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The Role of Youth Arts: Providing Opportunity and Intervention for At-Risk Populations

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of Honors

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INTRODUCTION

This past year, I did an internship in Washington D.C. with Pyramid Atlantic, a non-profit community art center. Here, I was introduced to the field of youth development. Twice a week, we would provide afterschool arts programming in two Montgomery County middle schools. More than half of the student body at each of the schools is on the Free and Reduced Meals Program (FARMs). FARMs is a poverty indicator that measures the percentage of students eligible for participation. Our afterschool program partnered with *Excel Beyond the Bell,* a Montgomery County initiative whose mission is to improve the quality and quantity of experiences for children and youth when they are not in school. The program offers children and youth safe, quality, and accessible out-of-school time activities in which to realize their full potential.[1]

With these kids, I found a passion for youth development, particularly the role the arts can play. This directly influenced the course of my work, and as a result, the following thesis. My research led me to the many practices and organizations nationwide that are dedicated to providing valuable arts experiences for youth populations.

Chapter One will look at the work of art educator, Viktor Lowenfeld, and his contributions to the role of art in education. We will also look at current trends in arts participation, and how these trends relate back to the accessibility of arts education. Art will also be regarded as cultural capital, capital that provides the opportunity for social accessibility and mobility.

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[1] *Excel Beyond the Bell.* Accessed April 1, 2014. http://excelbeyondthebell.org/index.html

In Chapter Two, we will look at art as intervention. There is a growing field of research into the value and necessity of arts for healthy development, especially in at-risk youth populations. Using a study prepared for the California Endowment by Susan Anderson, Nancy Walch, and Kate Becker, we will look at several studies and programs that regard youth arts practices as a means for cognitive and social development, academic improvement, and civic engagement.

Chapter Three will describe my implementation of this research through my work with Johnson City's youth program *PATROL.* I had the wonderful opportunity to work with PATROL to develop an art program for their participants. PATROL, Police and Teens Reach Opportunities for Life, partners Johnson City police with children and teens from two Johnson City housing communities. The program's mission is to provide youth support and mentorship, while opening lines of communication between police officers and the communities they serve.

CHAPTER ONE:

Art as Opportunity

Viktor Lowenfeld (1903 – 1960) author of the classic book in arts education, *Creative and Mental Growth,* is highly regarded as one of the most significant art educators of the past century. His work has emerged as the single most influential force in shaping the field of art education from the early 1950s to the late 1980s. Lowenfeld believed that all young people had the inherent potential to develop their own individual voices and to pursue the complexity of their identity. Therefore, he advocated that the goal of art education "is not the art itself or the aesthetic product or the aesthetic experience, but rather the *child* who grows up more creatively and sensitively applies his experience in the arts to whatever life situations may be applicable."[2] This will encourage the child to apply his or her increased awareness and compassion to their relationships with others and the world around them.

As human beings, we are wired to be social creatures. Our relationships with one another and our connections to society are essential to our well-being. Matthew Lieberman, professor of Psychology, Psychiatry, and Behavioral Sciences at University of California, and one of the foremost authorities in the world on the study of neural science has spent much of his career researching how our brains respond to social engagement.[3] Lieberman writes:

> "*Everything we have learned about the social brain tells us that we are wired to make and keep social connections, that we feel pain when these connections are threatened, and that our identity, our sense of self, is intimately tied up with the groups we are a part of".*

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[2] Bernard Young, "The Importance of Self-Identification in Art, Culture, and Ethnicity" (The Lowenfeld Lecture, NAEA National Convention, New York, 2012).

[3] Matthew D. Lieberman, *Social* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2013).

Therefore, as Lowenfeld argued, if art experiences allow children to explore and identify their sense of self, and if this sense of self is intimately tied to our social connections, as Liebermann states, then arts education can lead to greater self-awareness *as well as* increased social-connectedness.

Lowenfeld wrote that self-identification was one of the basic factors important for creative expression. For him, self-identification included self-knowledge, self-affirmation, and self-empowerment of ethnically and culturally different individuals and groups. Part of self-identification comes through relationships and social encounters with others.[2] Again, we are talking about this awareness of s*elf*, combined with an awareness of *other.* The ability to understand and share the feelings of another is defined as empathy. The word *empathy* was introduced into the English language a little over a century ago as a translation of the German word *einfühlung. Einfühlung*, which means "feeling into" was used in nineteenth century aesthetic philosophy to describe our capacity to mentally get inside works of art and even nature, to have a first- person experience from the object itself. This illustrates that throughout history, art has often been used as a vehicle for understanding ourselves within a larger context and thereby understanding each other.

In addition to helping children identify themselves as individuals and as part of a larger social context, art education is believed to enhance several areas of cognitive development and growth. These include emotional, intellectual, physical, perceptual, social, and aesthetic growth. Through the creative process, young people develop their capacity for emotional attachment and the ease to identify with their own world experiences. They increase their intellectual alertness and comprehension, while developing spatial recognition, differentiation in color, and even

awareness of social issues. Physicality and motor coordination is also enhanced through the increased awareness of kinesthetic experience.

Perceptual growth is another area of development, one that is extremely important, and often overlooked. Lowenfeld writes:

> "*The cultivation and growth of our senses has been largely neglected in our educational system. Were it not for art education, the child would scarcely be reminded of the meaning and quality of his sense organs. Yet their proper use is of such vital importance, for the enjoyment of life and for vocational purposes, that we cannot afford such neglect".*

Social growth is one of the foremost factors of human growth developed through creative activity. We see this in an individual's growing ability to live cooperatively in their society. Children must learn to identify with their own experiences, and thereby take responsibility for the things they do. This is inherent in the creative process. Here, children are expected to draw from their own personal life experiences and communicate them in a way that is understandable to others. This not only makes children aware of their own needs, but the needs of others as well. Self-identification with others needs will lead to the discovery of the group, and one's role in it. The arts, through cooperative work, can give this group awareness constructive meaning. This feeling of social consciousness and responsibility is of great significance for the child's understanding of a larger world in which they will become a part.[4]

