to create physical artifacts that represent their understandings and discoveries about the world around them. To do so, young people involved in arts rich learning environments learn to manipulate artistic tools and media to communicate ideas to others. The authors find that as young people make art, they learn to link their thoughts with new language and artistic action—and in this way, artmaking provides meaningful opportunities to develop the language needed to formulate goals. In addition, the studies the authors reviewed suggest that in arts contexts, young people have opportunities to place their lived experiences within larger social, cultural, and historical contexts, interrogate stereotypes, and explore “potential selves” (p. 632) by taking on new roles and perspectives. And finally, the authors identify a common creative process that underlies learning throughout artistic disciplines. This creative process moves from exploration and ideation to prototyping and reflection and usually culminates in some form of sharing with a larger public.

When taken together, these processes—what the authors refer to as *creating representations, engagement in identity processes, language development, and creativity and design thinking*—represent fundamental forms of disciplinary knowledge in the arts. Experts in educational research agree that cultivating disciplinary knowledge is key to supporting deeper learning pathways, and the authors of this study suggest that studying the characteristics of arts rich learning environments offers great potential in terms of understanding how to promote sustained participation in fields that demand creativity and periods of trial and error.

Katz, M. L. (2008). Growth in Motion: Supporting Young Women's Embodied Identity and Cognitive Development through Dance after School. *Afterschool Matters*, 7, 12-22.

This study reports on an ethnographic investigation of two community dance organizations and examines the relationship between dance participation, positive identity development, and cognitive growth. The qualitative analysis in this article draws on focus group, interview, and observational data, as well as student reflections collected from 30 teenage girls included in the study. The author found that dance participation supports the transmission of knowledge through varied kinesthetic, visual, and linguistic channels. Dance participants have multiple entry points that allow them to access new knowledge, what the author and others in educational research refer to as embodied cognition. Embodied perspectives on cognition acknowledge the body and the body's

interactions with the surrounding environment as key influences on cognitive processing, and the community dance organizations the author studied used a combination of movement, observation, and discussion to help students extend their capabilities. The author also found that the continuous feedback the girls received in dance classes was particularly conducive to their learning and development. Through the feedback process, the girls were encouraged not just to take in new information, but were carefully guided in incorporating, internalizing, and externalizing this information strategically through their own coordinated movements. In addition, the author found that the feedback process encouraged students to view mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, one that is necessary in order to develop new levels of expertise. As a result, the participants reported that they were more willing to experiment and take risks, and felt more confident in their ability to enact goals. The author argues “combining use of multiple modes of communication with supportive social relationships and varied opportunities for participation can offer young people potent environments for cultivating agency” (p. 21) and suggests that after-school community arts organizations may foster an ideal learning environment for risk-taking and growth.

Peppler, K. (2010). Media arts: Arts education for a digital age. *Teachers College Record*, 112(8), 2118-2153.

This study is based on a qualitative, three year study of youth-driven creative media production at a Computer Clubhouse in Los Angeles, an after-school organization that involves ethnically and economically diverse youth in art and technology project-based work. To understand how informal creative learning environments like the Computer Clubhouse capitalize on youth culture to support learning, the author collected a range of data including: interviews with youth ages 9-15, interviews with professional media artists, and video footage of students working with Scratch, a popular programming language young people use to create and share original interactive media. The author found that young people gravitated to Scratch at the Computer Clubhouse because the platform gave them the freedom to pursue their creative interests across a variety of genres. Initially, young people drew upon their pop culture interests to “remix” their own media, but the Clubhouse’s peer culture helped young people gain greater independency and fluency in their work over time. As a result of participating in an informal creative learning environment, the authors of this study found that young people used the tools of the arts to further their interests and form meaningful pathways to learning in other subjects. For instance, the author found that participation in media production projects offered young people with cognitive disabilities new ways to connect with academic literacies—content that schools often struggle to teach non-traditional learners.

