

**A PORTRAIT OF POSSIBILITY:
EXAMINING THE ARTIST/EDUCATOR/ACTIVIST AS
AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR ART EDUCATORS**

By

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Some art educators working in communities exemplify an alternative to the more common and stereotypical notion of the artist as autonomous, self-focused, and neutral. They view art-making and education as vehicles for social justice, and in some cases for social and political activism. In these broader social functions, the boundaries between art, education and activism fade. Drawing on perspectives from community art education, sociology, art criticism, critical pedagogy, and social justice education, and based on in-depth interviews with participants, this study examines the motivations, perspectives, development, and experiences of five artist/educator/activists who work in community-based settings in Tucson, Arizona. Common characteristics, as well as questions and implications for further research, are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

If artists and long-term protestors are similar in their thoughtful creativity and material deprivation, the underlying reason is a sense of moral and personal calling to their work, the fusion of social and individual fulfillment.

--James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*

Consider an educator working with art in communities toward change. For purpose of discussion, divide that individual's work into clearly labeled roles: educator; artist; activist. This individual is each of these at once. In practice, these three roles come in no specific order, and at any given time, depending on context, one may take precedence over the others. The intersection of these roles leads to something more than the sum of the three parts. And the ongoing manifestation of that sum is rarely static or confined to itself, as it is also influenced by the needs and contexts of a collaborating community or group. Through case studies, this thesis will put meat on the bones of this artist/educator/activist armature, filling in details of experience, motivation, and background through a study of individuals who embody this unique, multifaceted meeting of education, art, and activism.

Central Research Questions

This research examines the educator's identity which also significantly encompasses *artist* and *activist*, and how experiences and motivation connect to these three aspects of one's identity.

For example, what are artists/educators/activists' perspectives on art and creativity? On their place in society and communities? On their potential or active role as agents of change?

These questions feed into two broader questions guiding my work:

1. What leads an individual to work in non-school settings with a focus on using art in educational community work towards social or political change?

2. What are the key aspects or characteristics of these individuals' identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives on their place in society and role in education, art, and change?

The role of identity, experience, and motivation has been studied in both activists and teachers (Clay, 2006; Jasper, 1997; Gamson, 1995; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995; Flores & Day, 2006). Drawing on both these perspectives, and looking specifically at their intersection in case studies of five individuals, what significant aspects might emerge regarding the way artist/educator/activists' identity is formed and articulated?

Problem Statement and Motivation

To varying degrees, artists and art educators either embrace or struggle against the view that they are isolated and alienated from society. Art education in schools is often treated as an isolated discipline or viewed as a frill elective. A common version of community art education is a drop-in class or a side activity in an after-school program. This mode of isolation extends from one version of the artist today. Exemplary of the modernist era in art, but with roots back to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (Anchor, in LaChapelle, 1984; Gablik, 2001), the stereotype of the isolated, alienated artist and his or her accompanying artistic genius has permeated mass media, our schools and institutions, as well as the general public's ideas of art and its place in our world. In a sense, the artist is an ultimate embodiment of individualism, full of "autonomy and self-sufficiency" (Gablik, 1995), all notions which are prized in U.S. society. Accompanying this viewpoint is a belief that art is neutral, "created not for moral or practical or social reasons, but to be contemplated and enjoyed" (Gablik, 1995, p. 74).

I do not mean to suggest that this version of art and artists is not valid and valuable in its own right. But its prominence can obscure the more integrated roles art, artists, and educators can have in community building, value creation, cultural affirmation, and articulating the need for change. In these broader social functions, the boundaries between art, education and activism fade. Freire highlights the political nature of education and the fundamental role that community connection rooted in society plays in critical pedagogy: “Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people” (1970, p. 81). Dedicated to social and political change, the role the artist/educator/activist plays is significantly different from artists or teachers as we have experienced and sometimes assumed them to be. But they are no less a vital aspect of our conception of what community art education, and indeed, any educator, *can* be.

I chose to pursue study in art education in community settings not because I wanted to teach art, *per se*, but because I found in that focus the potential to explore broader questions regarding the function of art and creative acts in larger society and change. I came to my masters study with an instinct and belief that good education and good community (and international) development share many best practices. My experience working abroad in Mongolia led to my perception that, for example, many failed international development efforts could essentially be described as the “banking model” approach to education that Friere (*ibid*) describes. And the action-oriented, student-centered, critical pedagogy approach

that some advocate as strong approaches to education are also essentially characteristics of strong practices today in community development. In addition, working with the Arts Council of Mongolia for two years in areas including arts education, I became very interested in the question, What are (or can be) the arts' place in cultural preservation and identity building and reinforcement in the face of rapid development and change? Further, what are (or can be) the arts' place in positive political and social change?

Bringing this interest in the potential embedded in the intersections of education, art, community, and change to my graduate studies, I was initially surprised to find the field of art education to be primarily focused on preparing art teachers for schools. Although a number of universities across the U.S. offer programs in art education which focus on community and non-school settings, the research in this area is not nearly as developed as the wealth of research in art education in schools. In those scholarly articles that do address community, for the most part, community is not a realm for art and education in its own right, but rather either a resource for the classroom or a spin-off or strange cousin of school art programs. I have learned a great deal from research and theory that relates to diversity, critical pedagogy, and social justice in art and visual culture education. However, school has been, and remains, the central reference point for the field of art and visual culture education. Indeed, for our society, school is the conceptual home-base for education. Around this reference point a circle is constructed, in which all other forms or sites of education are seen to fit, orbiting the center. Yet, this general frame of reference for most art education, the school, and the concerns that are addressed in relation to that setting, do not fully encompass the realities, skills, and resources necessary to organizing, educating, and working

in community, non-school settings. Further, the paradigm of the teacher found in schools, which we've all experienced as students and internalized as a model of an educator, fails, in my experience, to provide a fully adequate model for community art educators.

As educators, models and prior experiences are influential in how we conceptualize our own work and form our own identities (Flores & Day, 2006). College and university studio art professors, as well as public school art experiences, shape many art educators' notions of what is fundamental in art education. These are familiar sources upon which to build an art educator identity. Thus, often the curriculum (and by extension, the teacher) become "recycled" versions of the old (Gude, 2000). Of course, schools are central to U.S. education, and many jobs for art educators can be found there. But *education* is not the equivalent of *school*:

education cannot be reduced to the discourse of *schooling*. Pedagogical relationships exist wherever knowledge is produced, highlighting how conflicts over meaning, language, and representation become symptomatic of a larger struggle over cultural authority, the role of intellectuals and artists, and the meaning of democratic public life. (Giroux, 1994, p. 8)

My experiences in community work and education have revealed that there is a whole range of issues that youth, adults, and communities deal with which school has no way of addressing or influencing, at least not within current school education. Given the complexities of contexts and social structures in which people negotiate their responsibilities, dreams, obstacles, and values, to focus almost solely on schools is to limit the field and potential for art education.

Thus, one of my greatest motivations with this research is to highlight individuals working in communities, whose work significantly involves “art” and “education,” but is virtually absent from the current field of “art education.” Another motivation is to explore and articulate the motivations and perspectives which have led these community artist/educator/activists to put “art” and “education” together in such different contexts and ways than the field traditionally conceives the art educator to be.

Definition of Terms

One aspect of understanding the following key terms and ideas as they are used in this study is that they are all connected, and that interrelatedness, in and of itself, contributes to the definition of any single term below.

Community educator

This term refers to an educator working in non-school settings, with any number and age of people. The work may be ongoing, such as a program at a non-profit organization, or emerge more organically from a particular relationship, situation, event, or idea. Either way, it is driven by a particular context, need(s) and/or asset(s), grounded in articulating some problematic or oppressive status quo, envisioning alternatives, or celebrating a particular aspect of a community. This term, as I am using it in this study, does not refer to educators employed by schools who use the community as a resource or site for learning and exploration in their classrooms, nor does it include educators who do not consider their work to be somehow sociopolitical in nature (for example, recreational community art workshops).

Artist/Educator/Activist

This term is one which I use because it highlights the main components of the type of individual, and their role in society, which I'm interested in exploring and highlighting. It is somewhat cumbersome but I find it difficult to reduce the term beyond these three components: artist, activist, and educator. The artist/educator/activist is a community-based educator whose work significantly involves art in, and sometimes as, work towards social or political change. Further, the artist/educator/activist's work and roles are more than a sum of those three parts, in that the art, the education, and the activism blur into each other and inform each other, so that each component is actually embedded in the other two.

Activist

Activist, as I am using the term, is not limited to those individuals protesting in the streets (although that is certainly one common activist tactic), but rather encompasses a variety of work towards social and political consciousness, empowerment, and change.

To be clear, the version of political activism about which I'm writing is not one of indoctrination, or the masses being led by the few— a potential pitfall as we consider the intersections between educator and activist. It's not about silencing voice, but rather, about encouraging its development. Giroux (1994) makes a useful distinction between *politicizing* and *political* in education. He explains that *politicizing* refers to “pedagogical terrorism” in which

the issue of what is produced, taught, and exhibited; by whom; and under what conditions is determined by a doctrinaire political agenda that refuses to examine its own values, beliefs, and ideological construction. (p. 9)

In contrast, *political* refers to a

form of cultural work [which] would encourage artists, students, and other cultural workers to become insurgent citizens in order to challenge those with political and cultural power as well as honor the critical traditions within the dominant culture that make such a critique possible and intelligible. (p. 9)

In my use of the word, *activism* focuses on building a democracy (Giroux, 1991, 1994), based on critical inquiry and thinking (Freire, 1970), taking risks, and “the responsibility to resist and say no in the face of dominant forms of power” (Giroux, 1994).

That which is included in the definition of activist, from a sociological perspective, is contested and can include many efforts and activities. Ultimately, the definition of activist and activism is bound up in one’s notion of change. If change is conceived to be linear, direct, and a clear progression, then the activities included in a definition of activism may be narrower, limited to organization of protestors, confrontation and deliberation with the powers that be, etc. But if change is conceived as being an ongoing process, multi-layered and complex, then activists’ work extends to more subtle, less overt ways of working, including the communication of a movement’s or group’s worldview, opposition, and vision; facilitation of dialogue towards political and social consciousness for both participants and the broader public; creation and expression of collective identity and solidarity; and working toward “cognitive liberation¹” (McAdam, 1999).

¹ This term aptly connects to the potentials for art and education in change, as it refers to a “subjective transformation of consciousness” which moves people from hopeless submission to oppressive conditions to a readiness to change those conditions. “Mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situation” (McAdam, 1999).

There is one final distinction to be made regarding the term *activist* in this study: it is not synonymous with *advocate*, a commonly used term in art and visual culture education regarding advocacy for art programs in schools. This work is important and valuable, but activist here does not encompass this advocacy work and should not be confused. It is not self-reflexive, but rather is specifically tied to agency in broader society, with regards to social, political, and cultural issues, problems, and change.

Artist

For the purposes of this study, *artist* is defined as an individual whose work significantly includes art or creative expression. In my attempts to bring more specificity and clarity to the definition, I found that I came up with characteristics that define only the modernist visual artist, such as making a living off one's art, which are too narrow, particularly for this sort of work. This is because there is a range of ways in which artists are working today, from solitary creation to work in which the interaction with others *is* the art. Suzanne Lacy (1995a & b) explores ways of thinking of the artist's relation to broader society, and how their work reflects that relationship. She notes that artists frequently move between different ways of working and interacting, but she puts emphasis on what is being done *through* the act of creation or art making, rather than focusing on the product. This focus for conceptualizing the artist is adapted here. The specifics of the media or art form differ from case to case (including visual arts, photography, media arts, performing art, movement, and writing,) but certain processes and themes of change, voice, collaboration, and agency run through their art and creative work.

Educator

The education which is found in the work of the individuals highlighted in the following case studies grows out of and shares traits with critical reflection, critical inquiry, and critical pedagogy. These approaches value, among other things, dialogue; the process of investigating the thoughts and language we use to refer to reality, perceptions of reality and the world; identifying transformative themes and possibilities; and reflection upon situationality and the importance of lived experience upon perception of reality (Freire, 1970). These traits are especially central to community-based work today because education driven by critical pedagogy blurs into contemporary best-practices in community development.

Methodology

The primary form of research for this study is the construction of case studies, or verbal portraits, of individuals based on in-depth interviews with each participant. Before selecting the five participants, I asked numerous people working in the arts, education, and community in Tucson, Arizona to suggest possible participants in the area, compiling a list of forty. I spoke with some of those individuals who were suggested to assess how closely they fit the artist/educator/activist description. The final five participants were chosen based on three criteria. The primary one was how closely each individual fits the roles of artist, activist, and educator (both in their own estimation and based on what I knew about their work). The secondary criterion was the goal of including the experiences of a diverse group

of people (with regards to gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and age). The final criterion was geared toward including artist/educator/activists working in a range of media and art forms.

The raw data for each case study is an interview with the participant which lasted between two and three hours. The interviews were semi-structured. Questions (Appendix A) were developed based on my central research questions, review of literature, and interests and experiences. The questions served as a base for a conversational interview, the direction of which was sometimes driven by the interviewee, and sometimes by improvised interviewer questions. At times, specific questions from the list in Appendix A were asked, while at others they served as a reference and guide to the main issues and themes that needed to be addressed by each participant at some point in the interview, meaning that not all the questions in Appendix A were necessarily asked. The interviews were digitally recorded (audio only), and I transcribed them.

The transcripts were analyzed holistically (Creswell, 1998) and in detail to select historical facts, quotations, vignettes, perspectives, metaphors, and anecdotes which illustrate the connection of the individual's motivations, experiences, history, and surroundings to his or her work. These were then woven into an instrumental case study (ibid), the sum of which illustrates the experiences, backgrounds, and motivations of five artist/educator/activists. A member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Jones, 2002) was conducted: both the raw transcripts and individual case studies were shared with each individual, and I requested and obtained feedback and review for accuracy.

At the start of my research, I had difficulty with the highly subjective act of assembling a case study, or portrait, of an individual. Balancing my perspectives and vision against the necessity and desire to portray each individual as accurately as possible is challenging, and ultimately, comes down to my choice and selection of another's words (which were largely in response to questions I asked) to illustrate that person's experience. In the first case study, that of G.E. Washington, I found that creating a visual representation of him and the way I interpreted his experiences was integral in my process of synthesizing a verbal portrayal of him. Working visually allowed me to acknowledge and experiment with the subjectivity and the process of representing another individual in a non-verbal medium and way of thinking. Though I did not go through this step with the other four participants' portraits, I mention it here because it was important in an early stage of my research.

Limitations of Study

At one point during the process of contacting and selecting participants, I realized that I had very few potential non-white participants. This led me to suspect that something about my identity was in some way influencing the potential participants that people suggested or with whom I came into contact. With this realization, I began asking people specifically for suggestions for non-white participants, and this was reasonably successful. However, this experience was an important reminder of who I am: a white, politically liberal, college-educated 29-year-old U.S. American woman. I bring a certain perspective and set of beliefs and assumptions to this study. Other people also bring a certain set of assumptions about me to interactions with me. I tried to remain constantly aware of this, as I searched for participants, interacted with various potential participants, conducted interviews, and

analyzed and interpreted the data. Yet as true to the participants, their words and experiences as I have tried to be, the study is far from an objective one, and contains the marks of my values, beliefs, vision, weaknesses, and perspectives throughout.

I was acquainted with at least half of the participants in this study before their participation. With five subjects, it would be impossible to represent a full cross-section of artist/educator/activists in Tucson; yet, it is possible that there is a certain way of working or there are certain commonly held beliefs that have brought these participants and myself together before the study, thus potentially narrowing the scope of perspectives and experiences addressed in the study. On the other hand, because of the detailed and specific nature of the study, it was important to know something about the participants before conducting in-depth interviews to determine, as well as possible, whether they would make relevant case studies for my purposes, and I was fairly certain these participants fit the selection criteria closely.

Finally, these case studies are based solely on in-depth interviews with participants. These are rich sources for examining motivations, background, and identity, and a member check allowed the participants to review and comment on the validity of the portraits. However, observations and information from other people are not included, and because of this, the case studies do not provide the fullest possible perspectives on the participants.

Structure

For the remainder of this thesis, the questions and issues outlined in this introduction will be expanded upon and explored in depth. Chapter 2, the review of literature, draws on sources and ideas from the field of art education, as well as assets-based community development, sociology, art criticism, education, critical pedagogy and social justice education. Chapter 3 consists of five case studies of artist/educator/activists in the Tucson area: G.E. Washington, Josh Schachter, Kimi Eisele, Jason Gallegos, and Kristen Suagee-Beauduy. Chapter 4 addresses conclusions, which include the common characteristics which emerge from examination of these five community artist/educator/activists, as well as issues, questions, and implications unique to their development, work, and lives.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, various disciplines and sources are drawn upon to establish the perspectives in which this thesis research is grounded. In examining the term *community* and its many applications in art education (both current and possible), assets-based community development is introduced, as well as its connections to critical pedagogy and social justice education. The way in which much art education literature conceptualizes community is discussed. The focus then turns to the sociological study of social movements, activism, and art, as well as the work of art critics and educational theorists, to begin to flesh out what it is to be an artist/educator/activist working in communities. Finally, the central place that identity and previous experience has in development of both educators and activists is addressed.

The Community in Art Education

All of the artist/educator/activists studied in this thesis do a significant amount, if not all, of their work in communities. But what does this mean, exactly? One's definition of community greatly influences the process and goals of community art education. Thus, it is necessary here to establish the working concept of *community* used in this thesis research.

As stated in chapter one, the type of community educator which I am seeking to highlight works in non-school settings, with any number and age of people. The work the artist/educator/activist does is driven by the particular context, need(s), and asset(s) of the community with which he or she is collaborating. This community may be one of common interest, such as a pro-peace group, people who come together around an environmental issue, or people dedicated to helping immigrants survive crossing our borders. Or, it may be

defined by place or some other common identity trait, such as ethnicity, gender, class, or sexuality. The specific nature or make-up of the community in any given project develops out of a combination of participant interest, relationships, dialog, project leader vision, community input, and a range of other variables that lead to both a process and product unique to the project.