Aesthetic growth is also an inherent attribute of creative activity. English poet and critic, Herbert Read, has called aesthetic education "the education of those senses upon which

[4] Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth: Fourth Edition* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966).

consciousness, and ultimately the intelligence and judgment of the human individual are based". So aesthetics, our perceptions and understanding of beauty, nature, art, and sensory stimuli, help us identify, comprehend, and make judgments on the world around us. Our entire personality is affected by aesthetic principles. Lowenfeld argued that only when the senses are brought into harmonious and habitual relationship with the world will an integrated personality be built. A lack of this integration will result in psychologically unbalanced types.[4]

Through the emotional, intellectual, physical, perceptual, social, and aesthetic development that art activity provides, children become self-aware and socially aware. Unfortunately, in our education system, most of these modes of comprehension and growth are overlooked. Learning, the acquisition of knowledge, is almost exclusively the focus of education. Lowenfeld writes:

> *"It is just as important for the child to gain freedom in expression as it is for him to get more knowledge. In fact, knowledge will remain unused, frozen, unless the child develops the urge and the freedom to use it".*

Without art activity and free expression, children are denied much of the development needed for the full and balanced integration of thinking, feeling, and perceiving.[4]

Knowledge alone does not create well-balanced individuals. From an early age, we as human beings require the space necessary to become aware of ourselves and our relationships with others, to develop an awareness and sensitivity for the world around us, and to reflect on our experiences. The freedom of expression taught by creative activity allows us to do this.

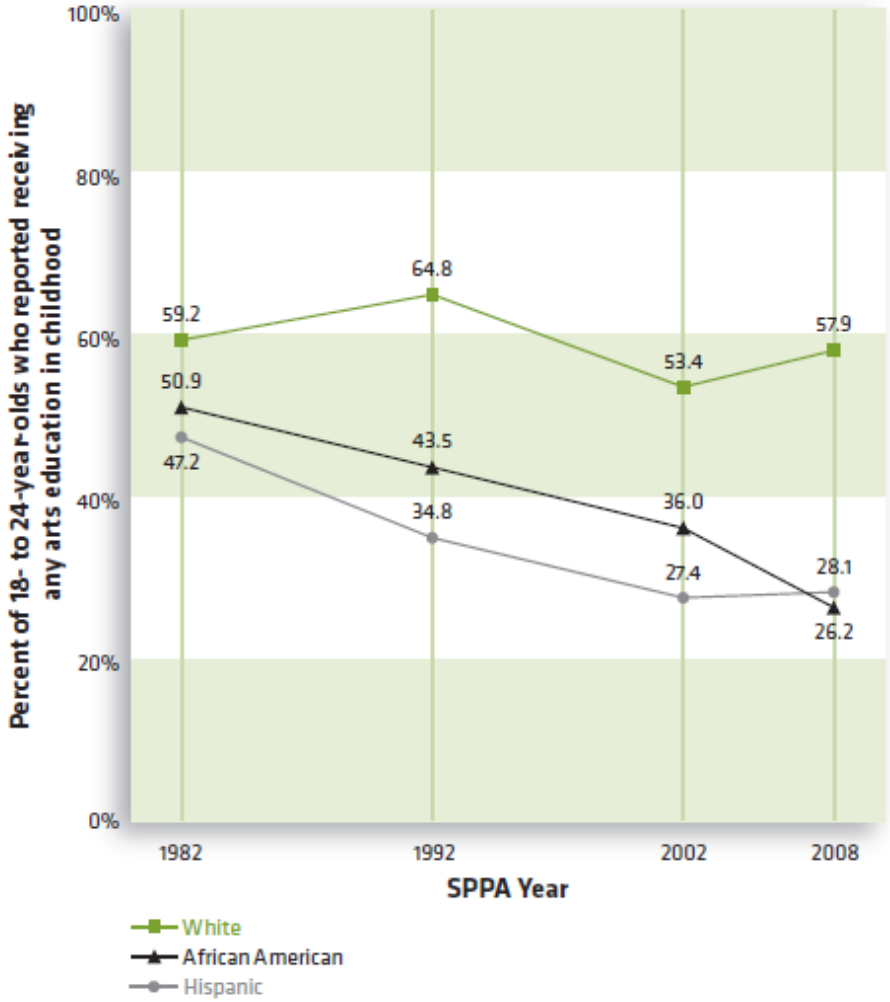
It is apparent that art plays a vital role in childhood education. However, since 1985, there has been a long-term pattern of decline in school based arts education offerings; music and visual

arts practices have suffered the most. A 1982 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts found that 64.6 percent of 18 year olds polled, reported that they had received arts education in childhood. By 2008, that number was 49.5 percent, showing a decrease of 15 percent. Research shows that the decline of arts education among white children is relatively insignificant, while quite substantial among African American and Hispanic children. Figure 4 shown below illustrates the disparity. From 1982 to 2008, arts education opportunities for white children actually rose 0.5 percent. For African American children they fell nearly 25 percent from 50.9 to 26.2 percent. For Hispanics they fell nearly 20 percent from 47.2 to 28.1 percent. Not only are minority children less likely to receive arts education, their schools are most likely to see decreases in funding. These statistics show that from 1982 to 2008, nearly all of the decline in childhood arts education were absorbed by African American and Hispanic children. [5]

[5] Nick Rabkin and E.C. Hedberg, "Arts Education in America: What the declines mean for arts participation" (Research Report #52, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington D.C., 2011).