Based on these findings, the author suggests that media arts experiences may offer opportunities for young people to leverage their cultural knowledge and interests to engage with complex academic content and develop a “love for learning and communicating their ideas” (p. 2138).

Sefton-Green, J., & Soep, E. (2007). Creative media cultures: Making and learning beyond the school. In Bresler, L (Ed.). International handbook of research in arts education (pp. 835-856). New York: Springer.

This handbook chapter describes the evolution of media arts education, a subfield of community arts education that is increasingly relevant in today's digital culture. In doing so, the authors use historical methods to review the development of arts education and media education and draw upon their experience as scholar-practitioners to theorize media arts learning and describe the unique affordances of media arts education. The authors define media arts as technologically-supported art forms that have the potential to reach mass audiences and argue that effective media arts experiences "teach a critical 'interpretive' ability so that the students can become an independent consumer and producer of the media" (p. 837). In community-based programs that support media arts education, young people often engage with current issues and events while learning to use artistic tools to produce and disseminate their own messages and points of view. As a result, young people involved in creative media production have new opportunities to engage with conversations that are relevant to their lives and over time, they can become skilled at using the arts to speak to new audiences. The authors find that several core features characterize community-based organizations that support effective media arts education. High quality community-based organizations provide opportunities for intensifying youth participation and leadership; involve youth in sustained project-based learning organized around cycles of planning, production, and performance; promote caring and collegial relationships with adults; and provide ongoing structures for peer critique and self-reflection. Given the undeniable influence of digital media and news, the authors argue that community-based arts and media organizations provide an essential outlet for helping youth gain the skills needed to be fully engaged and empowered in today's society.

Soep, E. (2006). Critique: Assessment and the production of learning. *Teachers College Record*, 108(4), 748-777.

The author of this study conducted a qualitative investigation of two community arts organizations that involve ethnically and economically diverse youth to understand how participation in artistic critique strengthens young people's metacognition, a form of self-reflection that fuels independent learning and discovery. To support this inquiry, the author draws on 190 hours of program observation and discourse analyses of the student talk that occurred during creative production at each site. In the critique sessions the author studied, students were responsible for articulating goals, developing skills for assessing their own work, and devising strategies for pursuing their own creative work. In contrast to formal school-based assessments, in which authority figures are responsible for evaluating student work, the author argues that these skills are critical for supporting empowered learning—since young people "need practice in the exercise of judgment" (p. 767) to develop the critical thinking skills that support lifelong learning.

The author characterizes effective critique sessions as those that entail: *joint assessment*, where all participants play a role in evaluating the merits of their work with a shared sense of accountability to an outside audience]; *improvisation*, where projects entail constant iteration, experimentation, and moment-to-moment problem solving; *reciprocity*, where authority, responsibility, and power for decision-making is mutually shared between youth

and adult partners; and maintain an *orientation toward emerging work*, where the process of creative production and the skills that emerge fuel new projects and directions to pursue. Through the structure of critique, the author found that community arts organizations allocate a high degree of decision-making responsibility to young people, providing opportunities for young people to produce “original work for distribution to real audiences in the hopes of having a real impact” (p. 771). Although the author notes that critiques are a regular practice in many professions, traditional classrooms do not typically afford similar experiences. The author argues that this study is relevant to school-based educators and policymakers eager to understand learning environments that use effective alternatives to standardized assessments.

Winner, E., Hetland, L., Veenema, S., Sheridan, K., Palmer, P., & Locher, I. (2006). Studio thinking: how visual arts teaching can promote disciplined habits of mind. In Locher, P., Martindale, C. & Dorfman, L. (Eds.) New directions in aesthetics, creativity, and the arts, (pp. 189-205). Amityville: Baywood Publishing Company.