The definition of community used here, however, does not only involve articulating the *thing* that makes up a community. It is also a *way* of working. *Community* can be thought of as both a noun—referring to a specific place or group of people—and a verb—referring to a certain way of collaborating and interacting². In many ways, the community-based artist/educator/activist shares many traits with a community developer who works in *assets-based community development*; that is, work which:

- is community-inspired and driven, rather than externally imposed and constructed;
- centers on local people and assets, particularly social relationships and networks, rather than external power, knowledge, and resources;
- grows out of dialogue and collaborative inquiry, rather than external evaluation, determination of needs, and implementation of strategies to address them;

² This way of thinking of a term both as a noun and verb comes from a number of sources. In a talk given at the National Art Education Association (NAEA) convention in 2003, Eric Booth encouraged art educators to focus on the verbs of art (*paying attention, responding, making connections, and yearning*) rather than just the noun, or product. Elizabeth Garber, in a presentation at the NAEA convention in 2006, discussed the term *craft* as both noun and verb: “I will look at the use of “craft” as a noun that connotes objects with certain traditions ... And I will also look at “craft” as a verb, to help us see beyond craft as defined media or objects having essential qualities such as tradition or function” (Garber, unpublished). I find this elaboration useful because it is being used to explore complex terms whose definitions are many and changing, but which also are often thought of primarily in their static noun form—the product in *art* or *craft*, and the place or group in *community*. This eclipses the “doing” of art, craft, and community, which is multi-dimensional and says as much, if not more, about those terms and why we do them than the noun aspect does.

- is participatory in nature, focusing on empowerment and ownership in the process, rather than treating community members as clients or recipients (Mathie & Cunningham, 2002).

Kretzman and McKnight (1993), co-directors of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, define *assets-based community development* in terms of three interrelated characteristics: it is assets-based, internally-focused (stressing “the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope, and control”), and relationship-driven (p. 4). They contrast this approach with the common needs- or deficit-based approach to community development. This approach grows out of a situation in which the negative aspects and needs are portrayed as the whole truth about a community, rather than just part of it. The needs-based model encourages residents to see themselves as powerless and keeps resources in the hands of service organizations and outsiders, leading to fragmentation in the community, devaluation of community wisdom, and a focus only on maintenance and survival, rather than meaningful change (p. 5).

Kretzman and McKnight examine the assets that various sections of the population bring to community development, such as youth, seniors, and artists. Regarding artists, they make a key distinction between surface beautification and integral involvement in change, which highlights the difference between needs- and assets-based development models:

Artists are still too often looked upon as members of a professional elite whose services are brought into a community by well-intentioned sponsors in order to beautify, enrich and enhance the quality of life in that community. Although cosmetic beautification of this sort has certain positive aspects, this process totally ignores the possibility of genuine artistic renaissance and revitalization that might be made possible through the development and utilization of the talents already existing *within* the community itself. (p. 95)

The similarities between the artist/educator/activist and the key characteristics of assets-based community development outlined above also have much in common with critical

pedagogy and social justice education. These intersections are rich with potential when considering the nature of work done by art educators in communities.

Critical Pedagogy

Many of the roots of assets-based community development (ABCD) can be found in critical pedagogy theory and practice. ABCD and artist/educator/activists' work share with critical pedagogy a way of thinking about education and the educator/student relationship which is "grounded in justice, equity, and moral mandates.... Critical pedagogy makes us look at the world, and it makes us look at our individual role in the world, the community, the classroom" (Wink, 2000, p. 44). Key in critical pedagogy, or problem-posing education (Freire, 1970) is a complex view of relationships, between individuals, community, and the world. With this complex view comes the necessity of constant reflection on, analysis of, and dialogue about those relationships, as well as the overt and hidden curricula imbedded in society and institutions which solidify certain assumptions and versions of reality that keep power structures in place.

Another similarity between ABCD, artist/educator/activists' work, and critical pedagogy is the emphasis put on dialogue, investigation, and inquiry as methods, rather than one-way transfer of pre-determined knowledge from teacher to student, or outside community developer to community member. Process is highly important. This contrasts starkly with the *banking or transmission model* of education³, a term which Freire (1970) uses to describe an educational environment in which knowledge is "deposited" by teachers in students, and the extent of student involvement is "receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 72). Freire holds that the attitudes and practices of the banking model of education "mirror oppressive

³ This concept and perspective is similar to the needs- or deficit-based community development model.

society as a whole” (ibid, p. 73). As such, critical pedagogy requires educators to look at fundamental issues of power and their relationship to greater societal forces that affect educational settings. Thus critical pedagogy is an approach to education which seeks to highlight and critique oppressive structures and behaviors in society as well as in and between individuals, not only through content taught, but in the way in which knowledge is conceptualized and sought. “Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not” (McLaren, 1989, p. 169). This is also a foundational concept in ABCD and artist/educator/activist work.

Another key concept is the postmodern understanding that reality and knowledge are not fixed and absolute, but rather dependent on one’s experiences, ways of interpreting those experiences, and subject to transformative actions based on those interpretations. Kincheloe (2004) explains that “Knowledge is not complete in and of itself. It is produced in a larger process and can never be understood outside of its historical development and its relationship to other information” (p. 17). Teachers (or community educators or developers) must acknowledge their position of authority, and relinquish the position of “truth providers” for that of “facilitators of student inquiry and problem posing” (p. 17). Giroux emphasizes that an educator must be reflective about his or her relationship to complex power networks and how that influences how we interact with students or community members, as well as what we teach. Virtually any space can be pedagogical, and all education is political. As such, he holds that artists and other cultural workers must see their work as political and pedagogical:

...critical pedagogy as a theory and practice does not legitimate a romanticized notion of the cultural worker as one who can only function on the margins of society, nor does it refer to a notion of teaching/performance/cultural production in which formalism or the fetish of

method erases the historical, semiotic, and social dimensions of pedagogy as the active construction of responsible and risk-taking citizens” (Giroux, 1994, p. 9).

Educators and educational spaces are not outside or immune to the complex network within which identity, community, and power are created and conceptualized. As such, educators and community developers must constantly critically evaluate and renegotiate how, what, and why we educate and work toward collaborative and participatory change.

Finally, this work should not operate on a theoretical level alone. It must always, as Kincheloe puts it, be “connecting to the reality of human suffering and the effort to eradicate it” (p. 12). The intersection of the theoretical and the lived, experienced domains produce a “synergy that elevates both scholarship and transformational action” (ibid). With critical thinking and inquiry must also come agency and belief in the possibility of change and each individual’s ability to act and bring about change, as Freire (1970) highlights here:

Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation... problem-posing education—which accepts neither a ‘well-behaved’ present nor a predetermined future—roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary. (p. 84)

Art Education Literature and Community

Some art educators have passionately and meaningfully brought critical pedagogy and social justice education theory and practice into art education. Garber (2005) notes that the inclusion of visual culture studies and education is grounded in a paradigm shift towards art education being “relevant, socially active learning” (p. 5). Several art educators seek to radicalize art education through the inclusion of visual culture based in critical pedagogy theory, with the goal of empowering students to be thoughtful, reflective, and active participants in society (see, for example, Gude, 2004, 2007; Tavin, 2002, 2003; Eisenhauer, 2006). For example, Tavin (2003) states that “through contextualizing visuality and the visual

subject, art education can pose questions regarding privilege, power, representation, history, and pleasure within the intertextual circulation of images” (p. 208). Multicultural education theory and scholarship is another area which has been powerfully connected to art education theory and practice toward a vision of social justice (for example, Desai, 2000; Garber, 1995; Stuhr, Pertrovich-Mwaniki, & Wasson, 1992).

These key characteristics are also found in social justice education, which Garber (2005) describes as “guiding students to know themselves and their worlds, and to live and act as part of community and society as critical citizens, employing ‘the principles of justice, liberty, and equality’ in creating radical democracy” (Garber, 2005, p. 6). Bell (2007) emphasizes that social justice education is both a process and a goal. It envisions and works toward a world in which resources are equitable, and individuals are both self-determining and interdependent, with a sense both of their own agency and of social responsibility. The complexity of relationships, networks and aspects of society which social justice education addresses is illustrated by this list of influences and traditions from which social justice education draws:

adult literacy education, Black Studies/ethnic studies, community organizing, conflict resolution, counseling, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, developmental education, educational administration, experiential education, higher education, intergroup dialogue, international education, laboratory and T(raining)-group education, multicultural education, teacher preparation, and women’s studies. (Adams, 2007, p. 16)

And, true to critical pedagogy, the process of social justice education should be democratic and participatory, in which “students reclaim their voices as part of a process of empowerment, not as a means to acquire personal power over people or goods, but by learning how to resist oppressive power that subjugates or exploits themselves or other people” (Garber, 2005, p. 6).

The literature on community in art education, however, has not as solidly developed the connections to critical pedagogy and social justice education. In addition, although the type of educational community art work addressed in this thesis can be found across the U.S. and the world, *community art education*, in the field of art education, remains conceptually tied to, and peripheral to, school-based art education. This limits the potential of art in community and change.

Community has long been an undercurrent in art education literature. Often traced to John Dewey and social reconstructionist and progressive education, interest in education beyond schools has probably been around as long as the primary focus has been on schools. In 1974, F. Graeme Chalmers wrote of the many roles artists can play, including “magician, teacher, mythmaker, sociotherapist, ascriber of status, propagandist, and catalyst for social change” (p. 21). He also addresses the arts’ place in social movements, change, and culture, and notes that those intersections are not often acknowledged or valued in education. He states that “a certain romantic conception of art’s *sublimeness* together with sentimentality in the teaching of art appreciation has deprived art of much of its vital function in education.” He goes on to address community as an important realm for art education: “the community is the primary association about which the integration of art activities and democratic goals should be organized” (pp. 22-23.) His is a tantalizing, though vague, perspective born in a time often defined by social movements and challenging the status quo.

In recent art education literature, there is little consensus on or critical development of the definition of the term *community*. It is rarely explicitly defined, and generally used in a way

which assumes that the reader understands the term as it is being used. Usually, it is thought of as a noun (place and/or people) whose primary importance is in its relationship and potential value to the school and art classroom, rather than a descriptor of a certain approach or context and way of working, as it is used, for example, in ABCD. In some cases community is generally conceived of as anything outside of the school: parents, businesses, organizations, neighborhoods, etc. In other cases, community is more specifically a resource to be explored, mined, and brought into the classroom.

Marche (1998) makes a useful distinction between different notions of community, outlining three general approaches to conceptualizing community in art education. The first is the “*taking from*” approach, which is “community *decontextualized*, community as the largest art supply store, an immediate source of interesting objects, stories, and experiences from which popular art and commercial products are acquired” (1998, p. 8). Adams’ sense of community, for example, is similarly that of a resource for a school project: “It is important to build community support in order to get the help we need” (2002, p. 364). Marche’s second approach to conceptualizing community is “*learning about*,” in which students become detectives and “explore the historical and human contexts of their own communities.... Respect for a variety of lifestyles, concern for human rights, and empowerment of participating groups characterize this form of community-based art education” (ibid, p. 8). Bastos (2002), for example, uses the term “community-based art education” to refer to the classroom educational act of “making the familiar strange” through studying local art and artists. And finally, Marche’s third approach is “*acting upon*,” where students are social activists. Potentially closest of the three to the artist/educator/activist version of community,

she develops this least of her three approaches, leaving more questions in the reader's mind than clarity (for example, why are social activist students "acting *upon*" rather than acting *with*?). The centrality of the school in her discussion of community keeps her ideas tied to that specific approach to education.

Kindler and Irwin (1999), in the introduction to the National Art Education Association anthology on community art education that they edited, *Beyond the School*, note that attention to education beyond school boundaries is increasing and that the contributions of communities to art education have been little explored. They go on to firmly establish the school as central and community-based learning as supplemental and secondary: "learning that begins at school can be extended and supported by resources that reside within the broader community" (p. 1). The majority (though not all) of the articles in the anthology take this basic position. The anthology includes articles addressing the potential for advocacy for school art programs or related issues by conducting activities outside the school (Dalton, 1999; Perry, 1999); the school as community, such as collective work in the art classroom or teacher partnerships with outside organizations (Wallot & Joyal, 1999); organizational, institutional, governmental, and business and school partnerships (Hunt, 1999; Pinciotti & Gorton, 1999); and the (school) art education professional community, or lack thereof (Clark, 1999). A few do focus beyond the school, but in a very place-based and uncomplicated way: recreation center art programs (Lackey, 1999); and literacy programs in art gallery settings (Dubinsky, 1999). All are interesting and valuable projects in their own right, but in general, they focus on community as a place only, specifically one that is outside the school and derives its educational value from its connection to the school. In addition, generally absent

are connections between community art education and critical pedagogy and social justice education, as well as the specific skills and knowledge necessary in non-school, community-based art education.

An example in art education literature which aligns more with the artist/educator/activist version of community is Blandy and Congdon's (1988) description of a project in which a gallery/museum expands its focus and collaborations with local community, to include the local fishing community's input on an exhibition about their way of life. Their project involves serious community input and collaboration, participation, empowerment, ownership, and cultural celebration, many elements of the type of community work highlighted in this thesis.

Alternative Models for Envisioning the Community Artist/Educator/Activist

While the work of community-based artist/educator/activists shares many elements with that of school art teachers, they also have skills, knowledge, and ways of working that set them apart. The context and some of the goals are different, requiring different ways of thinking about and conceptualizing the work. Artist and critic Suzanne Lacy (1995a&b), in her discussion of *new genre public art*⁴, wrestles with the absence of a language and (more importantly) criteria by which to address, analyze, and evaluate collaborative, participatory, change-oriented art practices: "New genre public art calls for an integrative critical language through which values, ethics, and social responsibility can be discussed in terms of art" (p.

⁴ This term, though not the one I'm using, is the closest I've found to the concept of community art education used in this thesis, and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

43). She suggests that we need a more subtle and appropriate language for discussing this approach to art, one which is grounded in *both* art and social discourse, because this work needs to be evaluated in a “multifaceted way to account for its impact not only on action but on consciousness” (p. 46). This approach to art making even challenges art as we know it, redefining it “as a process of value finding, a set of philosophies, an ethical action, and an aspect of a larger sociocultural agenda” (ibid). The type of language she is advocating reflects the nature of the work she seeks to describe: multi-faceted, interdisciplinary, and ethically- and value-based action.

In the spirit of Lacy’s notion that the work I’m seeking to describe is interdisciplinary and multi-faceted, I will provide here some additional considerations for and perspectives on understanding the community-based artist/educator/activist. As stated in the first chapter, previous experiences often serve as models for the way in which an individual approaches his or her own work. For many art educators, these models are found in college and university studio art professors, as well as public school art experiences. These alone, however, are not sufficient models to use in a discussion of artist/educator/activist development, experience, and perspective. In an attempt to better fill out what might go into an artist/educator/activist model, I draw here on literature from the sociological study of social movements and activism, as well as the writing of artists, art critics, and educators. I problematize the common conception of the artist in our society today which is grounded in modernism and radical individualism as a common model for art educators, then look to provide alternative conceptions of the place of the art educator in society and change.

The Individual, the Artist... and Alternatives

As previous discussion of critical pedagogy, social justice education, and ABCD highlights, one key aspect of conceptualizing the community artist/educator/activist is examination of the artist's role in society. In doing so, it is useful to illuminate common notions of the artist with our conceptions of the individual's role in society and change, and by extension, the role that individualism plays in U.S. American identity. Freedom, autonomy, and individualism are dearly held U.S. American beliefs. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) problematize "radical individualism," which they argue is deep in Americans' identity, but which confuses how we define ourselves and our concepts of success, freedom, and justice (p. 21). They mention the many U.S. American myths and mythological types (such as the cowboy and entrepreneur) which have been built around the self-reliant individual, and note from conversations with U.S. Americans that "most of us imagine an autonomous self existing independently, entirely outside any tradition and community, and then perhaps choosing one" (ibid, p. 65). However, values that center around becoming "free" and "autonomous" from any restrictions or ties obscure personal, moral, and social realities based in more complex networks, relationships, and responsibilities. Giroux (2006) explains the dangers of this version of freedom:

As insecurity and fear grip public consciousness, society is no longer identified through its allegiance to democratic values but through a troubling freedom rooted in a disturbing emphasis on individualism and competitiveness as the only normative measures to distinguish between what actions are right and wrong, just or unjust, proper or improper action... Within this market-driven perspective, the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, the making of socially responsible citizens, and the building of democratic communities. (pp. 155-156)

Our society's vision of the artist is bound up in both modernism and U.S. American myths of individualism, or as Gablik puts it, a "paradigm of alienation" (2001, p. 98). For example, Jose Ortega y Gasset, a Spanish philosopher writing in the 1920s as modernist art continued to challenge and scandalize the West, exemplifies this stance in *The Dehumanization of Art* (1956). He suggests that the social effects of art, other than its segregating power to divide those who understand it from those who do not, are negligible and at most accidental. In his view, as modernist art approached "purification" (p. 11), separation from society was intensified as the artist "repudiate[d] reality and by this act place[d] himself above it" (p. 45). In his analysis of modern art, he finds "certain closely connected tendencies," including that it is inclined "to dehumanize art, ... to see to it that the work of art is nothing but a work of art, to consider art as play and nothing else, ... [and] to regard art as a thing of no transcending consequence" (p. 13).

I do not mean to suggest that the individual in our society is really so removed or simple. Indeed, Bellah et. al. clarify that in their extensive conversations with people across the U.S., "If there are vast numbers of a selfish, narcissistic 'me generation' in America, we did not find them" (p. 290). But just as this view is extreme, it is nevertheless a facet of some myths and assumptions in public consciousness, and in the minds of many artists. For example, according to Suzi Gablik (1995), artist Georg Baselitz exemplifies "the personal and cultural myth that has formed the artist's identity in the modern world: the myth of the solitary genius whose perfection lies in absolute independence from the world" (p. 77). In 1983, Baselitz's words were published in a catalog for an exhibition:

The artist is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial; his only responsibility consists in an attitude to the work he does. There is no communication with any public whatsoever. The artist can ask no question, and he makes no statement; he offers no information, and his work cannot be used. (in Gablik, 1995, p. 77)

In a more recent interview in *Art News*, he underscored this: “The idea of changing or improving the world is alien to me and seems ludicrous... Society functions, and always has, without the artist” (ibid, p. 77).