FIGURE 4

Percent of 18- to 24-year-olds who received any arts education in childhood, by race/ethnicity and SPPA year[7]

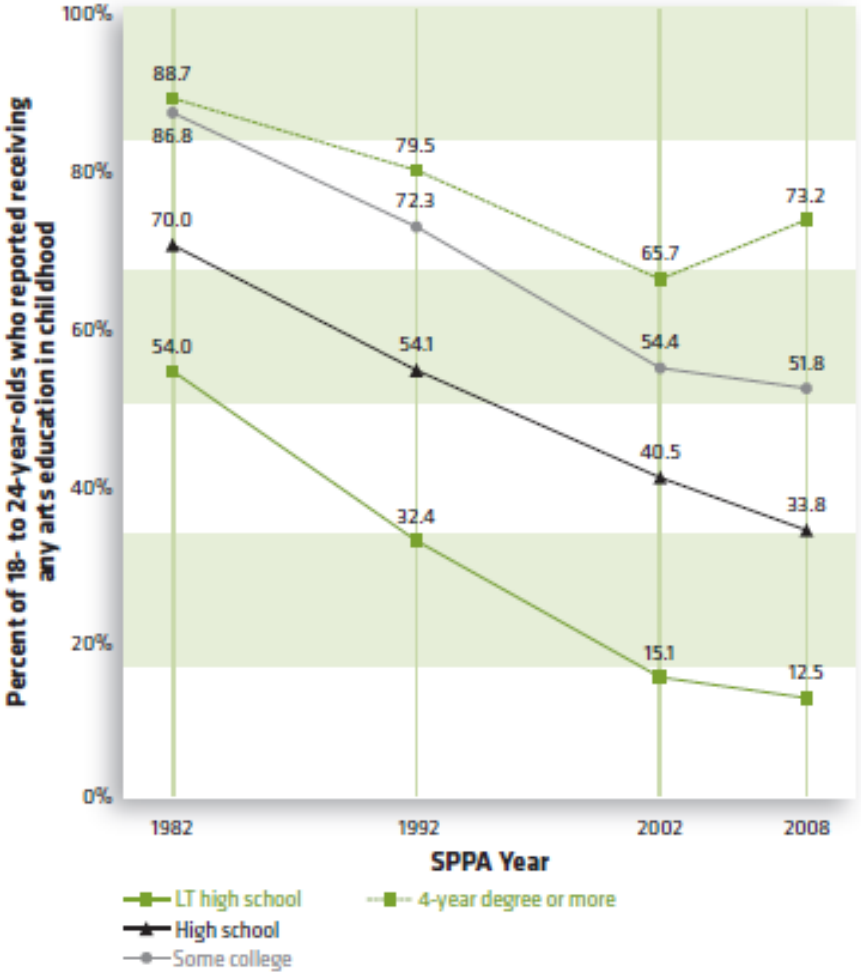


Source: 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008 waves of the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts.

In addition to race, the socioeconomic status of children matters a great deal to the decline of arts education. By looking at the educational attainment of children's parents, we can see the correlation of arts education opportunities to socioeconomic standing. Figure 23 shown below illustrates these findings.

FIGURE 23

Percent of 18- to 24-year-olds who received any arts education in childhood, by parental education and SPPA year



Source: 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008 waves of the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts.

From this graph we can see that children whose parents had a college degree or more (highest socioeconomic status) were consistently more likely to have had childhood arts education. On the other end, children with parents having less than a high school education (lowest socioeconomic status) were least likely to have had any arts education in childhood. The gap is

significant. In 2008, 73.2 percent of children from the highest socioeconomic status received arts education, compared to 12.5 percent of children from the lowest. This is a disparity of 60.7 percent.

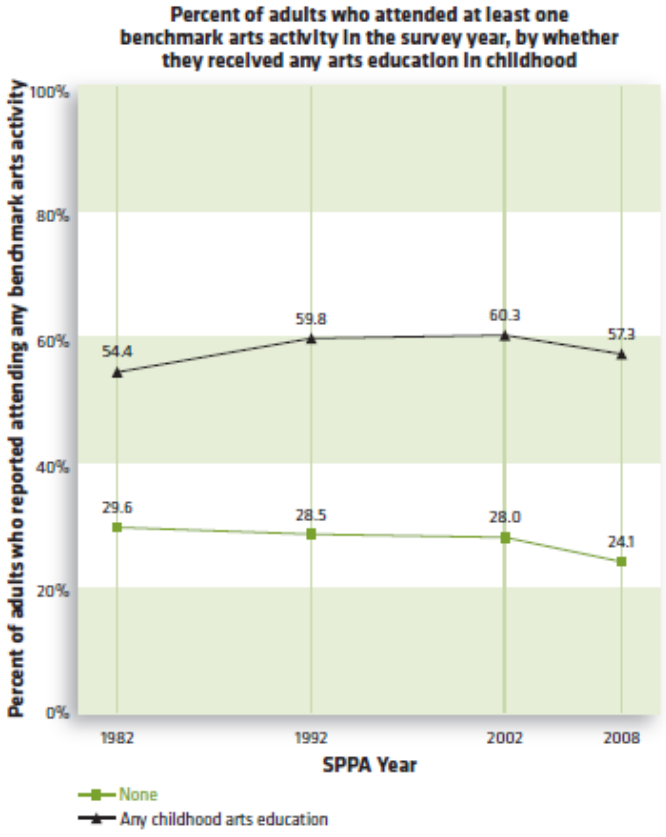
As we know from Lowenfeld's work as well as a growing body of research, arts education is associated with the development of dispositions and inclinations that support learning in general, reaching well beyond the arts to a broad range of positive cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes. Demographic studies of childhood arts education show that the benefits of arts education are largely being denied to children of low-income, minority status. This is a problem, as studies have found that arts learning has a more significant effect on low-income student achievement that it does on the academic performance of more privileged students. Arts education is further shown to be an effective pathway to deeper engagement and success in school for students who are at greatest risk of academic failure. Additionally, the effects of art involvement on low-income youth are sustained well into young adulthood. Youth who have substantial engagements with the arts are more likely to go to college, do well in school, and get a degree. They are also more likely to do volunteer work, register to vote, and hold a full-time job, while being less likely to require public assistance or food stamps.[5]

Studies show that childhood arts education is the most important factor in determining adult participation in the arts. Those who receive little knowledge or training in the arts as children are far less likely to create work or attend arts events later in life. Evidence shows that the decline in arts education for low-income, minority children, is highly correlative to future arts engagement. Studies have determined that arts audiences are not as racially and ethnically

diverse when compared to the degree of the general population. Figure 5 shown below illustrates the relationship between arts education and adulthood arts participation.[5]

FIGURE 5

Benchmark arts attendance, by childhood and adult arts education and SPPA year



Source: 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008 waves of the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts.