This article describes teaching and learning in the visual arts and identifies several unique “studio habits of mind” young artists regularly deploy when they make art. Based on intensive ethnographic observation, video analyses of students making art, and interviews conducted with professional art educators at two specialized arts high schools, the authors sought to document thinking patterns that are fundamental to arts activity in order to lay the groundwork for understanding what forms of cognition may transfer outside the arts. The authors find that three primary activities common in arts studios—demonstrations of new techniques, opportunities for hands-on artmaking, and critique—foster eight distinct studio habits of mind. Broadly, these studio habits of mind enable students to conceptualize and make art as well as reflect critically on their own artmaking efforts. In conceptualizing and preparing to produce art, young people learn to carefully observe the world around them and stretch beyond current frames of reference in order to notice new things and appreciate subtle distinctions. Through artmaking young people learn to create external representations of their ideas and experiences, experiment and problem-solve as challenges arise, and develop a keen sense of how they can use artistic media to make themselves seen and understood by others. In addition, the authors of the study found that high quality artmaking experiences provide ample opportunities for reflection. In contrast to making, reflection involves taking time to critique existing works, reconsider goals, and devise strategies for bringing creative ideas to fruition. These reflective practices place students in situations in which they must think critically about their work and take initiative in directing the course of their own learning.

When cultivated in concert, the capacities for conceptualizing, making, and reflecting on artmaking amplify young people’s capacity for creativity—creativity that young people use to contribute to their surrounding cultural contexts through artistic expression. This is a seminal study in the field of arts education because studio habits of mind represent the core cognitive processes upon which broader forms of creative youth development in the visual arts depend.

CONNECT: WHO AM I AND WHERE DO I BELONG? *Creative Learning Experiences and Personal Development*

Catterall, J. S., & Pepler, K. A. (2007). Learning in the visual arts and the worldviews of young children. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 37(4), 543-560.

This paper explores relationships between participation in community-based visual arts programs and children's beliefs about their abilities to make things happen for themselves, what psychologists refer to as self-efficacy. The researchers followed the progress of 179 third grade elementary students involved in two high quality visual arts programs in Los Angeles, CA and Saint Louis, MO. In these settings, children worked with professional teaching artists to make art, learn how to give and receive feedback from peers, and speak publicly about their artwork. The authors hypothesized that cognitive capacities fostered in the visual arts may support the development of self-efficacy and a more positive orientation towards the future. Based on the work of Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2007) the authors of the study reasoned that the "studio habits" of mind acquired through an intensive visual arts education—engagement, persistence, reflection, and envisioning—may give children confidence in their abilities to tackle unforeseen challenges. To test this hypothesis the authors employed a treatment-comparison group design in which measures of self-concept, self-efficacy, and creativity for arts participants (N= 103) were compared to the same measures for comparison students (N= 76) through the use of pretest and posttest. The researchers found no statistically significant difference between arts and non-arts students in terms of self-concept. However, the researchers found that arts students made significant gains in their self-efficacy beliefs, and that the proportion of gainers in the arts group was significantly higher than the proportion in the comparison group. The researchers also found that the arts students made significant gains in their originality scale as compared to the control group. Thus, the results of this study suggest that participation in a sustained visual arts program is associated with the development of creativity, which in turn contributes to the development of self-efficacy.

Halverson, E. R., Lowenhaupt, R., Gibbons, D., & Bass, M. (2009). Conceptualizing identity in youth media arts organizations: A comparative case study. *E-Learning*, 6(1), 23-42.