Although concepts of art and the artist’s role within society have changed dramatically over the last century, this version continues to be imbedded in today’s society. Sociology of the arts has occupied a small nook in the discipline of sociology for over a century, and for much of that time has viewed the artist as almost mythic in his or her separation from society and radical individualism. Though it may seem obvious to some, work published on the sociology of arts in the past few years is arguing that “art is embedded in society; it is deeply interwoven with other aspects of the social world” (Alexander, 2003). This viewpoint is a deviation from the 20th century’s prominent approach to the sociological study of art, which has focused on art, artists, and consumers as separate and apart from society (ibid; LaChapelle, 1984). Running parallel to the emergence and development of modern art, one theoretical focus that emerged in sociological perspectives has focused on avant-garde artists as a “minority culture” which opposed and attacked the dominant, primarily bourgeois culture at the beginning of the 20th century (ibid). The perception of artists as outsiders is often interpreted to be negative: they are marginal and suffering from “psychological and social alienation” (ibid, p. 34)⁵.

⁵ LaChapelle, Gablik, and others suggests that the intellectual foundations of this perspective are rooted in the tradition of Enlightenment, just as Bellah et al trace the roots of individualism there. And just as Tocqueville pointed out that individualism is “strangely compatible with conformism” (Bellah et al., p. 147), LaChapelle suggests that the Enlightenment was bogged down by its humanism and accompanying fatalism, and that this ultimately prevented the enlighteners from “working out a theory of action which could serve to translate their humanistic ideal into reality” (Anchor, in LaChapelle). In contrast, some artists and activists push and challenge these limits of radical individualism.

Postmodern scholar Russell (1993) notes that most modernist artists were looking for alternatives to the social and political problems of their time, and what they observed to be apathy among most people. Their direction, however, did not prove to be successful in achieving what they intended:

increased attention to formal experimentation necessarily led to an increased sense of separation of art and artist from the social context... Modernism's fate, consequently, was to disintegrate into an extreme form of defensive individualism... What is revealed here are the inability of individual action, private language, or artistic style to alter society and its institutions, and modernism's failure to create significant meaning in its presumed isolation from that society. (p. 291)

Further, the isolated autonomy of modernism “condemned art to social impotence by turning it into just another class of objects for marketing and consumption” (Gablik, 1995, p. 74). In this sense, art and the art world have been largely inscribed in a constrictive network focused on production and consumption. Thus the possibility of influence in other areas of society is precluded as the artist is inscribed within these boundaries.

In stark contrast, Giroux (1994) takes a clear stand on the role of the arts in critical pedagogy:

critical pedagogy as a theory and practice does not legitimate a romanticized notion of the cultural worker as one who can only function on the margins of society, nor does it refer to a notion of teaching/performance/cultural production in which formalism or the fetish of method erases the historical, semiotic, and social dimensions of pedagogy as the active construction of responsible and risk-taking citizens. (p. 9)

Lacy's (1995a) concept of *new genre public art* describes what happens when art, activism, and education intersect, portraying one alternative to the isolated, marginal artist. She explains that this special, relatively recent genre of art resembles

political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility... an art whose public strategies of engagement are an important part of its aesthetic language. The source of these artworks' structure is... an internal necessity perceived by the artist in collaboration with his or her audience. (p. 19)

She suggests that this art's roots are grounded in the development of various groups and movements, including feminism, ethnic identity politics, and Marxism. This type of art and these various groups "have a common interest in leftist politics, social activism, redefining audiences, relevance for communities (particularly marginalized ones), and collaborative methodology" (p. 25). Lacy also emphasizes that this type of work comes from a deeply internalized motivation and perspective on one's place in the world and relative to other people: "The transition from a model of individual authorship to one of collective relationship suggested in this work is not undertaken simply as an exercise in political correctness. A longing for the Other runs as a deep stream through most of these artists' works" (p. 36). It is not just a job; it is, often, an extension and manifestation of the way the individual would like to live and would like the world to be.

Kester (2005) focuses on the role of dialog in what he calls "socially-engaged art," in contrast to modernist art, which was intended to shock common viewers out of complacency and the familiar boundaries of common language. Alternately, a "dialogical aesthetic" suggests a very different version of the artist: "one defined in terms of open-ness, of listening and a willingness to accept dependence and intersubjective vulnerability" (p. 6). Productivity is in the interstices between artist and collaborator, and the knowledge it produces is not objective or universal, but rather local, consensual, provisional, and interactive.

Activism, Social Movements, and Art

Including *activist* in the community art educator identity helps to articulate certain worldviews and approaches to working, but also emphasizes the commitment to change that many

community artist/educator/activists have. In addition, perceptions in U.S. society of activists and artists have sometimes paralleled each other over the last century, as they negotiate various interpretations of society and their roles in it. The study of social movements in the field of sociology, increasingly open to examining the arts in relation to social change, highlights some interesting and relevant parallels and perspectives on the artist/activist interaction.

James Jasper (1997), a sociologist and student of social movements, draws a metaphorical parallel between the artist and the protestor, suggesting that they are “key articulators” of alternative lifestyles, and new ways of seeing, judging, feeling, and thinking about the world. As such, protestors and artists are “moral innovators.” Jasper emphasizes the importance of both protestors and artists’ connection to traditions and the familiar (p. 365), in that they build on and “rethink existing traditions in order to criticize portions [of those traditions] and experiment with alternatives for the future” (p. 65)⁶. He also acknowledges that this is not necessarily a widespread perspective, as it contrasts with a common view in our society that protestors (and as it happens, artists) are dismissed as “irrational kooks or selfish calculators” (p. 13), occupying positions near the edge of society.

It has only been in the past decade or so that the influence of culture has begun to be taken seriously in the study of social movements in sociology (Jasper, 1997; Adams, 2001).

Collective and individual identity, too, has experienced a comeback (Gamson, 1995; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). Until recently, both culture and identity were generally either taken for granted or considered peripheral to social movement theories which emerged in the ‘60s and ‘70s, which focused on rationality, structure, resources, and cost/benefit analyses in seeking

⁶ This is reminiscent of problem-posing education and critical pedagogy.

to explain social movements and individuals' motivation to participate in them. These theories were a significant break from, and strove to distance themselves from, earlier collective behavior explanations held into the mid-20th century, which essentially explained collective behavior either as irrational, spontaneous, and contagious, or as the work of alienated people with few social ties, or as an uncontrolled response to social strain or deprivation (see, for example, Blumer, 1969; Smelser, 1962). Prior to the '60s and '70s, collective behavior was generally viewed as negative and an aberration by social science theorists. In contrast, theorists in the '60s and '70s strove to portray protestors as far from irrational and alienated people prone to volatile reactions to societal strains and deprivations. In the process of building their contrasting argument, they also eschewed emotions, political and social context, ideology, identity construction, solidarity, and other cultural aspects (see, for example, Olson, 1965; Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Today, some sociological researchers are expanding their focus regarding the context and influences on social movement development and activist participation. More and more, work emphasizes the importance of insurgent consciousness, solidarity, subjective meaning and "cognitive liberation"⁷ (for example, McAdam, 1999). Further, some recent theorists, primarily in Europe, suggest that most contemporary social movements, sometimes called *new social movements*, or *post-citizenship movements* (Jasper), are a different beast than the social movements of the '50s, '60s and '70s. Whereas citizenship movements (including the labor, civil rights, and women's movements) work for *inclusion* in dominant culture and society, post-citizenship movements focus on *dissatisfaction* with dominant culture and society. Important to the increasingly acknowledged connection between the arts and social

⁷ *Cognitive liberation* is a term referring to "subjective transformation of consciousness" which moves people from hopeless submission to oppressive conditions to a readiness to change those conditions (McAdam).

movements, Jasper cites Alberto Melucci and John Lofland as arguing that much innovation and progress in post-citizenship movements “take place offstage, in apparently quiet periods, as ideas circulate and new forms of living are tried” (1997, p. 65). If, as Jasper suggests, these ideas and new forms of living are only occasionally expressed in explicit forms of protest, then research examining movements and activism must necessarily extend behind the scenes of structured and organized protest. Along with this shift is a sense that change is more organic, complex, and multilayered than linear and predictable.

The contributions of the arts to social movements, change, and activism have been noted in the sociological study of social movements⁸. For example, the arts create solidarity among participants, functioning as a vehicle to both create and express collective identity; they communicate a movement’s or group’s worldview, articulating both opposition and vision, thus facilitating political and social consciousness for both participants and the broader public; the arts can stir up and fuel emotion for recruitment, mobilization and continued protest (see, for example, Jasper, 1997; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Adams, 2001; Roscigno & Danaher, 2004). Clay (2006), for example, examines hip-hop as a tool for organizing youth, constructing and transforming identity, articulating inequality, and the forming of political consciousness. She emphasizes that hip-hop is an important art form at this particular historical moment, when power and oppression are “diffuse and dispersed” (p. 108), and youth are working through the duality of being an *object* of the previous civil rights struggles and the *subject* of present and future movements. She connects this with the work of new social movement/post-citizenship theorists, who suggest that critical “identity assertion and formation is a significant piece of social and political activism in the late 20th and early 21st

⁸ It is interesting to note that many of the roles the arts have played in activism have close ties to key concepts in social justice education and critical pedagogy.

century” (ibid; also see Jasper, 1997; Gamson, 1995; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). These initial entries into the connections between art and activism signal a shift in the perception of art and change as linear, straight-forward, and methodical.

Sociologist Eyerman (2006) brings many of these ideas together when he suggests that art be viewed as an “experiential space,” seen as a

form of social activity through which new kinds of identities and practices emerge...As a cognitive praxis, art is a space for individual and collective creation that can provide society with ideas, identities, and ideals.... Like a social movement, art opens space for experimentation, social and political as well as aesthetic. (p. 19)

Increasingly, the arts and artists are being considered in broader contexts than the constrictive art world, with more emphasis placed on identity and ideology formation and affirmation in communities and society. “At issue is the necessity for cultural workers to develop a collective vision in which traditional binarisms of margin/center, unity/difference, local/national, public/private can be reconstituted through more complex representations of identification, belonging, and community” (Giroux, 1994, p. 13). In examining artist/educator/activists, I aim in this thesis to move away from established stark dichotomies and assumptions about the nature of art, education, community, and change, by examining in detail the experiences, motivations, and backgrounds of individuals who are working in the grey spaces in-between.

Conceptualizing Community-based Artist/Educator/Activists

Lacy notes that the skills and knowledge necessary for community-based art education focused on change are diverse and interdisciplinary. She writes, “artists have drawn on models outside the arts to reinterpret their roles” (1995a, p. 39), and emphasizes the great difference, even opposition, there is between traditional, modernist notions of the artist and

the artist working collaboratively toward change: “In seeking to become catalysts for change, artists reposition themselves as citizen-activists. Diametrically opposed to the aesthetic practices of the isolated artist, consensus building inevitably entails developing a set of skills not commonly associated with art making” (p. 177). A basic notion in the field of art education is that being an art educator is not the equivalent of just being a good artist. In addition to artistic skill, there are certain pedagogical skills, knowledge, and philosophies which are ideally developed in order to teach art to a classroom of young people. Working from the understanding that community art education can be quite different from teaching art in a classroom, and that skills in addition to art making are integral to the work, what is necessary in the preparation of a community-based art educator?

Beginning to answer this question, Dean (1999) writes of higher education’s potential to reshape itself within a partnership process, collaborating with community-based initiatives, that “responds to the widening roles and functions of the artist as both facilitator and enabler” (p. 54). Dean highlights the need for a dialogical and practical sharing between institutions and community, and the necessity for art education to envision itself as a part of change:

Art practice and education can underpin the sense of ownership necessary to tackle the realities, needs and critical issues facing communities. In turn, through these connections and partnerships, art practice and education can be influenced by these realities.... As communities embark on processes of renewal, the challenge for art education is to locate itself within the changing societal framework. (p. 56)

Carol Becker (1997), in a report on a symposium of three art schools titled *Artists as Citizens*, held to address the changing needs of artists today, notes that today’s art students see

themselves differently and envision themselves as artists in new ways. She highlights the concern and need that spawned the conference:

Art students were rarely encouraged to develop themselves deliberately as those who might take an active role in leading society...many of our students will not become studio artists in the nineteenth century sense.... They should learn to take an active role in their communities, making the break once and for all with the myth of the isolated, lone, artist. (pp. 13-14)

As institutions shift toward the preparation of educators using the arts in communities, what is important to address?

Identity, Background, and Motivation

As noted earlier, Lacy (1995a&b) highlights a number of differences between the modernist artist and the artist working collaboratively towards change. One key difference is the more connected role which the new genre public artist (or artists/activist/educator) plays in communities and society, grounded in his or her conception of good, of his or her relationship to other groups, and of his or her role in change. The role of identity, self-conception, and worldview in this work is important, yet not well explored: “philosophical positioning of ‘self’ in the context of culture is an unexamined characteristic of this work, along with how its structural, temporal, and iconographic nature is shaped by the artists’ psychological processes” (1995a, p. 32).

Degge (1987) examined community art teachers in order to “ascertain the professional preparation, perceptions about programs and students, career aspirations, instructional aims, and pedagogical practices” (p. 165). The individuals she studied work in “programs in which classes are offered in the visual arts to serve the leisure, avocational interests of the public.

Community art programs may be considered a cultural service involving the aesthetic welfare of a society” (p. 165), a perspective on community art education which does not align with community-based artist/educator/activists. More than anything, her study, conducted over twenty years ago, emphasizes the absence of research on art educators working in non-school settings. The future research interests she suggests in her conclusions, such as examining the relevant skills community art teachers bring to their teaching, is still largely undeveloped.

The importance of identity formation, background, and motivation has been researched in both education and the sociological study of activists. On learning to become a teacher, Assuncao Flores and Day (2006) note that “research has highlighted its multi-dimensional, idiosyncratic and context specific nature...which entails an interplay between different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives, beliefs and practices, which are accompanied by the development of the teachers’ self” (p. 219). In their study of teacher identity formation, they define identity as an “ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences.” Identity is not something people *have*, but that they *use*: it is “open, negotiated and shifting,” combines parts of past and present, and is “influenced by personal, social, and cognitive response” (p. 220). They find that the three main influences on teacher identity are prior influences, initial teacher training and teaching practice, and the contexts of teaching (both classroom practice and school culture and leadership) (p. 224). They note that the majority of their participants (all school teachers) cite extrinsic motivation (employment opportunities, money, influential people) as important in having become teachers, and that “the role of intrinsic motivation needs to be

taken into account in attempts to foster teacher recruitment and retention” (p. 226). Further, they found personal biography to play a key role in “mediating the making sense of teachers’ practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers” (p. 230). While these authors studied K-12 teachers, what similarities or differences might a study of community artist/educator/activists reveal regarding motivation, biography, and influences?

Within the sociological study of social movements and activism, some findings regarding connections between activism, motivation, and identity are of interest as well. Klandermans (2002) holds that there are three core aspects of the social psychology of protest: a sense of injustice, belief in one’s efficacy, and identity, both collective and personal. Like Assuncao Flores and Day, he denies that one’s identity and self are stable psychological structures, but rather, each individual carries multiple identities and experiences complex competition between different groups and interests. Further, self-categorization depends on context and circumstances, and individuals must also navigate “imposed identities,” those identities others expect an individual to have. Snow, Rockford Jr., Worden, & Benford, (1986) discuss “frame alignment,” a concept which is defined as the linkage between an individual and a social movement organization’s interpretive orientations of a situation or conditions. This linkage is malleable and can be influenced by a range of factors in the individual’s life and environment, as well as the social movement and organization. They criticize much existing sociological research, suggesting that it holds a static view of an individual’s decision to participate, when it is more likely that people reassess and renegotiate their involvement over time.

The consequences of activism have also been studied, providing additional insight into the activist experience, which may also inform our understanding of the artist/educator/activist. For example, in a study of both right-and left-wing activists, Klatch (1999) found that later in life, leftist activists tend to wander from job to job more; leftists feel more unsettled and unresolved in how their activist identities are transitioning into later years, and how they are involved in social change; politics is central to both left and right activists' identity throughout their life, even as jobs, family, and a more settled life compete for attention; most activists, both left and right, become more tolerant over time, as they grow to see life and politics in more complex ways; and, in general, activists' children hold the same values and tend to be politically involved. With regards to education, Sherkat and Blocker (1997) found that protesters, as compared to non-protesters, tended to be more educated, and more likely to receive additional education in the long-term. McAdam (1989) found, in a study of Freedom Summer participants, that activism of this sort tends to have long-term, if not lifelong, effects on the participant. These effects are both attitudinal (participants emerge from the experience more radicalized and committed to activism) and structural (networks of like-minded organizational and personal relationships are formed). Fendrich (1977) found that interest-based politics alone will not sustain long term commitment to a radical leftist movement, but that a strong, "other-oriented humanism" and ideological commitment are necessary, as well as a commitment to pursue one's career based on motivation other than extrinsic rewards. Which of these issues and traits, if any, might be present in the artist/educator/activist identity and experience?

Given these insights from research into teacher and activist identity and experience, how might community art educators' personal biography, motivation, and self-conception compare? The remainder of this thesis will explore the identity, motivation, and experiences of artist/educator/activists, in order to provide insight into why it is that individuals do this work, and what skills, knowledge, and perspectives they bring to it.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDIES

The following case studies provide a glimpse into the success and struggles of five different artists educators committed to social and political change. Each individual's motivations and philosophies are interwoven in his or her work and identity as an artist, educator, and activist, blurring the boundaries between them.

Three criteria were used to select these five participants from a larger group of potential participants in the Tucson area: how closely each individual fits the roles of artist, activist, and educator; the goal of including the experiences of diverse individuals; and aiming for a range of media and art forms represented across the case studies.

Each case study is constructed from an interview with the participant which lasted between two and three hours. The interviews were semi-structured, and interview questions served as a base for a conversational interview. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the author. Those transcripts were analyzed holistically (Creswell 1998) and in detail to select components which illustrate the connection of the individual's motivations, experiences, history, and surroundings to his or her work. These were then woven into an instrumental case study (ibid), and a member check was conducted with participants. Each has a unique story which informs the larger picture of what it is to become and evolve as an artist/educator/activist.

G.E. Washington

G.E. is a 39-year-old African American, gay male performance artist/educator/activist. His notion of his role as an agent of change is intimately tied to his personal experiences and strong feelings and perceptions about problems with the status quo. He sees change as a process which is complicated and always developing, and his work focuses on encouraging shifts in perspectives on social situations, articulating the unspoken, bringing voice to problems otherwise kept silent, and action-oriented, sustainable collaborations.

Since his youth, G.E.'s relationship with the arts has been one which involves elements of personal resistance and identity formation. Reflecting on his youth, he said that he was "not a gifted artist." Growing up in Bedford, Pennsylvania, a small rural town with few African Americans, he did not have formal arts training, but music was an integral part of his family's life, and he began dancing at a young age. Seeing breakdancing on TV resonated with G.E., and he recalls being "really excited that they were dancing in the streets" (Washington 2007). He started breakdancing and continued through high school. In college his academic focus was biology education, and he took some modern dance classes and was a cheerleader.