National Endowment for the Arts

So why is it important to look at arts participation? These numbers are a good indication of the democratization of the arts. As a portion of support for the arts comes through public funding, concerns are raised about the social composition of the arts public. By looking at audience participation, questions are answered as to whether government programs are

underwriting activities enjoyed by a large cross-section of the American public, or if they are backing activities that remain the special preserve of an exclusive social elite. Audience indicators are also important in learning the extent to which cultural resources are inequitably distributed in the United States.[6]

"Evidence suggests that the highly unequal distribution of cultural resources can be an important factor in maintaining class boundaries and perpetuating social immobility from generation to generation." Exclusive social events surrounding the consumption of high culture act as ritual occasions for the reaffirmation of elite solidarity. Familiarity with cultural matters, access to cultural events, and the possession of cultural credentials are important assets for ascent in social standing. Therefore arts audience composition is important in understanding how the arts may perpetuate class hierarchy.[6]

Income, occupation, ethnicity, and education all play a part in audience composition. Studies show that art audiences tend to have median incomes above the national average. Occupations with the highest attendance are also those with the highest education attainment. A 1976 survey of audience demographics showed a 68 percent median participation for professional and managerial workers, while only a 5.6 median participation for blue collar workers. Additionally, minorities are often found to be highly underrepresented in arts audiences. The same 1976 study showed that minorities represented 7 percent median participation of the audiences studied. Conclusions can then be drawn that arts audiences are distinctly elite in level of education, occupation, income, and race.[6]

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[6] Paul Dimaggio and Michael Useem, "Cultural Democracy in a Period of Cultural Expansion: The Social Composition of Arts Audiences in the United States," *Social Problems* 26, No. 2 (Dec. 1978): Accessed December 23, 2013. http://jstor.org/stable/800281.

Participation in and consumption of the arts is particularly important for lower classes looking to identify with the upper class and to yield socially useful contacts. Additionally, the accumulation of cultural capital through education and refined aesthetic taste can serve as a medium for the transmission of elite position from generation to generation. By endowing their offspring with this capital, it can thereby be converted into social standing and economic position later in life.

As we've seen, low-income minorities are at a disadvantage for inclusion in arts circles as well as the subsequent transmission of capital to their children. They face barriers including lack of information about arts events, lack of training to ensure appreciation of the arts, relative unfamiliarity and often discomfort with artistic contexts and social conventions, and finally, a lack of access to those who define artistic tastes and standards.[6]

We see that these barriers begin in childhood as income, ethnicity, and social standing determine access to arts education. This access to youth arts then becomes the largest predictor of adulthood arts participation in which people gain access to cultural capital and social contacts that improve chances for social mobility. If we continue to deprive children of arts opportunities early on, we will continue to perpetuate class hierarchy within the arts and throughout society.

While the benefits of arts education can be seen through numerous studies spanning the course of decades, the art curriculum has never enjoyed a secure place in American education. The role of the arts in the academic curriculum has been constantly debated with questions raised about the value that the arts provide to the widely accepted goals of public education. These goals are often based on the memorization and regurgitation of facts and information. By

the 20th century, progressive educators including John Dewey, the leading educational philosopher of the time, began asserting that learning in the arts was essential to a complete education. Dewey theorized that learning happens as a consequence of experience. Therefore the arts, which are refined and intensified forms of experience, make unique contributions to human learning and understanding. The fundamental processes of art making are profoundly cognitive, while reinforcing the building blocks of all thought. Arts education will continue to be an essential part of the shifting culture of the American landscape.[5]

CHAPTER TWO

Art as Intervention

Arts in Education

The United States is a rapidly changing nation. Income inequality has increased substantially over the decades, upward social mobility is threatened, minority populations are growing yet remain highly underserved, and young Americans are facing far worse job prospects than previous generations. In the face of these challenges, we are seeing struggling and disconnected young adults. Scholars at the National Research Council in 2002 estimated that at least one in every four adolescents in the U.S. is at serious risk of not achieving productive adulthood. Among the life-threatening, and sometimes fatal, problems are mental health, obesity, access to healthcare, substance abuse, sexual behavior, teen pregnancy, homicide, and suicide.[7]

In 2003, Susan Anderson, then principal of CivicArts, approached The California Endowment with her observations on youth development in the arts. She and a group of researchers were then commissioned by the endowment to study the arts as being influential on youth well-being and development, and thereby effective intervention strategy for those at-risk.

Young people who are commonly seen as disadvantaged and at-risk often attend troubled schools, have been kicked out of school, live in struggling neighborhoods, are in foster care or families in crisis, are in juvenile detention centers, and/or struggle with substance abuse. At-risk

[7] Susan Anderson, Nancy Walch, and Kate Becker, "The Power of Art: The Arts as an Effective Intervention Strategy for At-Risk Youth," *Prepared for The California Endowment,* accessed March 9, 2013, http://www.calendow.org/uploadedfiles/publications/by_topic/disparities/general/the%20power%20of%20art.pdf.

populations were chosen for study as the efficacy of arts programs in their lives is the most compelling testament to the power and necessity of art as a part of healthy young development.