The authors of this study conducted a comparative case study of two media organizations to examine the relationship between youth media production and identity development. Based on prior research that suggests that narrative construction and storytelling are key to how young people understand themselves and the world around them, the authors posit that youth media production projects that are geared around "telling, adapting, and performing narratives of personal experience" (p. 629) are a means for supporting positive identity development. To better understand how youth media organizations conceptualize and promote identity development, the authors of the study selected two youth media organizations focused on using film as a mechanism for cultivating youth voice and identity development in diverse communities. The findings of the study draw on interviews conducted with organizational leaders and youth and content analyses of youth films and organizational documents. Although the organizations the authors studied differed in their specific conceptions of identity development, the authors found important similarities in terms of using the medium of film to support identity development among ethnically

diverse youth. Among ethnically diverse youth, the authors argue that participation in media production projects may be especially beneficial. Filmmaking provides ethnically diverse youth with unique opportunities to represent themselves in ways that challenge stereotypes, giving youth the resources and power to author and assert their own stories and identities. As a result, diverse youth gain experience developing complex representations of themselves and the communities they belong to, and develop media projects that “explore the relationship between how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they fit into their communities” (p. 25). This study is significant due to its unique focus on identity development among diverse youth. Because theories of adolescent identity development are often based on homogenous populations of youth, this study has the potential to illuminate more robust, culturally sensitive theorizations of identity development among diverse youth—youth who the authors point out “have often been saddled with dominant cultural models that do not quite fit” (p. 39).

Halverson, E. R. (2005). InsideOut: Facilitating gay youth identity development through a performance-based youth organization. *Identity*, 5(1), 67-90.

This study reports on a yearlong ethnographic investigation of youth participation in a theater organization for LGBTQ youth in Chicago, IL. The researchers were interested in understanding how the literacy and narrative development activities embedded in theater experiences assisted LGBTQ youth in positive identity development, providing opportunities to learn about the psychological, personal, and social dimensions of their identities. To pursue this inquiry, the researchers followed a cohort of 42 youth ages 14-20 as they engaged in a 22-week long workshop on narrative-performance. In this setting, youth were involved in telling personally meaningful stories to one another, while the researchers observed workshop activities, conducted interviews with youth, and analyzed the content of youth-generated stories for evidence of the often-challenging developmental tasks associated with LGBTQ identity formation: *unlearning the assumption of heterosexuality*, *identity disclosure*; and *managing a stigmatized identity*. The author found that in using theater as a vehicle to develop personal stories, young people learned how to use literary devices such as point-of-view, irony, and repetition as strategies for addressing the psychological, personal, and social dimensions of their identity. The author also found that the process of transforming written stories into performance pieces allowed youth to explore new possibilities for the future, which youth described as a liberatory process of self-discovery. In addition, the author suggests that crafting and performing original stories afforded youth “the opportunity to see their story outside of themselves as an independent piece of work rather than a deeply personal [and fixed] event” (p. 85). The author finds that this process was cathartic for many youth, enabling young people to see the circumstances of their own past experiences in a new light. As a result of this investigation, the author suggests that theater-based creative youth development programs centered on the creation and performance of original stories developed have the potential to help marginalized youth interrogate labels, manage stigmatized identities, and explore possibilities—work that is central to positive identity development.

Holloway, D. L., & LeCompte, M. D. (2001). Becoming somebody! How arts programs support positive identity for middle school girls. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(4), 388-408.

This study reports on a two-year qualitative study of an intensive theater arts program designed to address issues of identity and gender with middle school girls. The authors of the study were interested in understanding the girls' phenomenological experiences of the theater program and how artistic practices can create space for identity transformation and the exploration of gender. The study draws on participant observation of the theater program over two years as well as in-depth interviews conducted with 15 girls at the end of year one and 24 girls at the end of year two. In contrast to traditional schooling experiences, which often do not address the unique developmental challenges and gendered experiences girls contend with, the theater program the author studied was specifically designed to encourage reflection and dialogue about society and gender norms. The authors found that the artistic practices associated with theater provided participants with an "artist's tool kit"—strategies for interrogating assumptions about society and culture and imagining possible alternatives. This "artist's tool kit" enabled participants to "make meaning for and about themselves, give voice to their experience, and engage in symbolic action that change[d] how they view themselves" (p. 401) and was formed through participation in theater activities designed to encourage focus, open-mindedness, and self-expression. Over the course of the study, the authors found that theater participation provided opportunities for participants to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about their roles in society and develop new ideas about themselves and their potential as women. As a result, the authors argue that arts experiences give individuals a way to "depict their experiences, to try on new identities or perspectives, and even to visualize, articulate, or act out the impossible" (p. 394) and may be a powerful means of promoting self-determination.