Breakdancing and dance were important in G.E.'s development in several ways. Through dance he came to know the power of "using your body as a medium to communicate ideas that aren't just of your body" to build metaphor and engage the audience or viewer in an interaction that "becomes about reading, not about the idle object." He sees breakdancing as being deeply rooted in storytelling: "being influenced by breakdancing as a very little kid really turned me on to the power of story as a way to connect, to touch people.... So I think

I was already primed for that kind of exchange.” Further, he has since developed an awareness that breakdancing is of essence about reordering and reinterpreting one’s surroundings: “In breakdancing, no one wants to see you unless you have something different to say. Because the moves themselves aren’t novel... They’re all grounded in pedestrian routines and habits and patterns of people So the moves themselves, nobody cares about. It’s just the order and the reordering that people give to them.”

Yet he developed this mode of communication in an environment which lacked support, and in spite of subtle resistance from his parents. He explains:

No one, my mom or my dad, they weren’t like, oh hey, Garnell, go dance. And call the neighbors over, dance for grandma kind of thing. It didn’t happen, you know. In fact, it was the opposite. For a long time my parents didn’t really like certain things I was doing, because I was doing all kinds of movements all the time, and some if them, I guess, were effeminate, and definitely not masculine enough for what my parents thought a young boy should be doing. And so I was actually chastised for a lot of the things I was doing.... What they thought I needed to know, and what I was exploring and wanting to express, weren’t the same always.

G.E. recalls that he did not grow up in an environment which valued art for art’s sake. Instead, his early expressions in the arts were manifestations of himself as an individual, and at the same time in opposition to authority. From its start, his art was political. He said, “When I decided to do these things, it was for a reason. They were always for a reason... There’s a lot of personal satisfaction and a lot of knowing yourself that you do in art. ... However, it has to be reflective. It’s not automatic. And I’m still not going to give any ground on that. I don’t think there is an automatic appreciation, just because I did it, I appreciate it.”

G.E.'s work as an artist, activist, and educator developed while he was living in Washington, D.C. in the early 1990s. It was here that he made a commitment to performance art, along with a group of artist friends with whom he was living. This grew out of dissatisfaction with social-economic and racial issues which manifested themselves both in general society and the artworld itself. "I realized that performance art was more interesting to me because it was more based on, the medium could be more connected to the stories I wanted to tell. Because the stories I wanted to tell were about disadvantaged and struggling African Americans in D.C." G.E. lived in a community of working-class Latinos and poor African Americans, and ties to the community and his own experiences were part of a foundation for deep discontent regarding the social reality of D.C.: "the social politics of African Americans in D.C., it still is like this, it's very much silence and an awful lot of walls, and barriers that are constructed by not talking, and not interacting around certain issues like gender, or sexuality or even race relations."

The artworld was not a haven from these realities; rather, it was perceived as part of the problem. He and his friends often discussed the hypocrisy of the artworld:

We were just sick of the hypocrisy, because they talked about difference, and getting along, but... nobody was risking anything, other than rhetoric. And it just really fucking pissed us off, and we were upset, for example, at being the only African Americans at so many of these art world things, in the middle of the District of Columbia.... And I know people have said, they try to explain it, and they try to say well what can you do, and it's very complicated. And I agree, but on one hand, still, it's ridiculous. It's absolutely obscene to be the only African American year after year after year at these things, in the middle of a community that's 80% African American. If art really is something that brings people together, then what the fuck, why aren't there people together at your own art things. And that's why we stopped going to theaters.... dominant culture norms are protected and reified and explored. And not that other cultures aren't explored, but it's done for the dominant. So if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

In contrast, G.E.'s group forcefully extracted art from its traditional realm and redefined it as an integral medium for questioning and dialog surrounding race and status quo. For six months, they conducted a series of performances in their home. The goal of these was to facilitate mixing of people from the neighborhood and outside, and for both groups to start to question their assumptions, perceived boundaries, and stereotypes and engage around ideas of separation. Although he does not feel they were successful, this was the beginning of G.E.'s focus on storytelling, confronting silence on social issues, and encouraging mixing of different people and groups.

G.E.'s view of the artist in society is rooted in these experiences and has continued to develop. The bases for his work are objective social issues and society's perceptions of them. He focuses on the issue of race in his art, but underlying that is a feeling that our society is profoundly misled in its perception of social realities. Rhetoric sometimes overshadows and confuses the condition of our society, contributing to a perception that change is linear and progress can be or has been clearly won. G.E. highlights and deconstructs some of the comfortable assumptions commonly held in our society:

The lack of any relation with race: I think that is the major issue, because we use it so much... as a jumping off point into other kinds of denials. If it looks integrated, or it looks diverse, then we feel like we're in a diverse culture. So since we feel like we're in a diverse culture, we assume that there's a dynamic and an inter-exchange. And because we assume that there's a dynamic inter-exchange, we feel that learning is happening. Because everyone senses that interaction is a key, and action and reaction is a key element in learning. And with that in mind, we believe that we've conquered, or we achieved something that clearly we have not. And it's just absolutely asinine. And I can't understand—I can understand intellectually why it happens, but honestly, physically, in my lived life, I can't for the life of me get my mind around it... there's this assumption that progress is happening—but shit. I mean things have changed, but not necessarily, it's much different, but not necessarily better.

Building from this reading of the status quo, in which objective reality is tangled in subjective beliefs and interests, he views the role of the artist in society as similar to that of a philosopher: “To raise questions, and to point out interesting juxtapositions that were taken for granted.” This artist/philosopher is fundamentally integrated into culture and community. It is a metaphor based on a disconnect he perceives between the myths and realities of oppression in our society. It is also grounded in his view that both culture and change are complex, multi-layered, and evolving:

Change is a social, cultural dynamic. Norman Denzin... talks about culture as an action and reaction and interaction. It's not something that you can do, or have, or be, or even see. And there's no way to be out of culture in that sense. You're always responding to it. ... I think that change is an intercultural dynamic. So it's between cultures, or between things. So it's like, things coming together and then you can observe change through that. Without that, I think that some of the things that are called change, are just the residue of change... I think you'd have to look back and look for the crisscrossing, the intersections, the things that pulled together, in order to study the change.

G.E.'s view of change, social movements, and the arts' place in them are rich and complicated. His interpretation of the civil rights movement, for example, is not simply in terms of successes won. He is interested in exploring the individuals, collaborations, networks, and paths of knowledge that wove together to converge into the movement. He questions assumptions about where and when change actually took place, and what actually constitutes “change” and “success.” He is wary of the neat stories which are told today about the development and successes of the civil rights movement. Here, he is referring specifically to the role of freedom songs in protests of the era: “Somehow Bob Seeger and these black women just spin this song while the cops are beating them with a cane... I think that it's just too easy of a story... I mean some of these stories are quite painful, they're not so nice and sweet, but the story's too nicely packaged...” His own storytelling and questioning is a response to the dominant stories of our society.

G.E.'s involvement with change is as multi-layered as his understanding of it. He has been involved in a number of tactics aimed at change, including organized public demonstrations and protests. Living in D.C. in the early 1990s, he participated in numerous protests, and AIDS and abortion were especially popular protest topics at the time. At Penn State, where he received his PhD, G.E. was both a participant in and a consultant to student-led protests confronting race and the U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent war. He continues to feel compelled to participate in protest specifically regarding sexuality and gender, because of his identity, and because the fight is currently a public and sometimes violent one.

Organized demonstrations are only one aspect of G.E.'s repertoire of protest. He was trained by and is today drawn to collaborate with artists who are very active in their communities and "lightning rods in their neighborhoods." His own way of working is extremely action-oriented, and he builds his collaborations through networks he weaves in areas where he lives. Often these networks are interdisciplinary and combine a variety of non-profit or local community interests. The nature of his work, whether it focuses on subtly raising uncomfortable questions or "interventions into the status quo," leads him to collaborate with professionals, sites and projects in a range of fields. These include, among others, cockroach-infested schools and the Environmental Protection Agency, native youth empowerment groups, African American bikers riding the Underground Railroad and having a soul food picnic with local white residents, and performances addressing modern-day slavery. His work as an artist, educator, and activist is locally informed and has little to do with the artworld: "I'm very committed to social change and social action, and it might not

be what all artists are committed to... I haven't found a lot of artist collectives that are meeting regularly... to do social change projects." A significant portion of his role as a faculty member at Daemen College, near Buffalo, New York, involves connecting art education students with community partners to facilitate creative and meaningful collaborations. The following exchange between myself and G.E. followed his explanation that his work is very local and site specific:

Alina: Interesting you say site specific. There are lots of different sites converging together: yourself, where you are, and who you're around.

G.E.: Isn't that interesting? I think that's the role that the artist plays in these protests, by the way. Not so much the protests, but the social activists: they try to bring a visibility to that coalescence for people, people can see different things coming together in the artist's body or in the work that they're doing. So the artist makes that visible...things that they felt, but they couldn't say...

In addition to this vision of the artist as articulator and source of voice for a cause or community, he uses the plow as a metaphor to describe his own work:

A large part of what I do is a response to the shutting down of other people. ... culturally, socially, politically, individually.... often I'm looking at the things that they can't talk about.... I think artists can be a site for sowing the seeds of change, or for plowing-- even, like for my own work, it's not even so much seeds as it is like plowing the ground. And it's just my work, and other peoples' work is different. So I prepare the space for someone who would sow the seeds later. I turn up ideas, and churn ... up the ground. Or churn up the group. Like to ask provocative questions, that then, someone else can plant seeds for change when you do see my work in context with a large group of people, it is very subtle.

Since he was young, G.E. has seen himself in opposition to norms and assumptions of society. And also since that time, the arts and expression have been tools both for articulation of his own socially and politically charged identity, and of problems he experiences or identifies in communities and society. He operates largely in the shades of grey that are found between the common notions of black and white, good and bad struggles for change and power in our society. The work that he feels is necessary is ongoing

and often external to popular forms of protest and other tactics for change: he focuses on the less visible but very insidious issues of silence, assumptions, and interpersonal and cultural barriers. Sometimes his work as an educator takes place within the classroom, but just as often it does not. His sites, projects, and approaches vary greatly by context and the nature of the collaborator, but all his work models *problem-posing education*. G.E.'s identity as artist, activist, and educator are layered and tightly woven around his personal lived experiences and perception of society, and the result is an agent of possibility in art, education, and society.

Josh Schachter

Josh Schachter is a 37-year-old white male artist/educator/activist. In his work, relationship and process are important, whether he is focusing on community building, photography, or helping others to find and develop their voices. This connects to an interdisciplinary educational background from which he cultivated the ability to look at systems, resources, distribution, and inequity. Perspective shifts facilitated by extensive travel have built on this training and lead Josh to focus on critical inquiry and thinking in his work. He puts great value on humility, empathy, trust, building meaningful working relationships, and facilitating the development of voice through active educational experiences and dialogue. He values both successes and failures in the process of critical reflection and adaptation for the future.

Reminiscent of Suzanne Lacy, Josh struggles with labeling his work. He settles for *community-based photographer and educator* or *visual storytelling educator*. But a perfectly accurate term is elusive:

...my work evolves quickly and keeps changing, and my interests too... as my level of awareness of what I'm doing changes, I think my own identity as an artist, educator, and activist keeps changing... and so it's hard for me to come up with a specific term because it's evolving. (Schachter 2007)

Both his work and his own identity shift organically as his awareness of his place in both change and society evolves.

At least in part, Josh's difficulty in labeling himself—he does not consider the term *artist* sufficient—may have to do with the fact that Josh had little formal training in photography. His path toward photography has been more akin to finding a tool appropriate to the work he'd like to do based on the way he sees the world. For him, becoming a photographer was a “slow, kind of gradual discovery.” He took one photography class in both high school and college, but majored in Biology in college. Following his passion for studying primates, Josh went to Madagascar to studying lemurs, where the unfamiliar and fascinating nature, place, and culture inspired him to photograph. He was then first invited to publish his photographs in Switzerland the next year. He returned to the U.S. to obtain a Master's degree in Environmental Management at the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies at Yale. His concentration was in *social ecology*, which is the study of “how human and natural systems interact... everyone plays a role in how energy moves in a system, and how resources are distributed, equitably or not so equitably. So in many ways, also, there is a social justice component to it.” This focus of study has significantly influenced the way Josh understands society and relationships.

The influence of social ecology extends to the kind of artist Josh has become:

I think largely the way I've become a photographer, in many ways, is because of my training in a totally different field, which is in social ecology. Because I basically was trained in observation, which is largely what you do as a primatologist, too... Now, in retrospect, learning to see things, and systems, and learning to understand relationships between things, has played a huge role in how I photograph, and the sort of social commentary I try to express through my work.

Josh's faculty for seeing and building relationships, both between ideas and between people, has often manifested itself in an interdisciplinary approach to his work. For example, he stepped outside the normal disciplinary bounds of the School of Forestry for his master's project, which was also one of his first experiences as an educator. He developed a project in which inner city youth shared how they saw their environment and community through photography, intending to explore whether having young people document their lives is empowering. One of the challenges was that he did not get much support from the School of Forestry because it was essentially, in their view, an art and psychology project. But he explained that for him, the connections were more important than those boundaries:

... for me it was totally related. Because if we're going to work with young people and have them think about the environment, how can we do that without knowing where they're coming from in the first place? We're just bringing our own assumptions to the table.

Josh candidly regards that project as essentially a failure, because he feels he did not know enough at the time about photography, teaching, psychology, or empowerment. But, he recalls learning a good deal about working with young people and using "photography as a tool for understanding how communities see themselves and why that's important.... That changed my life for sure." A focus on understanding others' perspectives and valuing different viewpoints is evident in this project as an early force driving Josh's work. And, through critical self-reflection, he is able to honestly acknowledge, build on, and value both successes and failures.

But the components of artist and educator were not yet prominent in Josh's identity at that point. After obtaining his Master's degree, Josh worked for a summer photographically documenting a community urban forestry project in New Haven through the Urban Resources Initiative (a project with which he continues to collaborate to this day), then moved to Tucson to work with a conservation and environmental organization, where he essentially became their photographer. At that point, given that he was getting more and more work centered on photography, Josh dedicated himself to the artform and quit his job to get more formal training. He attended the Rocky Mountain School of Photography for two months.

Returning to Tucson, Josh volunteered on a book project in public housing projects and had a significant teaching experience there. He formed a particularly strong mentoring relationship with a teenager from a very different background than his own, and the power of connecting in a meaningful way across their differences encouraged him to pursue the role of educator. From that time on, photography and education have been central aspects of Josh's work. Soon after, Josh joined VOICES⁹ as photography director. He worked there for several years, building the program. Today he is working on numerous projects combining photography and education, both locally and internationally. His collaborative projects include partnering with the Kalakar Trust in New Delhi, India, where he worked with artists that live in a slum colony; working with Bridges to Understanding, which

⁹ Several participants in this thesis have worked with VOICES, an organization in Tucson. Its mission is to "mentor low-income youth to tell their personal, family, neighborhood, tribal, and community stories so they can strengthen their cognitive, artistic, emotional, leadership, and higher education skills. Youth who are creative, resilient, educated and active citizens are youth who benefit themselves, their families and our community now and in the future." (www.voicesinc.org)

facilitates the sharing of digital stories between indigenous youth via the internet; and a project at a local high school with refugee and immigrant students who are photographing and reflecting on their experiences.

Asked where his values come from, Josh first cited his parents. His mother is a potter, and he credits her with instilling in him a passion for the arts. His father is a lawyer who does extensive social advocacy and volunteer work outside his career. But he went on to give a more complex, woven answer:

My kind of philosophy is that everyone's a teacher, and so when I'm teaching, I don't really think of myself as a teacher, I'm more of a facilitator. So I kind of think that everyone that I've come across in my life has shaped my life. You know, when I was studying turtles in Alabama, the scientist that I was working with shaped my values. You know, things that don't have anything to do with art necessarily per se. Or, I like to think that I become a quilt, or accumulate knowledge and values ... I just like to think I'm constantly gathering, and learning from my mistakes, and gathering knowledge and reassessing my values...

His interdisciplinary background and openness to different perspectives and influences have contributed to his evolving, quilt-like identity. Josh has been to more than thirty-five countries, and cites travel as one of the key influences on his perspectives. From the time he studied lemurs in Madagascar, travel has been a “big instigator” in developing his interest in visually documenting the world. “You know, yes, it's about photography, but no, it's not really about photography. It's about really just exploring our relationships to all these things. And that's why I think travel is so valuable.” While traveling, he has navigated different interactions and cultures, often as an outsider in unfamiliar territory. This experience as an artist extends to his work as an educator as well. He is conscious of these dynamics of navigation and unfamiliarity in any educational or community setting he enters.

Josh's awareness, clarified by travel, that our cultural lenses affect our visual lenses has highlighted for him both the possibility of connection across differences, and the dangers of unchecked assumptions about others. Thus, in his work as an artist/educator/activist, he puts great value on stories being told in an individual's own voice, and from his or her own perspective. Reflecting on a project at the San Xavier Education Center near Tucson, in which fifteen youth used digital storytelling to tell about their lives and communities, Josh spoke of an educator's responsibility to be aware and responsive to others' needs, norms, and cultures. This openness extends even to the nature of success:

It was a powerful reminder about when you go into another community, being aware of your cultural lenses and agendas and assumptions... We all have them, so we can't get rid of them, but we can be aware of them when we go into a place. And thinking about how do we define success of a project. And having different definitions of success. Not necessarily one that is right or wrong, just different. And thinking about it when you're in each step of that project. ... So really just trying to listen to what you're experiencing and adapt your teaching style as much as you can to fit with what you're trying to achieve and to be culturally sensitive and respectful.

Josh values "humility," that is, being open and receptive to others' experiences, knowledge, and versions of reality. He believes humility is possibly the most important ingredient that he brings to his work as an artist/educator/activist. Far from having a static vision of himself and his role as an artist educator, he stays open and adjusts to whatever happens. His energy is calm and his place is more in the background than center-stage:

If you're uncomfortable, if you're rushed, and you feel like you have to meet deadline, they're [community members] gonna [sic] pick up on that, and that's going to affect the process...I don't want to be the center of attention, I really just kinda [sic] want to be there to take in what's going on, and then I think that approach lends itself well to communities being receptive to me. Because I try not to come in with an agenda, I try to move, metaphorically and physically, kind of slowly.