Involvement in the arts offers unparalleled means for young people to develop the strength, resiliency, and self-image that allow them to participate in society on healthy terms. Some of the observed benefits of youth arts programs are improved academic achievement, workforce preparedness, enhanced self-esteem and self-sufficiency, increased pro-social identity, and avoidance of risky behaviors. Through the arts, adolescents are provided the positive risk-taking they need developmentally, significant mentor relationships, social accountability, healthy brain development, and a cultural opening to knowledge of the world and self. Compared with other activities, the arts are shown to elicit the greatest commitment from young people, many of whom remain in school or after-school programs because of their engagement with arts activities. Because of this engagement, the arts have the ability to serve as a portal for young people who are seeking healthy lives, commitment to school, and support services.[7]

Research shows that troubled youth, many of whom often join gangs and/or vandalize with graffiti, are in search of recognition, achievement, and self-expression. Art provides a healthy alternative to address these needs. With art, they learn to communicate and express themselves, while gaining positive reinforcement from mentors and/or the community for their achievements. Additionally, arts processes require long hours of practice, focus, and perseverance, traits that many at-risk youth lack. Youth programs offer artistic alternatives designed to show that natural highs can serve as viable substitutes to drug abuse and high risk lifestyles. Youth program director Harvey Milkman of Project Self-Discovery in Colorado writes:

> "*A kid who has a strong drive for thrill seeking and novelty can avoid gang violence by satisfying his needs through the performance of poetry, hip-hop, or rap. Almost magically, the conga, paintbrush, or guitar can become formidable substitutes for pistols or joints."*[7]

While education is typically at the core of these arts programs, there is a growing field that has evolved beyond the traditional practices that are limited to the classroom. Focusing on providing arts experiences where disadvantaged youth populations are found, the field has developed in response to growing institutional gaps, the decline in arts education in schools, and the defunding of public sector youth services and afterschool programs. Due to the increasing research and recognition of the vital role the arts play in the wellbeing of young people, this field has continued to grow of its own volition. Within this field is a national infrastructure of nonprofit, community based arts programs that have developed a range of shared characteristics that are broader, more dynamic, and go beyond current definitions of arts education.

Shared characteristics that are seen to contribute to the success and efficacy of these programs include intensive youth participation in *creating* art, sustained mentorship and apprenticeship between youth and professional artists, commitment to participation over time-throughout multiple years or projects, youth responsibility for publicly presenting or performing their own work, rigorous expectations of all participants regarding quality of work and human interactions, and finally, the provision of safe and secure spaces for self-expression and social and artistic development.[7]

The Commission on Children at Risk has reported on effective strategies for reducing emotional and behavioral problems in at-risk youth such as depression, anxiety, attention deficit,

conduct disorders, and suicidal thoughts. These strategies are those that provide children with close attachments, meaning, and social connectivity. Additionally, research shows that the best arts practices that benefit at-risk youth combine these three elements. From schools and community organizations, to foster care, and even detention facilities, the arts provide children the possibility and opportunity for transformed lives.

Studies show that a disassociation from school is one of the first steps towards additional risk taking and dangerous behavior. Poor academic performance, alienation from school, truancy, and dropping out are all indicators of at-risk youth. Research has revealed that when arts are integrated into a school's curriculum, and are taught well, students are shown to develop an attachment to school, and will attend regularly. The arts as a core part of instruction are also shown to improve academic performance and test scores, while contributing to improved work and life skills. Overall, the arts can enhance the climate on campus, and generate a creative energy that extends beyond school hours. Importantly, these results are seen to be more effective for low-income students than they are for those of higher-incomes.[7]

Some important conclusions have been drawn to explain the efficacy of arts education in schools. First, the arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached. Sometimes, the arts provide a reason, and possibly the only reason, for being engaged in school. Secondly, the arts reach students *in ways* that they are not otherwise being reached. "Problem" students often become the highest achievers in arts learning settings. Their success here then becomes a bridge to learning and success in other areas. And finally, the arts connect students to themselves and to each other. Arts help students feel invested in ways deeper than "knowing the answer". Their attitudes towards themselves and towards others are shifted through arts engagement.

Projects

Nationwide, organizations and educators have proved the efficacy of youth arts education through the success of their programs. The Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) is a major arts curriculum integration partnership in Chicago public schools. Multiple evaluations of CAPE schools show that students in the arts integrated schools, compared to demographically similar students in control schools, perform better on reading and math tests, show improved behavior and attitudes, and note better campus environments overall. Additional observations of the CAPE program showed student growth of "very high" and "medium to high" in areas including responsibility, self-management, team participation, work with diverse individuals, motivation to learn, classroom discipline, and long-term effects.[7]

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, *The Arts Collaborative* at Oliver High School showed that students within the arts program earned consistently higher GPAs than the control group students. In six targeted Pittsburgh public middle schools, the implementation of an *Arts and Career Exploration* program resulted in improved attendance. Out of 348 students considered to be in academic or behavioral crisis, 30 percent improved attendance by 50 percent, while 60 percent of students improved by 20 percent. *Inside Out Community Arts* in Venice, California provides programming to underserved Los Angeles middle-school youth. Successes include increased scores on state reading and language tests, improved attendance, and fewer discipline referrals. *The HeArt Project* in Los Angeles reports that after one year, youth showed improvements in multiple areas: social, aesthetic and re-creative, subject-based and content, and school and community engagement.[7]

These organizations represent just a few of the many organizations, educators, and advocates nationwide that continue to draw awareness to the value and necessity of arts integration into the lives of at-risk youth populations.

Arts in After-School Programs

The time spent outside of school presents additional opportunities for sustained youth development and engagement. Young people spend only about a quarter of their time in school. The after-school hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. are riskiest time for youth in which they are most likely to commit crimes, be victims of violent crimes, be killed in accidents, experiment which drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, engage in sex, and become pregnant. Effective after-school programs are shown to reduce juvenile crime, risky behavior, and the use of drugs and alcohol, while improving social skills, self-esteem, and graduation rates of youth participants. A growing field of practice and study in after-school programs has found that the unsupervised time spent by juveniles outside of school holds the possibility of either the greatest risk or the greatest opportunity to save lives, tax dollars, and achieve positive outcomes for youth, especially in underserved communities.[7]

Non-school and community-based arts programs are especially effective at engaging youth in ways that other programs do not. The programs are often self-selected by young people, therefore building on values they already have. These programs offer a safe-haven for self-expression while supporting complex learning, confidence, and beneficial peer and community relations. Harvard's project Co-Arts defined five characteristics of effective after-school,

community-based arts programs. These five characteristics outline that educationally effective centers:

- Engage the power of art to transform and/or articulate personal identity.
- Cultivate strong relationships with center constituents (staff, teachers, students, parents, etc.).
- Carefully attend to the needs and interests of the communities they serve.
- Provide an enduring oasis for students and families.
- Carefully attend to their own process of development and transformation.