Parker, E. C. (2014). The process of social identity development in adolescent high school choral singers: A grounded theory. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(1), 18-32.

This study reports on a qualitative investigation of three high school choral ensembles and examines the relationship between participation in chorus and social identity development, i.e. the sense of identity one derives from belonging to a relevant peer group. The article takes a grounded theory approach to data analysis and draws on interviews with students and music educators as well as observations of choral activities across the three sites included in the study. The author selected participating schools due to their diversity in size, location, student demographics, and curricular offerings and based on data collected at each school, aimed to: (1) understand how social identity development unfolds through choral participation, and (2) identify the key sources that influence social identity development. The author found that ongoing choral participation supported social identity development in a few key ways. First, choir participation provided students with access to an "in-group" a peer group focused on advancing shared interests and ambitions and this allowed newcomers to gain the musical skills and knowledge needed to develop their expertise. Second, as members of the group, participants reported that they were held to high expectations. They were expected to be prepared, take constructive criticism, and contribute to the group's goal of achieving musical excellence. In addition, the author found that chorus provided opportunities to

build new friendships, and that social support was instrumental to sustaining choral participation over time. Because study participants developed their musical skills and were recognized for their ongoing participation by others, they derived a sense of accomplishment and pride that was closely linked to their experiences in choir. As a result, the author argues that sustained choral participation allowed study participants to transcend mere group membership by experiencing a richer sense of belonging.

The author argues that several contextual factors were key to social identity development in chorus. First, parents and mentors were instrumental in influencing participants' initial decision to join chorus. Second, the author also found that group size and level of intensity were also key factors in identity development: the smaller the group, the longer the time spent together, and the more rigorous the rehearsal and performance schedule, the stronger the participants' conception of and identification with their team. Based on the results of this study and existing scholarship on adolescent identity development, the author argues that sustained choral participation may aid adolescents as they enter new and more challenging stages of development.

Rantala, K. (1997) Narrative identity and artistic narration: The story of adolescents' art. *Journal of Material Culture* 2(2) 219-239.

This article reports on a qualitative investigation of the visual art making practices of seven adolescent artists enrolled in a specialized arts school. The author of the study conducted artifact-based interviews with young artists to understand how the young people used art as a tool for *narrative identity construction*, i.e. the use of stories and reflection on stories to define a sense of self. The youth involved in the study participated in regular arts instruction and art making activities in painting, drawing, and graphics, and the interviews the author conducted focused on reflecting on a personally meaningful artwork of the participant's choosing. Based on data collected during the interviews, the author found that making art supported narrative identity development through a two-fold process. First, making art placed the young people in situations in which they were responsible for organizing their thoughts and experiences and giving them concrete form through a visual medium. Second, the author found that in discussing their artwork, young people practiced interpreting and reflecting on their experience. In turn, the author suggests the process of making, interpreting, and reflecting on personally meaningful art enables young people to become more aware of their perspectives. This metacognitive work that is central to adolescent development: telling one's story through art makes experiences more comprehensible to oneself, allowing for greater self-understanding and sense of self-efficacy. Though this general process unfolded among all of the youth involved in the study, the author observed notable differences along gender lines. While the content of the girls' artwork depicted themes dealing with intimacy, care, and belonging—themes the author argues are traditionally associated with feminine values—the girls described the process as one that allowed them to experience greater autonomy and self-sufficiency—themes that have been historically associated with masculine values. Conversely, the author found that though the boys in the study depicted masculine themes in their artwork, they described the artmaking process as one that created space for sensitivity and self-expression. Thus the author argues that artmaking provided the young people in the study “relief from the pressures stemming from strict gender roles” (p. 231) allowing them to both understand and shift their perspectives through making

and reflecting on their artwork. This study carries important implications for arts educators concerned with adolescent development. In addition to the technical and aesthetic dimensions of arts education, arts educators may want to consider the ways they can purposefully design experiences to support reflection and dialogue about personally meaningful artwork.