This emphasis on building trust and safety is closely connected to Josh's respect and empathy for the people with whom he is collaborating. These elements are present in the

way he talks about multiple facets of his work, including community, education, and photography. Describing his work in New Haven documenting the community urban forestry project, Josh shows an emotional empathy and respect for others' lived experiences and realities:

I would go out into the neighborhoods and talk to the neighbors and photograph the process of planting trees and everything surrounding that-- the joys, the sorrows, the beauty, and then the training, the planting-- the whole process of transforming an area in the neighborhood, you know? You're planning, you're implementing, you're maintaining, and then all the emotions that go along with that, the frustrations of people ... Who wants to go sweat for three hours after you've just worked all day and taken care of kids? So for me it's just, it's very inspiring to see people that work super hard and then come home and then put their time into building a better community. I don't know a lot of people that are willing to do that.

Josh's humility, empathy, and commitment to safety and trust underline his focus on and understanding of the complexity and importance of relationships across difference. His reasons for valuing humility also reflect the tenets of ABCD:

Part of the other impetus behind this work is that I believe neighborhoods and communities are the best experts of their own lives... for me the real power is that they have access to those things...so if I go in with humility, knowing that I don't know everything about what the issues are in their community, then it's going to be, usually, a somewhat successful project. Because I'm respecting the fact that they have a huge amount of knowledge and expertise, even though we don't often look at communities necessarily that way. It's always about deficits.

Significantly, Josh's focus on assets and relationships are not just strategic tools he employs for his personal success; they also make the work meaningful to him, reflecting his own values and the way he sees the world.

In line with his values and ways of working in communities, Josh's focus as an educator is on developing voice and addressing larger issues of social justice and truth. His methodology and philosophy are grounded in a belief that there are problems with the status quo and oppression in our society, and that agency is important in addressing those problems. The

development of voice is an important component of his firm dedication to facilitating agency: "...the most important thing for me is I don't compromise the youth, the voice. Because if I do that, well, the whole principle behind the work is for them to believe in themselves, to develop their voice...And if that gets compromised, then the whole project is compromised." Josh worries that students are not getting the necessary visual literacy and critical thinking skills in school, and feels responsible to help young people develop them in the work he does. Though photography is a large part of that process, his pedagogical focus is not on the technical aspects of the medium:

... I focus a lot on, "What is truth?" That's...for me, really, fundamentally, one of the most important things I try to look at, is not about whether you understand shutter speed, or composition, or lighting. It's about questioning where do we get our information, and what's the agenda behind the people that are giving us the information, and how do we decide what we trust and what are the truths, and how does our own experience and background affect how we interpret information--visual information in my case. That's really the heart of what I try to do.

Josh does not completely ignore the technical aspects of photography, but his emphasis on experience and dialogue in learning is a fundamental extension of his beliefs and values. He mostly shares with students images that he considers failures, so that they can see his process. He also creates a learning environment that is student-centered and -driven:

I prefer not to teach a whole bunch of stuff at once, rather just give the essentials and basics, and then let the youth discover things on their own, and then come to me and say, "Why is this photo all blurry?" ... Because I feel like that's how they're gonna really learn, is when they experience it, and then we can talk about it...they need to play with the language, and then we'll talk, take it to a different place.

This emphasis on process, engagement, and dialogue in learning photography and sharing experiences is also evident in the way Josh understands community work. Regarding community urban forestry, he again emphasizes process over product:

The actual plant itself is not as critical in many respects as the process of what has to happen to mobilize to beautify a neighborhood. And maintain it. ...It's amazing to me to see... the

process of just planting some trees and some plants, the communication networks it creates that's really far beyond just a green plant.

Josh notes that often process and product are confused as goals for this sort of work. He believes that it is necessary to establish and agree on criteria for the work:

Youth photography work is spreading like wild fire... there needs to be some agreement about how do you work in a community, particularly if you're not part of that community, and what are the considerations. Because you know, there are certain things that I talked about, you know, like humility and thinking about your assumptions and all these things that people aren't aware of. They just think, oh, I'm gonna give some kids cameras, and they're going to take amazing pictures, and we'll have an exhibit and it will be great, and everyone will be empowered. But you know, that's not what the work is about, it's about all those things that are between, that happen in the process. And I believe that that will get lost.

Ultimately, Josh hopes to achieve three things with his work. One is that the people he collaborates with “believe that their voice is important. To truly believe. And that people should listen, and to help them develop that voice.” Secondly, he aims to facilitate “...a critical consciousness, or critical or analytical skills, for interpreting the world. And then sharing your own experiences with the world.” Finally, Josh is still trying to figure out how to achieve the third: “how to connect that personal transformation into a larger community transformation” through art.

Josh is both unsure and excited about the possibility of the arts' place in change. He hesitates to use the label “activist” for its potential divisiveness. Regarding measurable change outcomes, he struggles with understanding the arts' place in change:

There are sort of different levels of change. I've seen personal transformation ... I'm not exactly sure, to be honest, what are the ingredients that transform that into community change...I haven't seen a lot of good examples of it. I've seen a lot of people talking about it. But I haven't seen it with my own eyes. I've seen glimpses of it. So this is something I'm, right now, trying to understand, what is really possible, on a larger scale, from using the arts.

Yet Josh's work and philosophies regarding education and community work reflect a notion of change that is less black and white and linear than the evidence he is seeking. It is based in an interest in and understanding of relationships, networks, power structures, and inequities. As previously stated, there is a strong focus on social justice in his work, both in content and in process, and he sees humility, empathy, and relationships as important elements in work toward change.

So again, I think as I go back to this humility thing, just going and thinking, realizing, that they [community members] may interpret things differently based on their cultural lens is so important to this work. Especially as an activist. If you're going to go in there, and you've got an agenda that you want to get that nuclear waste facility out of Tibet using photographs to show how it's destroying, then you have to step back and think about... how do they want to approach it, and what are the...long term implications for the project...

Also indicative of Josh's sensitivity to the often complex and organic nature of change, he raises the ethical issues of youth involvement, where a fine line exists between following an agenda and staying true to voices being heard. He spoke often of the complicated nature of mentoring young people when the mentor's personal vision and hope is for a different and better society:

When you take their [youth] work...how much of the adults' agenda becomes the driving force behind social action based on these kinds of projects? And... the youth voice can easily get lost in that process of trying to create the change. And maybe that wasn't the intention of the young person, too. They just wanted to share their story... It's something very real for me, is how do you stay true to what the youth wanted to say, and other peoples' agendas don't overtake them? But you also want their voices to get heard, so it's this funny balancing act.

Josh's evolving and organic identity is tied to his perspectives, goals, values, and notions of change. He does not shy away from personal change, and embraces learning, changing perspectives, and the unfamiliar. Asked what motivates him to do the work he does, he cites not salary or job security, but elements of surprise and challenging his fears:

...what keeps me going? In some ways it's the humility, that every time I think I understand something, then I do a project, and I realize, whoa, that wasn't supposed to happen... And often it's a small thing that happens. But it ends up being a big thing... It throws my world and everything I know upside down sometimes, and I love that... And then [it] also challenges like my own fears, which is, I think, a good thing. Not just doing the same curriculum over and over. And trying something new that might totally fail, just like I feel like my master's work, in many ways, was a failure, but I think I learned from it. So yeah, I think that's what gets me excited about the work, is that constant change, and evolution, and challenging my fear of failing.

Still, Josh is honest about the difficulties of the work. He cites economic security, as well as strain on personal artistic development and the potential for burnout, as significant challenges. But he emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on the positives and negatives, the successes and failures of one's work, in an attempt to build on a more complete understanding of experience:

We have to talk about the things that also don't work, because I think a lot of times like at conferences and events, we just talk about the successes...I think we have to celebrate our challenges and our failures to do this work as artists, as activists, as educators. All. And I'm worried that that's lacking because of the pressures of publishing and funding and it doesn't facilitate sharing those things.

Josh's metaphor of the quilt is applicable to many aspects of his work and life. Personal traits and values weave with strategies for collaboration; success and failures stitch together with his reflection and creativity; and an accumulation of unique experiences and perspectives come together as a cohesive, though never finished, whole.

Kimi Eisele

Kimi Eisele is a 36-year-old white female artist/educator/activist. She is continually growing and developing the intersections of those three aspects of her work, building on past experiences and ideas for improvement. In all three realms, she communicates a rich combination of determination, ideology, reflection, and conflict. Her work, both alone and

collaborative, is influenced by changing beliefs about her role in the world and change, as well as what is important in the creative process. It is also connected with her evolving views on activism and ideology, rooted in her background of relative privilege and her highly critical and questioning reflection on relationships, power, and her identity. Her work as an educator has also evolved as her ideas about being an artist and activist have changed, but it is marked by a persistence to collaborate, respond to others' needs and assets, tell stories, and push beyond taken-for-granted norms and societal structures. The artist, activist, and educator in her interact in a constant flexible dialogue, identifying what is and isn't working, and responding to make the work more effective and fulfilling.

Describing herself as an artist, Kimi says she is a writer, dancer, and educator. She also includes the act of telling stories for change or celebration as a part of being an artist: "I'm interested in the ways that personal and community stories kind of intersect with the artistic process, and ... how can we tell our stories and have those stories be heard in order to change who we are and where we live. Or, celebrate who we are and where we live" (Eisele 2007). Kimi was a very serious dancer until age 17, when she felt she had to make a "heart-wrenching" choice between pursuing a life dedicated to being a dancer, or not. Leaving dance behind was extremely difficult, but the notion of the isolated artist has, for a long time, seemed not enough:

Even though I was attracted to the arts...I always knew that I never wanted to be JUST something, you know, like JUST an artist... I think that's how I've approached the arts, in that I don't want to be JUST a dancer or just a writer, but I want to be a good human being. And being a good human being, for me, was also knowing about other things beyond just craft. So the craft could incorporate geographic knowledge, for instance, or political information.

Many of Kimi's interests are in areas outside the arts, focusing on how disciplines, people, and ideas relate and can be interwoven. As an undergraduate student at Penn State she created an interdisciplinary major, combining Art, Geography, and English. After graduating, she taught English and Geography at a private school in Ecuador for three years, where she also worked on a development project involving tree planting and painting with youth. She returned to the U.S. to work on a M.A. in Geography at the University of Arizona, during which time she developed her understanding of connections, networks, and "the way we shape and are shaped by our environments."

But while the far extreme of the solitary artist is not satisfactory for Kimi, she has also recently moved away from feeling that it is antithetical to her political and social convictions. Her political and social ideas have evolved over time, and her idea of herself as an artist has changed with it:

There was a time when I didn't think it could be arts-for-arts-sake. I think I'm evolving now, and I think that that's O.K. too. But for awhile I was kind of belligerent about it not being that... I think that there was like a belief that that was irresponsible, that you know, I had to do something more with it... I happen to now think that there actually could be a lot of good in doing that, but at the time it seemed sort of insular... [and] selfish, and that it needed to be more useful.

She's struggled with the conflict between her socio-political convictions and the joy of creating and doing for some time. But recently, in her personal art-making, Kimi has begun making work that is "ephemeral." Whether the medium is movement or writing, collaborative or solitary, she is creating work that is improvisational, spontaneous, and almost solely about the process. This work is from "the gut level" and "joyful" for her.

On one level, Kimi's turn to the ephemeral and improvisation has been directed by her needs as a developing solitary artist. She realized that her dedication to process and discovery in her teaching was somehow not crossing over to her own creative work:

...in the community teaching I've done, it's very much working with people that don't think that they're creative...So it's about sort of waking up...you know, because people are so afraid of their results. And so here I've been like, for the past few years, just preaching ... "It's about the process, it's about the process," but meanwhile, freaking out about my own products. So it's like, well why don't I just follow some of my own advice? You know, it would be more authentic anyway.

A great deal of her earlier work was driven by a desire to make a "huge statement," and this had the effect of dampening her creative energy sometimes. As a result, she is taking a new and different approach in her own work.

This evolving approach to her own creativity and expression extends to other areas of her work, informing her understanding of collaboration, awareness and democracy. In one example, she contrasts the outcomes of collaborative improvisational movement with the pressures we face in the U.S. to make things happen by ourselves. Her creative experiences and alternative visions of democracy flow together seamlessly:

If you're interested in creating something larger, or shaping a new society, then, I think, by necessity, you need to pay attention to what other people are doing. So in improv work, you know, you pay attention to... what your choices are, and what your body wants to do, but you're always trying to expand your awareness and pay attention to what other people are doing...[and] also notice what you're not noticing... The process of making work in this way is sort of inherently democratic because everybody's responsible for everything that's happening at any given point...and in that way it's subversive, you know, in terms of the society that we live in.

Kimi's own creative experiences are highlighting the value of paying attention and everyone being responsible for what is going on, and she connects this to broader philosophies of

interaction, responsibility, and subversion. She is enacting and envisioning, through the process of making art, abstract ideas of a better society.

For Kimi, experimentation and risk-taking connect her ephemeral improvisation with activism and community work:

I think it's about learning to take risks.... and also not getting stuck in your everyday way of doing it... I think it goes with helping people experiment and try things out. Which then, hopefully, I guess, makes them less rigid in their lives and more open to... what's happening in themselves and what's happening around them. So that they can then make choices based on whether they think that something's worth celebrating, or worth changing, or worth fighting for or fighting against.

The taking of risks and a focus on experimentation are themes in many aspects of Kimi's work. Through her ephemeral and unpredictable creative experiences, she is developing an understanding that the unknown and unfamiliar can be joyful, "inherently transformative," and even revolutionary, in that change necessarily involves the unknown.

Her political and social concerns have long been motivators for Kimi, and privilege is a key factor in her background which has influenced her thinking and perspectives. It has inspired a feeling of responsibility to be involved in change, as well as critical reflection on her place in society and change. This has led to an evolving notion of how change is realized. She included being educated, coming from a safe community, her parents still being married, and being white as privileges that have given her certain opportunities and perspectives on life. Her father was a professor at Penn State in health policy, though he originally started out in community development. Her mother also worked at the university on a computer support team.

Kimi talks about her earlier feelings that art should not be selfish and had to address serious issues as being connected to a “sense of responsibility that people who come from a certain level of privilege often feel.” Although that feeling of responsibility was useful to her for awhile, she now considers it dangerous in two significant ways. On one level, in a critical pedagogical sense, ascribing too much power to oneself based on privilege only reinforces existing power structures and inequities:

You are giving yourself too much power...I mean, of course, I believe that I can make a difference. But, you know, where is that belief coming from? Is that reacting to the dominant structures? Like, can I make a difference because I'm white and educated? Maybe, yes. But I think holding too tightly to that also just reinforces that structure.

And in a second way, that sense of responsibility grounded in privilege can be stifling artistically, both personally and communally:

If you're always stuck to this responsibility, or even guilt, I might say, then you're not really necessarily going to be doing your best work...and if you're not doing your best work, you're probably not necessarily serving the community in your best way...

Perhaps part of her ability to perceive and acknowledge her own position of power in society is due to the fact that although she led a young life of privilege, it was not insular. From a young age, she traveled in Latin America extensively with her family, and recalls “paying attention to what was happening.” Her mother grew up in Latin America and part of her family is Ecuadorian through marriage, and Kimi acknowledges these influences as being important in her family and her growing up. To this day, an issue about which she feels very strongly is “uneven geography, uneven development, disparity between industrialized and developing nations.” In addition, she credits her father as strongly supporting the development of her feminist beliefs.

Kimi's critical reflection on her own place in society and change extends to her identity as an educator. For example, achieving equality is a common vision for social justice educators, and one Kimi shares. But she finds "equality" is difficult to define in her work with low-income youth:

Equality is kind of a huge question. What does that mean? Does equality mean, make you more like me? Cuz I have had opportunities? Does equality make you into who you want to be? And then, what is that, and that's always different for everybody...

Kimi's reflection about her educational work reaches back to her Master's project, her first project combining art and community work. She was interested in the maps that children draw, and what they can reveal about the spaces they live in. She was also interested in border issues like massive industrialization and globalization. She connected with a border community through a local activist and did a series of morning workshops one summer involving photography and drawing. Inspired by the work of photographer and educator Wendy Ewald, her aim was to use "the art projects to kind of elicit their responses about how they felt about where they lived. And then, sort of contextualized that in what was happening around them that they may or may not have been aware of as children." Kimi has mixed feelings about her role and the outcomes in this first project examining connections and telling stories through art:

... it brought up a lot about the role of the researcher. Even more, the role of the artist... Outsider, white, you know, I mean I was adored because of what I was bringing. ... those questions, and the power dynamics, [like,]... is it my responsibility to be here? Why am I here? Can I really make a difference? Why do I think I can make a difference? Why should I even try making a difference?... I could look at it very simply and say it was an amazing project, the kids got a lot out of it... I gave them opportunities that they wouldn't have always had, I gave myself opportunities that I wouldn't have always had... I learned a lot about the border and what goes on there. You know, or I could tell the more complicated version of like, what *was* I doing there?

Her consideration of the things she has done and the perspectives she has held is critical, questioning, and multi-layered.

After completing her M.A., Kimi became involved with a project in Tucson involving the arts, history, and geography, focused on how to integrate art and neighborhood participation. That project led to employment at VOICES as magazine editor. (For much of that time she and Josh worked together, and they continue to collaborate to this day.) For five years she developed the writing program, helping teens to tell their own personal and community stories.

Kimi's approach to education depends on the setting and has changed over the years, but her goal as an educator "is to give people an opportunity to express themselves in a different way, or a new way, or a way they haven't done in a while, and rediscover the joy of that simple act." She also acknowledges that her values come into play, as she tries to help people express themselves effectively, poetically, and above all, in their own voice. She strives to provide effective tools to facilitate self-expression, but also acknowledges that her work has a political nature:

In the same way that research is political, I'm choosing what I think is important to learn based on the kind of world I want to live in...So, you know, that carries an agenda. Even though you can ask open ended questions, and let people come to their own answers, the very nature of what you ask... [I guess what] it's about, then, [is] teaching the skills to question, and respond, and reject...Making sure what's presented, with that, goes the critical thinking skills, and the creative thinking skills. If I'm gonna reject that, what am I gonna put in its place? That is what is so lacking.

She works to find a balance between her vision and others' visions. And as an artist/educator/activist, she aims for the powerful combination of both criticizing the status quo and envisioning a better future.