[Source: *Safe Havens, Portraits of Educational Effectiveness in Community Art Centers that Focus on Education in Economically Disadvantaged Communities,* Project Co-Arts, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1993][7]

Another study, spanning from 1987 to 1997, led by Shirley Brice Heath and Elizabeth Soep, considered the impacts of learning *outside of school hours.* The study consisted of 34 geographical locations from Massachusetts to Hawaii, including urban, rural communities, and mid-size cities. One hundred and twenty community based organizations were sites of study in which 30,000 young people passed through during the course of the decade. All programs were identified by young people themselves as being high-quality. These organizations operated in impoverished neighborhoods or counties, with low employment opportunities, within zones of higher crime relative to surrounding areas, alongside schools in need of additional professional support, and in areas with limited open spaces or organized recreational or aesthetic activities for youth.

Study sites were clustered into three categories: athletic/academic, community service, and arts-based. All youth participants involved in the organizations attended them voluntarily.

The youth populations that participated in these observed areas shared many characteristics. These included a mix of features related to roles, rules, and risks. Youth were shown to carry much responsibility in regards to final performances and/or outcomes, they assumed multiple roles and responsibilities in their programs, and they followed a rule of conduct applicable to the given environmental conditions. Young people were valued as resources, and held to a high level of achievement. Above all, the youth endured the risks involved in sharing their achievements, often opening their work up to public scrutiny.[8]

In the first seven years of this study, no particular attention was given to the arts organizations above that which was given to all study sites. However, analysis of the data began to show noteworthy patterns among the youth that resulted in increased attention to the ways arts worked for learning. Conclusions were drawn that the arts, by their very nature, carried a particular power for learning achievement both in the arts and in closely related competencies upon which knowledge in the arts depends. The effects of youth involvement in arts-based settings were significant in unexpected ways.

A selection of the students within these organizations participated in the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) that allowed comparisons between students involved in arts organizations and those in a national database from schools across the U.S. from 1988 – 1994. From these comparisons, students participating in arts programs were reported to be 25 percent more likely to have feelings of self-satisfaction, were 23 percent more likely to say they can do things as well as others, and were 23 percent more likely to feel that they can make plans

[8] Shirley Brice Heath, Elizabeth Soep, "Youth Development and the Arts in Nonschool Hours," *Grantmakers in the Arts Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998), accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.giarts.org/article/youth-development-and-arts-nonschool-hours.

and successfully work from them. Further comparisons also showed higher levels of achievement among the youth participating in the arts. This included an intensity in characteristics such as motivation, persistence, critical analysis, and planning. When compared to other young people in the national sample, those participating in arts sites were 31 percent more likely to say that they planned to continue school after high-school, eight times more likely to be recognized for community service, four times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem, three times more likely to win awards for school attendance, and twice as likely to win an award for academic achievement.[7]

The table below reveals the outcomes that involvement in arts organizations have on self-esteem. Students participating in arts-based organizations showed more positive results, despite coming from more challenging circumstances in their homes and communities, compared with other students of the NELS study.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS		
	NELS	ARTS
Feels good about him/herself	76.20	92.31
Feels s/he is a person of worth	75.94	90.91
Able to do things as well as others	76.17	88.81
On the whole, satisfied with self	69.98	84.62

[Source: Imaginative Actuality, Learning in the Arts during the Nonschool Hours, Champions of Change, The Impact of the Arts on Learning, Arts Education Partnership, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999, p. 29].

Researchers looked at the qualities of experience and interaction in arts programs that promoted such positive results in effective learning and self-image. One observation was that

the range, degree, and frequency of risk taking called for in the arts was noticeably different than in other areas. The arts allowed for a release of the imagination, particularly with vulnerable populations like children, in ways incomparable to other areas. Young artists were encouraged to stretch the bounds of their creativity while trying new ways to do old tasks or to apply tried methods to new applications or methods of presentation. In the arts, divergent thinking is a norm.

In these programs, group products often held dominance. But even within the group, individual identity was present in final exhibitions, performances, or presentations. These individuals were responsible for their contributions to the work, and were thereby at risk for the ridicule and/or criticism that resulted. This risk, however, motives young people as they know people are just as likely to appreciate their work as they are to criticize it.

Encouraging risk, along with personal and group accountability, led to an increase in motivation, persistence, and planning. This level of engagement gives an individual a sense of investment and challenge that pushes achievement further. The youth is responsible not only for the work, but also the space and materials for production, marketing of the outcome, and the self-analysis needed to consider improvement. These parameters become self-made rules that the youth must abide by in order to achieve success.

The art making process is not only guided by this establishment of rules, it is a process that also demands the ability to change them. Young artists often begin with an idea of their desired effect. Through encouraged experimentation and manipulation of ideas and material, however, these ideas are subject to change. Therefore, art making calls for simultaneous attention to how things are going as well as where things are headed. By regularly checking on

the progress of a project, young artists preempt problems, anticipate responses, and rework procedures, taking products through several variations before final presentation.[8]

Heightened risk, dynamic rules, and demands for identity all characterize settings where the arts dominate. Critique also held a prominent position in youth arts programs. Peer critique was often needed in order to anticipate audience reaction. In order to critique effectively, the arts rely heavily on many kinds of knowledge, forms of communication, technical terminology, local expressions, institutional memory, and many more factors of regional and universal norms and traditions. Young people took the risks involved in appraising another's work as well as opening their own work to scrutiny. This created an awareness of their own ways of making work, as well as the ways in which to communicate meaning to others.