CATALYZE: HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

Creative Learning Experiences and Civic Development

Chávez, V., & Soep, E. (2005). Youth radio and the pedagogy of collegiality. *Harvard Educational Review, 75(4), 409-434.*

This study draws on ethnographic data collected at Youth Radio, a media organization in Oakland, CA to elaborate the organization's pedagogical approach to helping young people learn media production skills to advance a variety of stories for and about young people. Through involvement in after-school activities twice a week, young people at Youth Radio partner with adults to produce provocative news and media artifacts designed to attract public interest. In contrast to discourses that sensationalize the notion of an independent, fully formed "youth voice" the authors argue that partnerships between young people and adults are essential to helping young people develop the skills needed to refine their ideas and communicate compelling content to public audiences. This approach, what the authors refer to as a "pedagogy of collegiality" is characterized by "context[s] in which young people and adults mutually depend on one another's skills, perspectives, and collaborative efforts to generate original, multitextual, professional-quality work for outside audiences" (p. 411). The authors of the study argue that reciprocity is a defining feature of the organization's "pedagogy of collegiality" and find that reciprocity manifests in working together to frame stories, supporting youth-led visions with feedback and resources provided by adults, and holding each other to collectively held production standards. When these conditions are in place, the authors argue that opportunities at Youth Radio provide a vehicle for youth "to tell their stories, using dialogue, reflection, and action to convey and also challenge what is taken as truth. The process of transforming lived an imagined experience into original expressive works for significant audiences can provide a resource for young people to rewrite the stories that are told about them, against them, or supposedly on their behalf." (p. 410). This article suggests that youth media organizations that work with youth under similar conditions can empower youth to engage as creators rather than consumers of media, capable of producing high-quality content that meaningfully shapes public opinion and discourse.

In addition, this article also provides important implications for practice. The authors note that while many community arts organizations are inspired by efforts to "give voice" to disempowered youth well-intentioned projects "can overlook the ways young people are sometimes selectively allowed to participate in a given project—for example, providing intimate autobiographical accounts—while being kept from other levels of participation, like making editorial or curatorial decisions, or having opportunities for continued involvement and for earning meaningful credit and compensation for their contributions" (p. 416). In order to disrupt inequalities that may manifest in conventional teacher-student relationships, arts educators interested in amplifying youth voice need professional

development experiences geared towards cultivating partnerships with youth and in developing projects that enable youth to take increasing ownership in designing and directing the course of their learning.

Dewhurst, M. (2010). An inevitable question: Exploring the defining features of social justice art education. *Art Education*, 63(5), 6-13.

The author of this article conducted a qualitative investigation of a museum-based activist art class to understand the unique forms of teaching and learning inherent in a space that promotes a social justice orientation to arts education. The aim of this study was to bring further clarity to the concept of social justice arts education and explore how bringing an arts perspective to social justice education connects with and is distinct from traditional forms of social justice education. According to the author, all social justice art “shares a commitment to engage in creating art that draws attention to, mobilizes action toward, or attempts to intervene in systems of inequality or injustice” (p. 366). To investigate the pedagogical practices associated with social justice arts education, the author observed and conducted interviews with 14 teenagers involved in an after-school activist art class. The author found that teaching artists at the after-school program promote a unique form of *critical pedagogy*, i.e. teaching and learning practices designed to promote analysis of the systemic sources of injustice, through the arts. In this setting, critical pedagogy manifested through activities geared towards generating questions and connections about issues of inequality that were meaningful to youth, and translating questions and connections into aesthetic objects. When taken together, the author suggests that the processes of connecting, questioning, and translating allow artists to critically examine the world around them, construct knowledge about that world, and represent new understandings through artistic production. Making activist art requires youth to understand the various political, economic, and cultural factors that influence their social worlds, and activist artmaking positions youth as knowers and creative agents rather than as subjects of adult-led interventions. The author argues that young people’s engagement in this process represents a meaningful avenue for participating in civic dialogue, particularly for youth in power-marginalized communities.