Kimi's goals as an educator tie closely to her notions of change and how the arts can be involved in change. She is hesitant to call herself an activist, though in the past she would have insisted that that label be used to describe her. Kimi misses the convictions she had when she was younger, when she felt sure about what is right and wrong. While she would not want to go back to that way of viewing the world, she said that it is easier to be certain about how things work: "there's something comforting about having that kind of certainty that I don't have at all now...It's just harder to live in the grey." Now, regarding activism, Kimi uses blinders as a metaphor for what is necessary to participate in ideological fights. With blinders on, it is easier to focus on one viewpoint and work toward that goal; with blinders off, a wider and more complex view of issues is possible. She is unsure whether they are better on or off:

You know, like you almost have to cover one eye in order to fight that fight...I think that those people are really important. And I've been one of them, you know, in the past. But I also think that taking the blinder off is—I mean, I don't know. I--I don't know, I get confused about it...there can be danger in the monocular vision. Because what are you failing to see? And, who are you being mean to in the process?

This metaphor regarding an individual's awareness suggests two different notions of change and how to bring it about. These days, as an activist, Kimi tends toward working with the blinders off, and is far less concerned with black and white versions of society. The roles that Kimi sees the arts playing in change complement that view well: the arts invite deep engagement; paying attention, and being aware of both oneself and one's surroundings;

overcoming fears and going beyond the familiar; and the collaborative aspects of working together and making choices together, which is “inherently democratic.”

I've become a smaller activist. Like I feel like my cause is, in some ways, huger [sic], but in other ways, smaller...I feel less stuck to one ideology and more committed to some sort of idea of people expressing their truth. And creating an environment where it's O.K. to express one's truth. So there's something about tolerance in there...

Her uncertainty about what is necessary to bring about meaningful change does not hinder her work; in fact, it continues to drive her to seek different approaches and collaborations.

The push and pull of the joy of doing, her socio/political awareness and concerns, and her relentless questioning has led Kimi to better define how she best works in communities towards change. She recently piloted a project that resulted in a performance addressing relationship and partnership in the LGBT community, in collaboration with New Articulations, a modern dance company. She actively explored the connections between dance (which started again after graduate school,) what she'd learned working at VOICES, and the collaborative strategies of the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in Washington, D.C. Kimi guided community members in a series of movement-generating activities expressing participants' experiences. Those movements were woven into a performance primarily performed by community members. In addition, seven choreographers in town either restaged existing heterosexual duets as same-sex duets, or created new work speaking to that theme.

The goals and results of the project, which was conducted during a time when gay marriage was an increasingly divisive topic, were multiple. It created bridges between different

communities and provided a public forum for personal stories to be expressed. This led to affirmation of community participant experiences and the opportunity for outsiders to understand and identify with community members' lived and intimate experiences. Also, regarding the professional same-sex duets, audience members commented that it was refreshing to see queer life made beautiful on stage, rather than mocked or made ugly, thus it was also new and celebratory.

Kimi is currently working on a project with the food bank, exploring issues of food and local food systems informed by personal stories gathered from various communities to culminate in a performance. Workshops will be held open to the public, and the project is open-ended and participant driven:

...depending on what kind of stories emerge from participants, and what participants step forward as wanting to take a continuing role, that will then shape the pieces that we create...I don't know quite how it's going to work but [I will] really tak[e] a large view and see what emerges, and what are the themes, and how do we talk about food and the food system.

Kimi's approach to the project builds on and improves what she learned working with VOICES and the LGBT project regarding voice, collaboration, and the creative process.

Kimi searches for the most effective and creative approach for each new project and each new context. Regarding her current work, she speaks of constant examination, which leads to constant evolution.

I think that the job of a person of consciousness is to always be reexamining what they're doing. So, in that sense...it's always evolving, and changing, which is, you know, the nature of change, and evolution. But, I feel like I'm still figuring it out... I think it would be easy to come in and have sat down and say, "I'm doing this food and dance project, and here's what I want to get out of it, and here's what I want the community to get out of it." And I mean, I do have some of that agenda, obviously...But I think also that the deeper truth is that...I

examine my role in even asking those questions....I think there's just some balance between taking on an issue and presenting it through the arts, and then also examining one's own purpose in doing that.

She emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between reflective examination and action. "I think maybe sometimes we need to put the blinders on in order to move forward." Yet she also cautions against not taking them off, or assuming they are gone: "we can always be taking more and more blinders off that we don't think we have." This relationship with her blinders affects multiple aspects of Kimi's work as an artist/educator/activist, from her creative process to her role in change to her educational work, invigorating their intersections and advancing them all.

Jason Gallegos

Jason Gallegos is a 27-year-old Chicano male artist/educator/activist. He is in the process of evaluating and reconsidering his professional goals. Currently pursuing an M.F.A., he finds this path conflicts in some ways with his drive to work collaboratively with underrepresented populations using media arts. Real-world concerns have him seriously contemplating how and if he can pursue the work with youth which he has come to find so fulfilling. He is at a crossroads where competing values, desires, and responsibilities are creating large questions about his future.

Currently in his first year of an M.F.A. program in Art and Technology at Ohio State University, Jason is the only individual in this thesis to have studied his art form, primarily filmmaking and media arts, in a higher education setting. He received a dual Bachelor's degree, in Media Arts and Sociology, from the University of Arizona. In sociology, he

focused on stratification based on class and race issues, as well as social movements, group processes, and collective behavior. He credits this focus with having a significant influence on his artmaking. But his interests in social and political issues are rooted much earlier, in his experiences as a young person, influenced by both his family and community.

Jason cites his parents, and especially his father, as being an important factor in establishing his values and perspectives. Jason recalls hearing about his father's daily experiences and issues he encountered:

He was a working class guy, he was a truck driver, he was a member of a union. And he spoke about all these things [racism, classism, etc.], without really speaking about them.... I mean, since then, there's been a lot of people and work that have influenced me and have become influential, but that's what it's rooted in. ... back then it was just hearing him gripe, I guess, about whatever, and that just became a part of me... (Gallegos 2007)

His father's stories and anecdotes framed Jason's world, highlighting certain inequalities that he could only consciously label much later. Jason grew up in Flagstaff, Arizona, where he observed and experienced evidence of oppressive structures, both in his own life and those of people surrounding him. Immigration, for example, is a significant issue that he deals with in his filmmaking, since he has known many people who have immigrated or have family who immigrated. Because of these connections he sympathizes with the issue, "growing up in communities, and you know, interacting with those sorts of communities." He describes Flagstaff as a community in which racism is a serious issue which is not necessarily apparent to outsiders unfamiliar with the community.

...growing up with Native American friends and Native American-influenced community, you really start to see how, man...they've really got it bad, you know, trying to figure out their way in all of this. But that's what Flagstaff is. And Flagstaff is difficult to sort of talk about it... there's a lot of... latent racism... It's apparent if you are from there and grew up there. But it's not apparent on the surface. ... it's all a motivating factor in everything I do.

Jason has observed firsthand that certain perspectives dominate and others are silenced in our society. Also, Jason's difficulty in labeling his own heritage suggests an identity which is negotiated against history and present dominating contexts. He explained that in New Mexico (where he was born, and has extensive family) he'd be referred to as *Spanish*, in Arizona, as *Mexican*, but neither are accurate. *Hispanic* is not correct either. *Chicano* is not perfect but is the label he settles with. This difficulty in describing his heritage is connected to both his own identity and larger historical and societal influences: "It's a confusion. And I think it's confusion based on a lot of factors. Including, but not entirely limited to, the way other people have classified that population throughout history. ... So it's something, at the age of 27, I'm still trying to figure out."

Jason's awareness of uneven power structures, combined with his own background and identity, have led him to be actively involved in affecting social and political change. He values and thrives on networks and collaboration in his work, but also greatly values his individual choice about issues and involvement. He resists being a member of organizations because he does not want to be labeled in a certain way:

I don't want to be pigeonholed into a certain way of thinking. Or I don't want to be labeled a certain way. ...I'd rather feel like part of the general mobilization, moving toward an end goal, and... finding a way that I can do that without... becoming tied down or pigeonholed or trapped in one way of thinking.

Although he resists being pinned to any one organization's mission, Jason considers himself an activist. His activism is manifested in many ways, including his creativity, his lifestyle, and participation in direct social action, such as protests and spreading information. Primarily, though, caring and being motivated to act are key to his definition of activist: "I think I'm an

activist in the sense that I actively care about issues and I actively voice my opinion about that through a variety of ways... it's really just the active pursuit of caring enough about it to try to do something about it.”

Artistically, Jason moves back and forth between politically and socially focused films and media art, and more experimental work. He is driven to create political work for both personal and larger societal reasons, but sometimes needs to take a break from it because he becomes “so involved with it... and it becomes overwhelming... So I find I can't focus all my energy all the time in that direction. Or at least, I haven't been able to. Otherwise, I start to burn out. ...the creative process doesn't become cathartic anymore...” He is motivated to produce work with social and political content, but because he is so deeply passionate and personally involved, it can be draining as well.

In addition to making politically-charged films, Jason’s understanding that larger structures of oppression silence many perspectives has also led him to work collaboratively with underrepresented, frequently silenced populations. He is driven to help alternate perspectives gain more voice because “you see things in the media from only one perspective.” His interests in working as an educator align with his activist and artist motivations, grounded in both external observations and personal experience. For example, he has long been interested in working with youth because of the differences he noted between his own experiences in his youth, and those of some of his peers:

I always had the desire to work with youth, and again, going back to underrepresented population, and if I really think about it, it goes back to the environment that I grew up in and the people I grew up around. And you know, how some of them went in a totally

different direction from me and, you know, how maybe if they would have had more guidance they would have gone in a different direction.

Despite this underlying interest in working with youth, Jason did not graduate intending to work in educational settings. But he was offered an opportunity to facilitate digital storytelling with young people, and he quickly found working with youth “insightful” and rewarding. He has worked for several years with youth, facilitating digital storytelling, in Media Arts Social Action (MASA), a part of the larger Native American Youth Empowerment Project (NAYEP) which focuses on wellness in Native American communities. He has also collaborated with Pan Left, a Tucson activist media arts collective, to teach digital storytelling courses at City High, a local charter school that often brings community members into the classroom. Although Jason has no formal training in education or pedagogy, he strongly believes in the positive affect and empowerment that can result from developing one’s voice:

I just hope really that they [youth] take away [from working with me] that they know that they have creativity within them... And secondly the realization that people will care what you have to say. ...They are already underrepresented, so you know, [they think,] ‘Well, no one's going to care what I have to say. No one does now.’ But realizing that, it's really a sense of empowerment, you know. ‘Well, I have a way of saying something, expressing myself, and if I do it in a certain way, people are going to listen.’ ... It's a really fulfilling experience...some of these students are really lost, and then, when you tap them into [finding their voice] they really find something. That's especially motivating.

Jason is deeply invested in his work with youth, and his motivation and satisfaction are tied up in theirs. He often finds that collaboration itself as a creative act.

Just working with youth...it's addressing a population that's underrepresented by the media, and ... working with them then becomes my work. It's like an act of creation in a very conceptual way...I feel as attached to my students' work as I do to my own work sometimes. ... Like, you know, I can't take credit for it, but I can have that feeling of, wow, you know, that helped them produce something.

Jason did not foresee discovering the joy and fulfillment of working with youth as an artist/educator/activist. He had been planning to pursue an M.F.A. since his graduation, and after some setbacks, began his graduate studies this fall. But since working with youth, he now finds himself at a much different place, with evolving priorities, than he had been just a few years ago. He is conflicted about his decision to stop working with youth, which made him feel like he “was really doing something,” in order to pursue an M.F.A., which in some ways now feels like a “very selfish act.” He is finding that being in art school, submersed in the art world, is not exactly what he’d expected. Oftentimes he feels that his creative and political priorities make him an outsider, as few of his art-school peers have an interest in social and political issues or value making work in this vein. It is rare that his values and priorities are affirmed in this setting. He describes this frustration as:

... realizing that a lot of people are concerned with making art that doesn't speak about any of this other [political and social] stuff. At all. And a lot of people are not sure why you would want to do that. And it's frustrating to think that like, you're now becoming part of a group of people who aren't totally in line with your way of seeing things. ... Sometimes I feel like, again, maybe this isn't where I should be, maybe I should be back, you know, on the streets doing what I do, instead of being part of this population of people ...

The contrast between these two worlds is opening many questions for Jason. He has found it difficult to bridge the two, because their intents and ways of talking about and valuing the creative process and art are so different:

I think by considering yourself an activist and working in that direction, it doesn't matter as much [whether people consider it ‘art’]. ... I can show older work now to people who I'm affiliated with [at school], and they start speaking in totally different directions, and critiquing it... everyone really wants to say something really smart, really critique it, speak like an artist. And then ... it's like, it doesn't matter. Because that's not what it was about. That's not what it was for.

Jason is now somewhat “apprehensive” to enter the art world. But the decision to pursue an M.F.A. does not only hinge on an internal ideological battle between pursuing a filmmaking

career and working collaboratively with underrepresented populations. He also feels constrained by economic realities and job security:

...it was a difficult decision to make, because I was feeling and still feel very passionately about the work I was doing here in Tucson. And I would love to continue with that work. But when I first started on to the goal of getting an M.F.A., it was to have job security... [working with youth] won't give me, afford me that freedom and schedule, and it certainly won't pay as well... And then you have to, you know, question, well, which is more important? And of course the easy answer, like, to my parents, [is] go for the money and the time-- that's what everyone wants. But then it's ... so fulfilling to do the other work. It's difficult.

Jason highlights the necessity of having a “realistic perspective” on making a living doing community art education work. But he also says that it is key to have motivation that is other than “monetary compensation or recognition.” He has discovered that other motivation, but his economic concerns are tough and real competition. It is unclear which will prevail, or if he will be able to find a balance between them.

Kristen Suagee-Beauduy

Kristen is a 23-year-old, mixed-ethnicity, female, aspiring artist/educator/activist. She is passionate about education, fiercely committed to change and community building, and inspired by the role that the arts can play in those. She is at an earlier point in her development as an artist/educator/activist than the others in these case studies, and in fact, Kimi, Josh, and G.E., have been mentors and role models for Kristen over the past few years. As she looks to the future, she is forging her own academic path, informed by her values, personal experiences with difference, and desire to be involved in change.

Kristen grew up in Minnesota, and moved to Tucson when she was in high school. When she was younger, she was an ambitious visual artist, in addition to being involved in drama,

choir, band, and writing poetry, but for various reasons moved away from the arts in high school. During that time, she co-founded an activist club and began learning about issues she considered important around her: “We [activist club members] had just started figuring out... power structures, and we went to the no-war-in-Iraq peace rallies and stuff, and just started educating ourselves about the issues that were going on” (Suagee-Beauduy 2007).

Kristen became active in a number of social movements as she consciously began to connect her lived experiences with broader societal structures such as oppression and inequity. Since high school, she has been a regional coordinator for United Students Against Sweatshops; volunteered for Arizona Democrat Raul Grijalvas’ campaign for U.S. Congress; been a part of Las Sin Fronteras, a women’s activist collective; and participated in numerous political protests.

Kristen’s knowledge of political and social issues expanded beginning in high school, but her interest in these issues has roots in her evolving experiences and perspectives as a person of mixed white and Cherokee heritage. Since she was very young, her experiences regarding race have differed depending on context. For example, she was often treated differently by Native Americans depending on whether she was with her half-Cherokee mother or white father. This was confusing for her, as her perceived identity shifted depending on the perceiver and their surroundings.

When I was with my mom [on the reservation], people who knew her would come up and be like, oh, your daughter looks so much like you... she’s a native baby. But then when I’d walk around with my dad, nobody would look at me... I don’t remember ever a kid being nice to me or wanting to play if I was with my dad... So like, when I was a little kid I started to understand that I wasn’t going to fit in, cuz [sic] I was white. But it was weird, because I wasn’t all white. So that was confusing.

She recalls racial tension between white and Native American students being very present in school in Minnesota. As Kristen got older and began to explore her Cherokee roots, she also started to understand those tensions in terms of broader societal contexts. Cherokee culture was not a significant part of her family's traditions, but she recalls going to a Cherokee nation celebration, and recognizing historical interpretations and omissions, as she came into contact with "all of this stuff about Cherokee culture that was never mentioned in my textbooks." Connecting this perception of a divide between dominant and other to her personal experiences and identity fostered an ability to identify and empathize with others' experiences. This in turn has led her to examine larger structural and institutional issues and problems.

Do you see yourself in your education? So I didn't. So like my Cherokee heritage wasn't represented, and I didn't feel like American Indian perspectives were represented. And I used to make parallels between other people that weren't represented, and realized that there is a system of institutionalized racism and that that needs to be fought...

Kristen's passion for political and social issues is also rooted in the values she has learned from her family, and her observations that those values and her experiences growing up were less focused on material goods and surface appearances than those of many of her peers. These experiences and observations have inspired her: "I liked being angry because I had knowledge, and I think that's pretty much what started me out with activism... I felt like people were caring about the wrong things. ... it just felt really messed up that their values were really different from mine."

Two core values which she has learned from her parents and grandfather are "to be part of something bigger than yourself" and to "be a life-long learner." Her grandfather was someone who was able to meld these two values successfully in her eyes:

...he's the biggest example of synthesizing what it means to be an active citizen, I guess, and a good person at the same time. And someone who's selfish enough to raise their family right, but selfless enough to join groups that are about helping other people.

She respects and aspires to his simultaneous dedication to personal growth and to the good of his community. Her grandfather greatly valued education, enrolling in two masters programs in which he was the only Native American. Both Kristen's parents have masters' degrees in social work, her mother's focus on public health education and her father's on clinical social work. They have dedicated their professional lives to helping people lead healthy lives, especially native populations. Kristen feels very connected to her family, and responsible for making strong decisions in line with their values. "When I think of myself in the future, I think of how I'm kind of representing them, and the work that they've done, and that's important to me." Their examples have etched themselves deeply in the way Kristen sees herself in the world.

Her sense of responsibility is tied not only to the examples her family members have set, but also connected to the privilege she has grown up with:

...I have so much support and I feel like to not try to do something bigger myself ... would kind of let down what my grandpa was trying to make for his kids and what my parents were trying to make for me. Because... to advance in society is a lot about where your starting place is.