These characteristics of effective youth organizations prove to promote cognitive, linguistic, socio-relational, and managerial capacities in those involved. The "arts creep", as it is called, shows that skills and abilities learned through the arts often slip into many other areas of life. This also refers to the capacity of the habits of the mind, developed through arts practices, which then seep into other types of learning. The arts spring from and feed motivation.[8]

Arts environments encourage young people to take risks, to communicate, to take responsibility, to be leaders, to master complex learning strategies, to be flexible, and to think critically about process and outcome. The influence of participation in the arts shows up in increased syntactic complexity, hypothetical reasoning, questioning approaches, theory-building and predicting, translating and transforming, creating analogies, reflecting and projecting, demonstrating, and assessing.[7]

Projects

There are a number of successful projects across the nation that work with at-risk youth during after school hours. *Art Share Los Angeles* focuses on the visual arts, dance, film, and music to shape lives through art education and community action. This program provides a safe space during peak violence hours while working to increase art and language skills, and improve graduation rates. *CornerStone Project, Inc.* in Little Rock, Arkansas, uses a multidisciplinary arts focus to increase the academic and personal success of neighborhood youth, while preventing substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and teen pregnancy. *Global Artways in* Salt Lake City, Utah inspires young people to understand the past, imagine a positive future, and preserve their cultural heritage by exposing them to the arts and the creative process.

An important component of these projects and other afterschool programs is the opportunity they provide for prolonged engagement with adults or guiding experts. Studies show that adolescents have few occasions to work in a sustained way toward the planning and execution of projects. For students who did not attend organized non-school or extracurricular activities, their weekly interaction with adult supervisors in sustained conversation on a single topic that included planning was, at best, 15 – 20 minutes. These students received almost no practice in talking through future plans, developing ideas for execution, or assessing next steps. Young people in arts-based organizations, however, do gain this valuable practice in thinking and talking as adults. In a two-hour work session in any of the arts, young people can hear and use:

- Directives to listen, look, feel, imagine.
- Demonstrations by an adult of what a performance or product can look, sound, or feel like.
- Small-group discussions to work up ideas or develop presentations.

- Verbal illustrations or explanations of a routine, technique, or move.
- Portrayal or reflection on the event or task at hand.
- One-on-one attention from professional artists or mentors for praise, critique, clarification of technique/process, or accomplishment.

This sustained engagement with adult mentors allows youth participants the time, attention, and interaction needed to take a project from idea to result. The sustained dialogue also improves youth communication skills and strengthens their ability to act as and work with adults in the future. Through the arts, one must be engaged in the present while taking the future into consideration. Constant practice in the mental gymnastics necessary for such present attention and future action helps create a nimble mind, an observing eye, and a resolute spirit.[7]

CHAPTER THREE

P.A.T.R.O.L.

Program Overview

P.A.T.R.O.L., Police and Teens Reach Opportunity for Life, is an afterschool initiative that provides programming and mentorship to at-risk children and teens living in Johnson City. Partnering with Johnson City Housing, PATROL is currently focusing its efforts on two housing development complexes known to have higher crime rates and lower quality of life relative to surrounding areas. The program is funded by an $800,000 federal grant under the Targeted Community Crime Reduction Project. The TCCRP collaborates with local law enforcement to develop crime prevention and reintroduction solutions. PATROL is one of the project's *preventative* measures to reduce crime.

The federal program hones in on four components of community safety and development: Pre-enforcement, enforcement, neighborhood revitalization, and offender intervention. Programs under the TCCRP grant will work to create new opportunities in the community for at-risk populations and enable a smoother re-entry into society for offenders being released.[9]

Preventative programs, such as PATROL, teach children and teens positive actions that will lower their chances of risk taking and criminal behavior. Monthly events are planned to expose the children to practices and resources that promote skill building and healthy lifestyles. These activities include trips to the library, lessons on healthy eating, community clean-up and other civic engagement, art programs, recycling, and more. All events are planned and

[9] "TCCRP Grants Cut Crime", *EfficientGov,* November 20, 2013, accessed March 29, 2014 http://efficientgov.com/blog/2013/11/20/tccrp-grants-cut-crime/.

supervised by Johnson City Police Officers. The officers are there to provide a support system for youth participants through sustained mentorship and relationship development.[10] Additionally, through this relationship, a healthy dialogue is created between at-risk youth and the police that patrol their communities. Misconceptions coming from both sides are challenged as police and youth work together to form positive relationships and lines of communication.

PATROL is designed not only to deter teens away from a life of crime, but also explain the difference between smart and poor decisions. Creating a dialogue and opening up new opportunities for self-expression is considered key to molding young adults into active, engaged community members. Final products of PATROL and other programs, such as youth artworks, are displayed throughout the community as part of community revitalization. If children and teens develop an interest in their communities, and an inclination to preserve them, this might boost youth participation as adults and thereby lower crime rates.[9]

Developing Arts Programming for PATROL

I became involved with PATROL this February when program manager, Officer Michael Whiteaker, reached out to ETSU's Art Department. Several of the PATROL kids had expressed a desire to create art, so Mr. Whiteaker and I began to develop a program that would accommodate their interests. I first sat down with Officer Jayda Burkey, also a PATROL

[10] Becky Campbell, "Program Allows Police to Mentor Johnson City Youth", *Johnson City Housing Authority,* September 6, 2013, accessed March 29, 2014, http://www.jchousing.org/program-allows-police-to-mentor-johnson-city-youth/.

participant, to discuss the possibilities and expectations of an art component. But first, I wanted to know a bit more about the origins of the PATROL program.

PATROL originally existed in the 1990s. It was very successful, working with youth from housing developments all across Johnson City. The number of youth participants was in the hundreds. Each month, the kids would be given an option to participate in one of four projects. One might be an arts project, one might be a civic engagement project, one might be a sporting event, and so on. Upon completion of the projects, the results would be judged, and one group would win the award for best project of the month. The winning team would then get a night out with the officers for a special dinner or event. PATROL operated like this for years until participating officers began to retire, and the youth participants became adults and left the program. Now, with the awarding of the TCCRP grant to Johnson City, PATROL is being revived. They are now working within two Johnson City housing developments, with an average of 20 – 25 kids, and 20 officers who volunteer their time to the program. With time, they hope to expand services to more housing communities.