Goessling, K., & Doyle, C. (2009). Thru the Lenz: Participatory Action Research, Photography, and Creative Process in an Urban High School. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 4(4), 343-365.

This study combined photography with participatory action research techniques to involve teens in critical discussions about their communities. Working from a critical pedagogy framework, the authors assert that supporting critical consciousness is a means to recognize oppression and support change. In addition, the authors argue that adolescence is a critical time for shaping orientations towards justice because adolescence is when people begin to understand the world around them, and develop understandings of their places in it. To support their inquiry on the relationship between artmaking and the development of critical consciousness, the authors studied youth participation in a high school photography club over a two month period. Using participatory action research methods, the researchers worked with the young people on their community photo project, and developed their analyses based on group dialogue, photos taken by youth, participant reflections, and focus group data. The authors assert

that creative exploration encouraged youth to use their imaginations to “pave the way for new insights and understandings” about the world around them (p. 345). In addition, since youth were positioned as experts in relation to their work, the authors argue that participation in the creative process offered a source of empowerment which encouraged youth to “harness their energies for self-reflection and community connection” (p. 344). The researchers found that the photography project provided youth with an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses of their community, and explore their responsibilities and agency within their communities and cultures.

Kang Song, Y. I. & Gammel, J. A. (2011). Ecological mural as community reconnection. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 30(2), 266–278.

This case study draws on the framework of ecological art, i.e. art that is meant to promote awareness of and engagement with environmental issues, to explore how a community mural project promoted youth civic learning and environmental stewardship. The author conducted participant observation as the community mural project unfolded and interviewed over 70 participants involved in developing the mural. The project focused on an urban river ecology in Massachusetts and was facilitated by a teaching artist who involved youth in designing a mural to represent the ecology in collaboration with scientists. Youth developed research, teamwork, and presentation skills as they took a leadership role in designing the mural, where they were responsible for synthesizing new information and making decisions about their work. In addition, youth prepared a detailed case study of the river and developed an interest in environmental stewardship. The author argues that this immersive experience provided a window into global environmental issues, allowing youth to make connections between their local experience and issues of broader concern.

Krensky, B. (2001). Going on beyond zebra: A middle school and community-based arts organization collaborate for change. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(4), 427-44.

This article is an ethnographic study of a collaboration between a community arts organization and a public middle school that involved youth in an arts-integrated service learning experience. In this project, youth used the artmaking process to explore community issues, and their creative inquiries informed the design of a community art and playground space. Through the project, youth deepened their understandings of their communities, and learned how to use the arts to express ideas and envision new possibilities for their communities. The authors find that activist arts experiences were a particularly effective way to “explore, engage in, and affect social issues” (p. 427). The arts represented a tool for civic inquiry and arts-based experiences fostered the development of social responsibility. The authors argue that creativity is key to this process; creativity allows people to envision non-obvious solutions, and public art allows young people to share their ideas with a wider audience and create dialogue.

Kuttner, P. J. (2016). Hip-hop citizens: Arts-based, culturally sustaining civic engagement pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86(4), 527-555.