Yet Kristen's relationship to change is not straight-forward or easy. She has been actively involved in a number of initiatives to change the status quo, and is passionate about her beliefs. But her complex understanding of her identity and relationship with others has led her to question her place in change, specifically regarding the privilege that comes with her identity:

I had this one moment at a youth of color activist conference... I remember almost being in tears because I was so frustrated cuz so many kids kept saying... white people don't understand this, white people don't understand that ... I couldn't get away from the fact that I was white, and I was middle class, and that I wasn't able to understand what they'd been through because I hadn't lived in their neighborhood, I hadn't ever been discriminated against in the way that they had... They were like, well, you can't really lead our communities. We have to do that. You can't really talk for us. We need to talk for us... I went in my room and cried, because I was like... what am I gonna do then? Like if I obviously want to change things, and I have this privilege, like, what do I do?

Kristen's privilege and identity present a barrier to being involved in certain aspects of realizing change in others' communities.

Recognizing that she cannot change others' lives for them, yet still feeling strongly about being involved in positive change, she sees community art as one potential area in which she can be involved in the change she envisions. She sees art's place in change as "fresh," "meaningful," and multifaceted. Among key skills learned through art that are also necessary in activism, she cites learning to creatively solve problems, learning to explore and experiment, and becoming resourceful. Additionally, she notes the importance of different viewpoints and conceptualizing alternatives to the status quo in order to act upon it:

... young people need to be given the opportunity to have time to conceptualize society as different, because if they're not given that opportunity, they're just gonna go along with everything, be a push-over, not try to challenge things that they can challenge. ...creative thinkers have a lot to do with that, because of the way that systems are so established, it's only going to be thinking that's outside of the box that's going to change them at all.

She also notes that collaborative art can be a way "to get communities talking together for the first time, if there isn't a political mobilizing entity within them... [then you have] this network established, this system of communication, this consensus process established to do other things, like improving the neighborhood in other ways." She suggests that art can also begin discussion, or probe more deeply into difficult issues, as it brings a humanizing, and

thus motivating, element to community and political organizing for change. These potential uses for collaborative community art inform Kristen's ideas about product and intention in art. Her priorities are on process and intent, departing from standard judgments of art:

I think that's why a lot of the community art is so inspiring to me, because it's obviously not technically-mastered art, a lot of it, and you can see how there's a lot of non-artists working on art... it is pretty cool to me, just because it's challenging that aesthetic of art as something that's only accessible to people who have that much leisure time and that much talent or that much education in the subject. ...I think there needs to be different schools of judgment. Like the intention of the art is what needs to be judged.

The many potential uses of the arts in change necessitate different approaches to evaluating success.

Despite Kristen's enthusiasm about combining art and activism, her aspirations have not yet solidified into a vision of what she will be doing professionally. As she talks about her future in relation to her experiences with art, activism, and education thus far, she struggles with an unresolved tension between wanting to do things by herself and be in control, and wanting to work with others. One area where this tension is evident is in Kristen's views of herself as an educator. She highly values taking leadership in one's own education and being an independent thinker, as she learned much that she values informally, on her own, rather than in school: "I just thought, like, I'm gonna read books and articles and talk to people, and that's going to be my education about how to be like a successful human being, because college isn't teaching me that." She also learned a great deal about art, activism, and education at VOICES, where she progressed from being a youth apprentice in 2002, to peer editor, and then assistant editor. In her final year with the organization she started two programs with the goal of "trying to get young people connected to bigger issues in the

community and to also provide more ... youth coming together, realizing that they had commonalities in caring about community issues, about being artistic, and using their time positively.” In turn, as an educator she feels her most useful role is to help others make connections and become critically conscious:

Being an educator for me is really about showing young people or [formally] uneducated people that things that they want to know are out there, they just take finding the right people, finding the right books, finding the right organizations... And I think that that’s not really taught in school, either, you know, like how to be an independent thinker, how to do things for yourself...

Helping make these connections was one of the most rewarding aspects of being a VOICES mentor for Kristen. Her sense of what an activist is also reflects this combination of individual agency and group collaboration: “For me, an activist is just someone who’s trying to act, like in a way that’s affecting more than themselves, that’s being a part of a group of people. So a person connecting themselves to another group of people, trying to change things for the better.”

But also, as a mentor at VOICES, Kristen experienced some of the challenges of the work: “some of the most frustrating things about VOICES was like [sic] trying to organize youth that didn’t care to be organized. Like try to mentor youth that didn’t see why they needed to be mentored. And it’s like, being an educator, I think you need to have more patience than a normal American has.” At this point in her life, she doubts if she has the patience necessary, because she so strongly believes in her vision of the need for change:

I don’t really want to waste my time on people that don’t care. And I know that’s like not how I’m supposed to feel, because nothing’s going to change if regular people aren’t motivated to change things, but at the same time... I feel it would be one of the most heartbreaking, depressing things I could do with my life, just because I DO care what other people think.

Kristen notes that some of the tension she experiences may have to do with her age and impatience with waiting for change. But it also has to do with the power of her own voice, which she found during her time at VOICES. It was there that she “understood that art has a place in activism,” at least in part because the work she did there was tangible and validating. The allure of working as a journalist, for example, in a more solitary way yet still affecting change, is also strong for Kristen.

Her experiences with education, activism, and art have influenced the way in which she regards her own education. For awhile, Kristen wanted to study the technical aspects of art making, but now feels it is more important to her development as an art educator to study larger societal issues:

...for me, the most powerful thing about art education is like, affirming peoples' ideas and values and beliefs, and helping them think about all the different ways they could do it, and then connecting that to people who know those technical skills. So I almost feel like it's a waste of my time to learn all those technical skills when I could be doing research about the history of struggle and oppression and peoples' movements... for me, the time that's most well spent is understanding how people have mobilized and like come together and created change, cuz that's stuff that I don't feel is easily accessible...

Kristen is currently in her first year of college at the University of Arizona. She initially entered the Art Education program, as G.E. Washington was a significant role model for her: “Somebody who has a background in the arts and is using it to get communities talking, engaging them in dialogue, that's what I wanted to be.” But in reviewing the courses, she did not find many that addressed what she wanted to get out of an art education degree: “my main focus in art education, with the community- and museum-based degree, was to figure out how other people had used art to mobilize communities to achieve social change.” So she has decided to construct her own course of study, majoring in Interdisciplinary studies

and minoring in American Indian studies. “Basically I want to do independent studies that I think will teach me what I originally wanted to learn through the [art education] degree program.” For her interdisciplinary studies, she will focus on journalism, sociology, and social justice in various disciplines, including rhetoric, anthropology, and history. Kristen has been frustrated by the strong boundaries between disciplines, including art: “...the most interesting social justice work to me is work that involves art in some way. So I’m hoping to find... classes that would help me study that... the way I feel like school is structured, like I kinda have to be a fine artist in order to learn about art.” Instead, she is forcefully pulling together different areas in order to gain the knowledge she feels she needs to do what she wants to do. But ultimately Kristen would like to find balance in her life, along the lines of her grandfather, and values a holistic approach to the person. She worries about burnout as an activist, and is interested in learning about settings in which youth development is addressed from numerous angles.

...for me, thinking about myself as an educator or student, it’s a lot about thinking about yourself as a holistic person, ... like learning how to balance and prioritize and organize yourself is a lot more important than like, I don’t know, obsessing about your art and how good it comes out.

Whether art, activism, and education continue to intersect in that remains to be seen.

Each of these five individuals embodies a different and unique combination of artist, educator, and activist in their work in communities. Yet as diverse as they are, there are several characteristics which are generally common to the five participants. In addition, a number of issues, questions, and implications which merit further examination can be drawn from these case studies. The following chapter will present and address these findings.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

The five artist/educator/activists in this study are diverse. Each individual's chosen artistic medium is different; their histories and family backgrounds vary; educational paths diverge; and details of their educational work involving art in communities are distinct. Yet there are several characteristics which are common to most, if not all, five participants. While no broad and general conclusions about artist/educator/activists can be drawn from a study of this scale, these common characteristics are worth noting as a possible starting point for further research regarding preparation and evaluation criteria for community artist/educator/activists.

Further, a number of issues, questions, and implications which merit further examination emerge from these case studies. Some of these issues and questions reflect the unique nature of artist/educators/activists. But some of the implications and questions address specific aspects of community artists/educators/activists, including artists and the art world, art and visual culture educators, and activists.

Therefore, this final chapter is divided into two sections. The first addresses the common characteristics which emerge from examination of these five community artist/educator/activists:

- Experience as outsider/minority
- Self-Reflection, -Criticality, and -Modification
- Empathy and awareness of others
- Interest in larger structural issues as they relate to individual experience

- Interdisciplinary and social justice interests and focus
- Process-orientation and different reasons and criteria for creativity
- Little formal training in arts disciplines
- Collaboration
- Willingness to step into the unknown and embrace it
- Motivation consistently other than financial compensation and job security

The second section outlines issues, questions, and implications unique to the development, work, and lives of artist/educator/activists. This section is divided into four sub-sections: 1. *artists and the art world*; 2. *art and visual culture educators*; 3. *activists*; and 4. *artist/educator/activists*. Each of these sub-sections addresses aspects of the artist/educator/activist experiences that open questions and create implications for these distinct, yet related and interwoven, areas.

Common Characteristics of Artist/Educator/Activists

As previously stated, the artist/educator/activists interviewed for this study have traveled very different paths to get to this point in their lives and work. Yet a common theme in each is that their evolving notions of their roles as agents of change are intimately tied to their personal experiences and strong feelings and perceptions about problems with the status quo. The interior and exterior, micro and macro experiences and understandings intersect in formative ways. And the weaving of artist, activist, and educator produces some common characteristics which define and illustrate their work and lives. Those characteristics are outlined in the following section.

Experience as outsider/minority

One striking characteristic shared by all five participants in this study is the formative and influential experience of being an outsider at some time in their lives. This experience as outsider has significantly influenced the formation of their identities, leading to an ability to consider multiple perspectives and perceive structural inequalities and hierarchies. For some, these experiences as outsider are related to aspects the individual's identity which are not part of the dominant culture in the U.S. For example, G.E.'s race, sexuality, and experiences with class; Jason's ethnicity and the community in which he grew up; and Kristen's ethnicity and class. Kimi and Josh grew up, in many ways, with the privileges of the dominant culture, but had significant experiences as outsiders, primarily through work and foreign travel. Whether present since birth or acquired later in life, this outside position to dominant mainstream culture has provided a lens which highlights difference and power inequities.

Self-Reflection, -Criticality, and -Modification

I think that the job of a person of consciousness is to always be reexamining what they're doing... I feel like I'm still figuring it out... I think it would be easy to come in and have sat down and say, "I'm doing this food and dance project, and here's what I want to get out of it, and here's what I want the community to get out of it." And I mean, I do have some of that agenda, obviously...But I think also that the deeper truth is that...I examine my role in even asking those questions. (Kimi)

Experience as an outsider does not automatically result in critical thinking and reflection, however. As illustrated in Kimi's words above, an important compliment to the outsider experience in these artist/educator/activists is that they distill their experiences into reflective observations and assessments of their own work, collaborations, and efficacy. Each artist/educator/activist is reflective about what his or her unique perspective reveals

about privilege, inequity, and power. Many of them regularly evaluate themselves in relation to larger structures. In doing so, they also seek to respond to these evaluations by modifying and developing new strategies for their work in different contexts.

G.E. suggests that a primary role of the artist/educator/activist in society is “to raise questions and to point out interesting juxtapositions that were taken for granted,” with the aim of expanding perspectives and challenging assumptions. Significantly, these artist/educator/activists ask these questions not only of society and other individuals, but also of themselves. They all ask probing, difficult questions about their work and their place in change. The following are some of the questions asked by the interviewees¹⁰ over the course of the research interviews. Even those questions which focus on broader society and ideas, such as truth and equality, have an element of self-awareness and -questioning:

- What actually constitutes change and success? (G.E.)
- How do we define success of a project? (Josh)
- What does [equality] mean? Does equality mean, make you more like me? Cuz I have had opportunities? Does equality make you into who you want to be? (Kimi)
- What [change] is really possible, on a larger scale, from using the arts? (Josh)
- If art really is something that brings people together, then why aren't there people together at [art world events]? (G.E.)
- How [do] human and natural systems interact? How [are] resources distributed? (Josh)
- If I'm gonna reject [the status quo], what am I going to put in its place? (Kimi)
- How do [community members] want to approach [the project], and what are the...long term implications for the project? (Josh)
- What are you failing to see [when you're fighting an ideological battle]? (Kimi)
- Where is that belief [that I can make a difference] coming from? Is that reacting to the dominant structures? Like, can I make a difference because I'm white and educated? (Kimi)
- Is it my responsibility to be here? Why am I here? Can I really make a difference? Why do I think I can make a difference? Why should I even try making a difference? (Kimi)

¹⁰ Some interviewees spoke more frequently in question format and for this reason are more represented in this list. Even if a question is attributed to a specific individual, many of the other participants touched on the issues these questions raise in other ways, such as anecdote or statement form. Finally, this is not an exhaustive list of useful questions that pertain to the work of artist/educator/activists, but rather a sampling.

- If I want to change things, and I have this privilege, what do I do? What do you do if you don't want to be a person in that kind of power situation? (Kristen)
- What are your motivations for wanting to work in the community? (Jason)
- What is truth? Where do we get our information? What's the agenda behind the people that are giving us the information? How do we decide what we trust and what are the truths? How does our own experience and background affect how we interpret information? (Josh)
- If we're going to work with young people and have them think about the environment, how can we do that without knowing where they're coming from in the first place?(Josh)
- How much of the adults' agenda becomes the driving force behind social action based on these kinds of projects? (Josh)
- How do you stay true to what the youth wanted to say, and [be sure that] other people's agendas don't overtake them? (Josh)
- Which is more important: [job security or doing work that is fulfilling]? (Jason)

These questions illustrate the engagement and digging that these artist/educator/activists undertake as part of their approach to their work.

Empathy and awareness of others

An important pre-requisite for meaningful self-reflection and evaluation is empathy and awareness of others: being able to both relate to and see oneself in relation to other people and groups. These two qualities are also key to collaborative work towards change, in which empathy and awareness of others is both a motivator and guide in facilitation of a project.

Josh's words highlight the importance of these qualities:

I believe neighborhoods and communities are the best experts of their own lives... for me the real power is that they have access to those things...so if I go in with humility, knowing that I don't know everything about what the issues are in their community, then it's going to be, usually, a somewhat successful project. Because I'm respecting the fact that they have a huge amount of knowledge and expertise, even though we don't often look at communities necessarily that way. It's always about deficits. (Josh)

These five artist/educator/activists' empathy is not a surface embrace or acknowledgement of difference. Rather, it is a constant attempt to understand and see from another's perspective. This, in turn, leads to reflection and questioning of one's own place in relationship to others. Kimi connects this awareness and response to democracy:

If you're interested in creating something larger, or shaping a new society, then, I think, by necessity, you need to pay attention to what other people are doing. So in improv work, you know, you pay attention to... what your choices are, and what your body wants to do, but you're always trying to expand your awareness and pay attention to what other people are doing...[and] also notice what you're not noticing... The process of making work in this way is sort of inherently democratic because everybody's responsible for everything that's happening at any given point...and in that way it's subversive, you know, in terms of the society that we live in. (Kimi)

They are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating different aspects of a project, often focusing on the dynamics of the relationships, and how he or she is influencing or interacting with others. And as such, these artists/educator/activists do not shy away from failures, but seek to learn from them, alongside successes. Humility, Josh's most valued characteristic for his work, might be understood to encompass, or result from, genuine empathy and awareness of others.

Interest in larger structural issues as they relate to individual experience

Connected with this reflective and critical assessment of themselves, relationships, and their work, these five have a strong interest in larger structural conditions and issues in our society important to social justice, such as systems, power, resources, distribution, and inequity.

These were focal points of some participants' college and graduate studies, such as Jason's undergraduate sociology double-major, Kimi's masters in geography, Josh's master's concentration in social ecology, and Kristen's building of interdisciplinary social justice studies. But their focus on larger systems is not just textbook-based and theoretical; each artist/educator/activist's interest is in the way larger systems affect and influence individual situations, perspectives, and experience. For them, macro and micro experiences and conditions are interdependent. They all have an ability to perceive larger structures and their

influence on individuals. In turn, this fuels both their creative work and the educational work, which are responses to inequities they have perceived or experienced. The result is work grounded in goals of social justice.

For example, Jason's films and his digital storytelling with youth are responses to stratification and under-representation.

I always had the desire to work with youth. And again, going back to underrepresented populations, and if I really think about it, it goes back to the environment that I grew up in and the people I grew up around. (Jason)

Josh's photographic eye and community- and other-centered approach to collaborative projects responds to his global perspective on the complexities of human interaction and development.

I think largely the way I've become a photographer, in many ways, is because of my training in a totally different field, which is in social ecology. Because I basically was trained in observation... Now, in retrospect, learning to see things, and systems, and learning to understand relationships between things, has played a huge role in how I photograph, and the sort of social commentary I try to express through my work. (Josh)

G.E.'s performances and teaching methodologies are responses to silence and assumptions that both grow out of and nourish structural inequalities.

A large part of what I do is a response to the shutting down of other people. .. culturally, socially, politically, individually.... I think artists can be a site for sowing the seeds of change, or for plowing... I turn up ideas, and churn ... up the ground. Or churn up the group. (G.E.)

Kimi's collaborative community projects and improvisational movement and dance respond to privilege, disparities in development, and democracy. Finally, Kristen's search for ways to combine activism and art are a response to hidden and visible oppression, hierarchies, and inequity in our society.

Interdisciplinary and social justice interests and focus

I think that's how I've approached the arts, in that I don't want to be JUST a dancer or just a writer, but I want to be a good human being. And being a good human being, for me, was also knowing about other things beyond just craft. So the craft could incorporate geographic knowledge, for instance, or political information. (Kimi)

All five participants have a distinct interdisciplinary approach to their work. This is perhaps in part due to their undergraduate and graduate studies in other areas, ranging from biology to sociology to forestry and social ecology to interdisciplinary studies. This interdisciplinary approach is connected to a view of the world which emphasizes social justice issues and challenging the status quo. Rather than art being a sole or primary focus, many of these artist/educator/activists employ art alongside other disciplines, as Kimi's words above describe, resulting in interdisciplinary theory, tools, and work towards change.