As I spoke with Ms. Burkey, it was clear that there is a lot of passion, but not a lot of direction for PATROL. Not only that, there appears to be a lot of miscommunication, or no communication, between those providing direct service, and those overseeing the program. This has been highly problematic. Aside from the administrative challenges, the officers who participate in PATROL are very passionate about the program and the kids involved, which made them a real pleasure to work with.

As we talked, I wanted us to focus on the mission of PATROL. I feel when a program begins to lose sight of its direction, it should always look back at what it first set out to do. For PATROL,

this was to bridge the gap between at-risk youth and police officers. The goal was to build positive relationships and open lines of communication. Here, is where I suggested we focus our art program.

Since the kids range in age from 9 – 16, we had to take into account skill level and ability while still engaging all ages. Ms. Burkey was very passionate about bringing the kids to the ETSU campus. By showing them what a college campus looks like, we hoped to lessen some intimidation or misconceptions the kids might have about higher education. We also needed the space and resources that would accommodate an art activity for 20 kids. Once we had decided the when and where, we had to think about the most important part: the what.

Again, I wanted to focus on the PATROL mission. In talking with one of my art professors, we came up with the idea to have the kids reimagine and create new and improved police uniforms. We wanted the officers to talk beforehand about what the uniform represents to them in regard to its functionality, symbolism, and design. The kids would then take these elements into consideration as they created their uniforms. In the end, the officers would wear the creations and be judged on best design.

This project encouraged the kids to think about the reasons behind the uniform. The uniform, in its very being, creates the separation between authority and subordinate, officer and child. By breaking down the barriers of the uniform through discussion and re-creation, we were literally and metaphorically bridging the gap between and children and the officers. Additionally, by getting the officers out of their actual uniforms and into the new creations, we wanted to humanize them in a way and show that they could participate *with* the kids and be integral to the process.

Once we had our idea, we needed the supplies. I met with Officers Burkey and Whiteaker for a Home Depot run. We bought white, zip-up paint suits and construction hard hats. These would provide the blank canvas for the kids to create their uniforms. Paint, markers, glue, tape, paper, cardboard, stencils, stickers, and an assortment of other items were provided as materials.

The kids were broken up into three teams. We counted them off by 1 -2 -3 to be sure that cliques wouldn't stay together (the older members vs. the younger members). Again, we wanted to ensure that each group could benefit from a range of skill levels, as well as allow the kids get to know others within the group they may not associate with as much. The officers were then asked to speak a little about their uniform. Mr. Whiteaker was great by asking the kids what *they* thought they represented, rather than just telling them. The kids were able to identify things like justice, authority, trust, respect, and honor. The officers added that uniforms should identify place, name, and rank, they should make officers approachable and identifiable, and they represent family and a sense of belonging. The kids were asked to demonstrate these elements in their designs, and that their results were be judged based on such criteria.

The teams worked well together, some better than others. Of course, with group work, there are always one or two individuals who disrupt team dynamics. We dealt with this accordingly, and tried to appease everyone's needs. I was very lucky to have the help of instructors and students that were kind enough to lend a hand. I could not have maintained the entire group without them. It was chaotic, but a chaos that was entirely expected. The kids were passionate, eager, and creative. They did not have to be pushed to engage with the work and each other, they jumped right in and got down to business. In the end, we had three very

different results. We ended up not having all of the officers we had expected to model each design. Instead, Officer Jeremiah was kind enough to model all three designs for us.

The kids seemed very pleased with their uniforms, and had a lot of fun making them. At the end, we had a group critique where team members shared their creations with us. This is a very important aspect of youth programming – the communicating of ideas, process, and outcomes, that I didn't want to deny them.

PATROL has always included a competitive element with each activity. I, however, didn't want to reward one group over the others. They all did a great job. Also, I feel these programs are meant to encourage and celebrate the accomplishments of *all* of those involved. It is not about being better, or best at something. So, instead of an overall winner, each group received a specific award. We gave one for most creative, one for best use of uniform concepts (identification, justice, honor, etc), and one for best teamwork.

With youth programs like these that work to prevent future outcomes like crime, it is hard to evaluate immediate results. From all that we've learned about the behavioral, cognitive, and social benefits youth gain through arts participation, we cannot see these effects until much later. Therefore, it is hard to sum up a program's direct success. What I can say, is that we came up with a project that took into account the mission of the program as well as the desires of the kids. They asked to do something with the arts, and we answered them. We let them dictate their designs, how they were going to execute them, and how they were going to present them. The kids gave a lot of thought to their designs while considering the meaning of police uniforms. Hopefully, this will encourage them to think further about the role police officers play, the support system they provide, and the mentorship that they offer.

While working with my internship site in Washington D.C., my employer said to me: “With youth programs, you assign activites and the kids do them, but no one ever wants to take their work home. If this is the case, you have a problem.” Now, I always take this into consideration when evaluating the outcomes of youth activites. How much do the children seem to identify with the work? Is it enough for them to take possesion of their creations? At the end of our PATROL session, I was very pleased, selfishly, to see the kids fight over who got to keep their uniforms. This showed me that the kids felt pride and ownership of the work they had done. For me, that was the greatest success.

Conclusion

My experience in Washington D.C. and with the PATROL program has taught me a lot about the importance of youth development. Working with these programs has given me new insight and gratitude for the arts and the value they give our lives. I was able to see first hand, that art is not merely a luxury, but a neccessity that contributes to our overall health, happiness, and well-being. Furthermore, the arts have proved to be essential for critical, intellectual, and social development. This skill building then leads to greater self-awareness, social engagement, and opportunity. For children and teens, especially, the arts are highly influential. Here they learn to problem solve, collaborate, innovate, and reflect. They are allowed the space to develop their voice and identity, and a platform to express themselves. I find myself inspired by these possibilities, and determined to make sure they are available to everyone.

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