This article comes from a yearlong qualitative case study conducted at a hip-hop based youth arts organization that involves young people in using artistic practices to challenge

oppression and pursue social justice. The author argues that while scholars now comment on the “civic empowerment gap,” the ways that civic education is currently defined fails to capture the full range of how students of color participate in civic action. In contrast to traditional forms of civic education, which are often premised on a few relatively narrow—and adult-centric—measures of civic participation (e.g. voting), the author argues that “youth civic engagement is increasingly intertwined with cultural production” (p. 528-529) for the purposes of exerting influence on issues of public concern. This is because while young people may be skeptical of their ability to enact change through institutional politics, artistic modes of expression offer an attractive alternative for engaging in creative action. To illuminate how a youth arts organization uses arts and culture as resources for supporting youth civic participation, the author of the study selected an innovative hip-hop organization working at the forefront of *youth cultural organizing*, i.e. “social change efforts that place art and culture at the center of a community or movement organizing strategy” (p. 532). The author conducted participant observation of organizational activities over a ten-month period, thirty-one interviews with organizational stakeholders, and analyzed organizational documents to understand how the hip-hop organization enacted its mission and supported youth civic engagement through the arts. The author found that organizational efforts focused on developing students’ critical consciousness in the cultural realm. Young people learned to recognize how ideological oppression and injustice are sustained through art, media, and popular culture as a critical first step toward enacting change. In addition, young people created action focused on cultural change through *counterstorytelling*, i.e. developing new narratives that challenge dominant conceptions of communities of color as a means for supporting the growth of social movements. Based on this in-depth case study, the author suggests that the specific mechanism of counterstorytelling may represent an underexplored avenue for using artistic practices to tap into and expand youths’ civic resources (p. 549). Furthermore, the author argues that arts practices rooted in community cultures and traditions may be an effective way of moving beyond deficit-based analyses inherent in the civic empowerment gap discourse toward recognition of the myriad ways young people are working to promote change.

Kuttner, P. J. (2015). Educating for cultural citizenship: Reframing the goals of arts education. Curriculum Inquiry, 45(1), pp. 69-92.

This article draws on a qualitative case study of a hip-hop organization to explore how culturally responsive arts education shapes young people’s orientations towards participation in the cultural life of their communities. Over the course of a year, the author studied a hip-hop organization that trains youth as cultural organizers that use the arts to address injustice in their communities. The young people at the organization work to develop artistic skills and become prepared to take collective action. Through analysis of interviews, field note data, and organizational documents, the author found that through hip-hop, youth are engaged in recognizing forms of oppression that stem from dominant portrayals of communities of color in mainstream media, and are involved in creating their own counternarratives that challenge deficit-perspectives. In the process of doing so, that author found that youth “begin to contextualize their individual experiences and develop a shared language for talking about community issues” (p. 80). The author suggests that these new understandings coupled with arts education give youth confidence in their abilities to use art and culture as resources for contributing to the world around them. The

author argues that this represents a unique form of cultural citizenship, where individuals use the arts as a means for shaping the cultural life of their communities. Based on this study, the author suggests four key dimensions of cultural citizenship: (1) has a critical, systemic analysis of power in the cultural domain; (2) advocates for marginalized cultures and stories, based in a strong sense of cultural pride and efficacy; (3) feels responsible for, and capable of, using art towards justice in her multiple, overlapping communities; and (4) is dedicated to change through collective action utilizing multiple social change approaches. These research-based dimensions may be useful assessment benchmarks for arts education stakeholders interested in promoting social justice through the arts.

Peters, D.M. (2010). Passing on: The old head/younger dancer mentoring relationship in the cultural sphere of rhythm tap. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 34(4), 438- 436.

The findings in this case study come from an ethnographic investigation of mentoring relationships formed through an African American tap dance community. The author found that the tap dance community provided a strong context for intergenerational mentoring relationships between elder tap dancers “old heads” and younger tap dancers. These mentoring relationships functioned as a mechanism of social support, allowing young people to develop new skills and expertise connected to the cultural life and heritage of their community. In addition, the tap dance community created a sense of shared identity, purpose, and cooperation among dancers. The author argues that mentor-mentee relationships are integral to maintaining the vitality of cultural traditions.