Process-orientation and different reasons and criteria for creativity

Somebody who has a background in the arts and is using it to get communities talking, engaging them in dialogue, that's what I wanted to be. (Kristen)

Connected to this interdisciplinary and social justice focus, these artist/educator/activists do not consider the production of fine art an important goal for their collaborative work. Instead, as Kristen's words above suggest, the arts and creative process are tools, or vehicles, to achieving other goals, such as dialogue, sharing individual experiences, gaining and developing voice, envisioning alternatives to the status quo, and revealing hidden assumptions and prejudices. While a quality art product is one aspect of successfully using art to these additional ends, it is not an end goal of the artist/educator/activist's work¹¹, in

¹¹ Though most of these participants also sometimes make art more for art's sake.

and of itself. The process, as well as developments and revelations along the way, are the focus of these artist/educator/activists¹².

Little formal training in arts disciplines

Possibly one reason for these artist/educator/activists' relatively easy departure from standard methods and goals of art-making and education is that four of the five participants have relatively little formal training in the arts. Though all were involved in the arts as young people, four of the five majored in something besides the arts in college and graduate school. Only Jason majored in the arts, with a degree in Media Arts; yet he also had a double major in Sociology. Further, since his experience as an artist/educator/activist, he is finding that pursuing an MFA puts him in a community of artists whose intent and reasons for making art are quite different from his own:

A lot of people are concerned with making art that doesn't speak about any of this other [political and social] stuff. At all. And a lot of people are not sure why you would want to do that. ... Sometimes I feel like, again, maybe [art school] isn't where I should be, maybe I should be back, you know, on the streets doing what I do, instead of being part of this population of people. (Jason)

Collaboration

Collaboration is a significant aspect of many of these artist/educator/activists' work, and their approaches to collaboration share a few common traits. For example, they aim to facilitate participant- and community-driven projects. Their focus is not on their own work or art-product, but on facilitating others' creative success, creation, or dialogue. They seek to

¹² Further, the collaborative aspect of much of their work brings in an additional element to consider in evaluation, especially in relation to typical standards' and schools' focus on evaluating *individual* outcomes and competencies only.

move away from the center of the classroom, stage, and viewfinder. And they genuinely value knowledge, perspectives, and contributions other than their own:

Depending on what kind of stories emerge from participants, and what participants step forward as wanting to take a continuing role, that will then shape the pieces that we create...I don't know quite how it's going to work but [I will] really tak[e] a large view and see what emerges. (Kimi)

This is a distinct break from conventional top-down approaches to conceptualizing knowledge and education, which codify and rank knowledge and skills, and focus on individual development in those areas, leaving little room for community and local knowledge or collaborative skills.

Willingness to step into the unknown and embrace it

Every time I think I understand something, then I do a project, and I realize, whoa, that wasn't supposed to happen... It throws my world and everything I know upside down sometimes, and I love that... And then [it] also challenges like my own fears, which is, I think, a good thing. Not just doing the same curriculum over and over. And trying something new that might totally fail... So yeah, I think that's what gets me excited about the work, is that constant change, and evolution, and challenging my fear of failing. (Josh)

Many of the above characteristics are aided by these artist/educator/activists' willingness to enter the unknown and unfamiliar. They even welcome it, as Josh's words indicate above, as an important part of education, dialogue, and change. Sharing control of certain aspects of the project or collaborative art-making may backfire, hit unexpected ruts, or veer in wildly different directions that the artist/educator/activist had envisioned. But it can also lead to more participant-driven work, visionary creations, and imaginative alternatives to the status quo. It is also an important factor in the artist/educator/activists' individual growth and evolution of identity.

Motivation consistently other than financial compensation and job security

Unlike the majority of participants in Flores and Day's (2006) study of teacher identity and motivation, these five artist/educator/activists are not driven by typical extrinsic motivation and influences, such as employment opportunities, job security, and money. In fact, if these factors can be said to have any influence on one's choice to become an artist/educator/activist, it would be negative. All participants in this study (Kimi and Jason especially), in some way, cite job insecurity and financial considerations as challenges in their work. However, each artist/educator/activist possesses strong internal motivation, which is generally stronger than the lack of these extrinsic benefits.

While it is beyond the scope of this research to psychologically analyze the participants, their discussion of their own work echoes what Klandermans (2002) identifies as three core aspects of the social psychology of motivation for engaging in protest. The first, having a sense of injustice, is clearly and powerfully articulated by each artist/educator/activist. These participants demonstrate the second core aspect, belief in one's efficacy, in the way they see their work responding to, addressing, and affecting (to varying degrees) the injustices they perceive. The third core aspect Klandermans addresses is identity, and the degree to which an individual sees his or her personal identity as a part of a certain collective identity. All participants in this study are aware and reflective of their own identity as it relates to larger groups and society. Finally, like Klandermans, they exhibit a conscious denial that personal identity is fixed and stable psychological structure, which in turn influences the way they see themselves and their work fitting into the world.

Issues, Implications, and Questions

As previously stated, the experiences of these artist/educator/activists suggest implications and questions for different aspects of the artist/educator/activists. Thus, the following section addresses implications and issues along four categories: *artists and the art world*, *art and visual culture educators*, *activists*, and finally, *artist/educator/activists*.

Artists and the Art World

Some scholars, such as Becker (1997) and Dean (1999), have indicated that higher education art programs should respond to the changing nature of artmaking and the way artists see themselves, including increasingly collaborative and community-oriented work. *What challenges might a solitary artist confront in expanding his or her work into community, education, and activism?*

- *Finding balance:* One issue brought up by several artist/educator/activists, especially Josh, Kimi, and Jason, was the difficulty in finding a balance between collaborative and solitary artist work. They find that often one is a drain on the other, in terms of energy, time, and creative thinking. *What challenges and what opportunities arise for artists who work both collaboratively and alone? How can these be a part of the education of artists?*
- *Skills:* In collaborative work, the locus of activity shifts away from the artist, to the group. Interaction is a vital part of creation. The creation is not fully under the artist's control, and the product is shared. Not only does this challenge our conventional notions of authorship in the arts, it also demands skills that are not commonly associated with artist training, including empathy, dialogue facilitation, listening, coordinating, and inclusion of others' voices. *How can acquisition and development of these skills be incorporated into the education of artists?*

- *Media*: It is possible that some media are better suited to artist/educator/activist work than others. Sociological research on the arts in social change addresses the performance arts (music, dance, theater) more often than the visual arts. In my preliminary search for artist/educator/activists in the Tucson area, I found it most difficult to find visual artists whose work also encompasses community, education, and activism. My search was certainly not exhaustive, yet I located very few artists with these criteria working in more traditional visual media, such as painting, printmaking, and sculpture. This is perhaps due to my reliance on networks and contacts to find potential participants. But it may also have something to do with our notions of the solitary artist genius being entrenched in these media, or perhaps something in the actual artmaking which lends itself more to solitary work. Indeed, music, dance, performance, and theater have always had a collaborative aspect. But mural-making, poster and zine production, and public sculptural art can also be highly collaborative. Still, the various arts are different on many levels, and an area for further exploration may be: *Is it possible that some media are more suited to artist/educator/activist work than others? And for what reasons?*

Art and Visual Culture Educators

As the field of art and visual culture education continues to expand its realm of interests and influences, the experiences of these five artist/educator/activists generate several perspectives on and questions for the intersection of art and education in community settings.

- *Critical pedagogy, social justice education, and assets-based community development*: The goals and approaches of the artist/educator/activists in this study are grounded in the theories of

critical pedagogy, social justice education, and assets-based community development, whether they are aware of these or not. In addition to having differing and limited levels of formal education in their art forms, most also have limited formal training in pedagogy and/or community development (only G.E. has studied education at a higher level). Yet regardless of their education background, they have adopted and gravitated towards pedagogical approaches which align with critical pedagogy and social justice education.

Thus, artist/educator/activists of this type working in communities could be a valuable area of study in the art and visual culture education field regarding the connections between art, critical pedagogy, and social justice education, the possible outcomes of that intersection, and the motivations of these individuals to embrace that approach in their work. Further, assets-based community development theory and approaches may be a useful, additional perspective for art educators working in communities. It could also be a potential source of alternative criteria for assessing change-focused collaborative art projects.

- *Educational goals:* The technical aspects of artmaking are not the focus of these five art educators. Rather, art is a tool used to reach goals other than a fine art product. These goals include building voice, sharing and experiencing different perspectives, facilitating networks and relationships, and revealing hidden assumptions. Artist/educator/activists' work may be a revealing site for examination of art education focused on the goal of empowering students to be thoughtful, reflective, and active participants in society.

- *No set curriculum and evaluation:* artist/educator/activists work with no single curriculum, but rather develop and adapt educational approaches and projects based on the context, situation, and partners. Each participant is guided by clear philosophies and principles, including collaboration, participant- and community-centered focus, empathy, development of voice, and challenging the status quo. However, though these principles guide their work, these artist/educator/activists also embrace the unfamiliar and unexpected in their work and partnerships. This approach has a symbiotic relationship with the individual artist/educator/activist's identity: as the artist/educator/activist evolves, so does his or her collaborative work; and collaborative creation leads to new insights and perspectives that change the individual.

Given this, how is such work evaluated? There is informal and intuitive assessment evaluation conducted by each individual: they all indicated, in varying degrees, experiences where their work was misunderstood or examples of projects which were less successful, and why. But Josh in particular spoke of the need to agree on basic standards or goals among photographic storytelling facilitators, so that criteria and approaches from the standard art classroom are not just grafted onto this setting and way of working:

There needs to be some agreement about how do you work in a community, particularly if you're not part of that community, and what are the considerations. Because you know, there are certain things that I talked about, like humility, and thinking about your assumptions, and all these things that people aren't aware of. They just think, "Oh, I'm gonna give some kids cameras, and they're going to take amazing pictures, and we'll have an exhibit and it will be great, and everyone will be empowered." But you know, that's not what the work is about. It's about all those things that are between, that happen in the process. And I believe that that will get lost. (Josh)

And there are also the issues of funding support and other types of collaborations with organizations and institutions; in order for everyone to be on the same page, a common set of criteria and evaluation techniques are useful. *From where can this sector of art education draw to construct meaningful and appropriate methods of assessment and evaluation of its work and impact?*

Activists

Artist/educator/activists deviate from both the standard artist and standard activist types. In the realm of activism, the arts can be an important component of organized protest, but artist/educator/activists can also be exemplary of *new social movements*, where much of work towards change involves forming new ideas and ways of living, outside structured and visible protest (Jasper 1997). Artist/educator/activists both inform our understanding of and raise questions about the connections between the arts and activism.

- *The arts and change*: Based on their work and developing philosophies, these artist/educator/activists have noted many manifestations of the arts' place in change.

Among those they articulated are art as a medium or vehicle for¹³:

- The telling of stories as a way to connect, touch, and engage people around ideas (*G.E., Kimi, Josh, Jason, Kristen*)
- questioning and dialog (*G.E., Josh, Kimi*)
- facilitating a mixing of people and collaboration (*G.E., Kimi*)
- questioning assumptions, perceived boundaries, and stereotypes, and developing different points of view (*G.E., Kristen*)
- raising subtle questions or creating active interventions into status quo (*G.E.*)
- facilitating agency and development of voice (*Josh; Kimi, Josh*)
- helping develop critical consciousness and critical thinking skills (*G.E., Josh, Kristen*)
- celebration of communities, lifestyles, and cultures (*Kimi, Josh*)
- raising awareness and encouraging responsibility (*Kimi*)
- envisioning alternatives (*Kimi, Kristen*)

¹³ All of these points are also present in sociological research on social movements and the arts.

- overcoming fears and going beyond the familiar (*Josh, Kimi*)
- facilitating exploration and experimentation (*Kimi, Kristen, G.E.*)
- bringing a humanizing element to political organizing (*Jason, Kristen*)

Many of these support a notion of change which is complex, multi-layered, and evolving, rejecting common perceptions that change is linear and progress can be or has been clearly won as no more than comfortable assumptions.

- *Change and causality:* These artist/educator/activists, on the whole, have a complex understanding of the status quo and change. No one carries the illusion that the arts will save the world; rather, when they speak of change, it is more organic than direct, connected with perspective shifts, worldviews, and revealing assumptions and alternatives. Yet that sort of change is extremely difficult to measure, and its influence on structural and societal change also difficult to assess. Thus, some artist/educator/activists, especially Josh, indicate uncertainty about the existence of direct causal links between arts and community or societal change. As ideas about change and activism evolve and expand, the questions will continue to be raised: *What do activists accomplish? What is change and how is it measured? If it is difficult to measure a direct causal link between the arts and societal change, how else can the arts' connections to change be assessed or understood?*
- *Critical pedagogy and change.* Perhaps one element to consider in assessing artist/educator/activists' connection to change is their implementation of critical pedagogy and asset-based community development philosophies and principles. By adding the *educator* component to *artist/activist*, learning and sharing of ideas become a more salient aspect of creative work towards change, driven by pedagogy developed to bring about positive change.

Artist/educator/activist

These portraits provide a window into the motivations and development of five artist/educator/activists. Just as Flores and Day (2006) note that motivation and identity development have implications for teacher preparation, so too may this raise issues to consider in preparing art educators to work in communities. While it is beyond this writer's knowledge and experience to make specific suggestions in this area, there are some issues related to educator preparation which emerge from this study.

- *Internal motivation from lived experience:* One challenge institutions could face in preparing artist/educator/activists, should they choose to do so, is the high level of internal motivation these artist/educator/activists exhibit, which grows, at least in part, out of lived experience. Their paths have varied, but their work has roots in experience as an outsider and in their perception of injustice. Since several of the common motivators for entering a career, such as money and job security, are tenuous at best for artist/educator/activists, other motivation must either be present or developed to pursue this line of work. *Would it be within an institution's responsibilities and abilities to foster this sort of motivation? If so, how might that be achieved?*
- *Interdisciplinary studies and experiential learning:* Based on the educational paths participants in this study created for themselves, one possible approach to preparing artist/educator/activists might be interdisciplinary studies that include study of society, community, systems, behavior, relationships and/or networks. Their interdisciplinary and structural interests have encouraged a notion of the individual that is connected and imbedded in networks. This is in contrast to the radical, mythological individual

described in chapter 2, which is commonly reinforced in higher education art departments. An interdisciplinary track of study would potentially facilitate understanding and analysis of the complex power structures and systems that communities and individuals negotiate.

Another key aspect of these artist/educator/activists' development is that they evolve through their work, gaining new perspectives, responding and modifying. *Would it be possible for an institution to stimulate this reflective experiential learning process?*

- *Practical considerations:* All the drive and vision in the world won't get an artist/educator/activist far if he or she can't eat. As several of these participants have indicated, financial survival can be a challenge. Given the patchy infrastructure for permanent long-term employment with one employer, perhaps an element of survival preparation would be an asset to a community educator preparation program. This might focus on the non-profit sector, including service organizations and funding organizations, their relationships, norms, expectations, and challenges. Business and grantsmanship skills are important to long-term survival and success in the not-for-profit organizational arena, and developing these skills could make dedicating oneself to this work more viable.
- *Networks and research:* On the whole, artist/educator/activists are a collaborative, networked group. The longer they spend in a community, the more connections and relationships they develop. Yet the participants in this study also indicated gaps in the community of individuals doing this work, including evaluation and assessment, and standards by which to work. Further, all five artist/educator/activists indicated interest and were enthusiastic about this research. For example, Jason's comment regarding this

study, and his experience in general, indicates a possible need for more sharing of ideas, approaches, and best practices amongst artist/educator/activists:

I really think that it's important that this is being addressed. Because this has been a pretty thought provoking conversation. And I'm glad people are thinking about it...I think art has a place in the activist realm, and activism, in turn, has a place in an educational setting... I hope more people will think about this stuff...I think probably just because I'm involved in it, there seems to be a lot of power in it, you know, in having those three [artist, educator, activist] intersect. (Jason)

Perhaps an infrastructure organization or association which supports and disseminates research- based development of best-practices (similar to the support provided by arts councils and state arts agencies for individual artists), and/or a forum in which to share their work, experiences, successes and challenges would help artist/educator/activists advance in and develop their work.

Conclusion

These artist/educator/activists personify many vital facets of contemporary work in communities, the arts, education, and activism. The defining nature of their work includes, but also goes far beyond, the non-school setting of their educational projects, their artform, educational content, and ideological protests. All these elements weave together in a unique way in each artist/educator/activist, informed by both macro- and individual level concerns, experiences and observations, resulting in both “moral and personal calling to their work” (Jasper, 1997). Their ways of conceptualizing themselves, their work, and their roles in society reveal a version of the artist, educator, and activist that departs from the “recycled” versions of old (Gude, 2000) in significant ways. The results are agents of possibility in our communities and society.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ARTMAKING

1. How did you first get involved with art? When/how did you know that was going to be your profession, or a big part of it?
2. Why do you make art? Have you always made art for the same reasons? What themes are addressed in your art?
3. What do you hope happens when your audience views your work? What do you hope they take away? What sort of feedback have you gotten on your art? Has your art ever been censored or repressed in some way?
4. Please describe your artistic education. What was emphasized? What artists were often used as examples? Who were your most influential educators (art or other)? Why?
5. How does the art world influence your art? Who has been most influential on your artmaking?
6. How do you make a living? Where do you show/perform your art?
7. What is our society's definition of an artist? In what ways do you fit that description? How do you differ?
8. What place does or should an artist have in society? What do other artists think their place is in society?

SOCIAL/POLITICAL

1. What are important aspect of your identity? How do you identify?
2. Have you experienced discrimination in any way?
3. What are the main political and social issues today? What issues are most important to you?
4. How did you form your ideas regarding social/political issues? Have they changed significantly at any time? How do your political beliefs fit in with your family's? your friends'?
5. Who or what was most important in shaping your values? Ideas of how the world is and your place in it? Who had positive effects on you, and who had negative affects?

ACTIVISM and ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL

1. What does the word "activist" mean to you?
2. Are you involved in any political/social/other organizations? Have you ever been an activist? When? Doing what? What movement/cause? Why? Are you active in any social movements now? What jobs have you held in the past?
3. If so, do you connect that work to your artmaking in any way?
4. Have you ever been the victim of repression connected with political or social action?
5. What are the most important resources for social change?
6. What power can an artist have on social change? Does art have any place in a social movement?
7. How would you describe individualism today in the US? Benefits and drawbacks?
8. Can an individual affect social change?

EDUCATION

1. How would you describe yourself as an educator? What is most important to you? Why are you an educator?
2. How are the arts used in your work in education? How is your work as an educator political, or not?
3. What do you hope to achieve as an educator? How do the arts factor in to that?
4. Why do you work in non-school settings?

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