Adolescent artistic caricatures, and the sharing of art

by

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Abstract

The assumptions and stereotypes that form the basis of adolescent social groups include caricatures of artists and artistic peers. This exploratory qualitative study is a bricolage in educational psychology with elements of adolescent sociology and art education. As art is perpetually redefined by philosophers, artists, and art critics, teenagers are defining art themselves within the context of school and their social interactions. Six teenagers shared stories about the attributes and descriptions of artists, art making, and the sharing of art with others during interviews. These stories offer insight into the formation of social identities related to academic domains, and the role that art takes as a meaningful expression. The fear of sharing works of art with others is a salient aspect of their conversations, and is presented here as an outcome of an intelligibility of art that places high value on personal expression. For these students, the role of an artist was an extension of themselves, or rather, mirrored a desirable potential self.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Countless movies, television shows and books for and about teenagers address the role of cliques and social groups. Popular media designed and marketed to teenagers thrive on the daily drama of interpersonal politics. The jock, the popular preppy or rich kid, the outcast weirdo, the heady nerd, the streetwise tough. Among these many archetypes we also find the "art nerd," and tropes related to the nature of art and museums. Parodied numerous times, art aficionados are portrayed as those that pick apart the nuance and meaning of abstraction with exasperated phrases like:

> It restates the negativeness of the universe, the hideous, lonely emptiness of existence, nothingness, the predicament of man forced to live in a barren, godless eternity like a tiny flame flickering in an immense void of nothing but waste, horror, and degradation, forming a useless, bleak straight jacket in a black, absurd cosmos (Allen, 1972).

Pair that scene with depiction of Ferris Bueller, with Cameron and Sloane, holding hands with a tour group at the Art Institute of Chicago, and standing in quiet contemplation of the art (Hughes, 1986), one can begin to see the cultural zeitgeist of the experience in a museum. Opinion writers and commentators decry the museum as a boring, stuffy "[tomb] for inanimate things" (Durston, 2013), or laud them as an "educational panacea," increasing test scores and social responsibility (Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2013). What one does at a museum, and the mannerisms of those that are interested in the arts is a social schematic, a caricature of the person interested in art museum

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patronage. But what are the experiences that teenagers today have with these artistic social crowds? What does it mean to be artistic in the current cohort of adolescents? Who do teens associate with museums and museum attendance? How do these associations present a problem for free-choice learning environments, educational programs in cultural institutions, or for art educators in general?

There are intersections between various bodies of research that I draw from in this project. First, there are issues related to museums: the manner in which they are organized, how they have developed their collection, and where they are physically and socially situated in the community. There are definitions of the kind and type of art that is shown in various museums (and the aesthetic debates that go along with those definitions), the provenance and historical narratives of specific objects, and the manner in which those collections, objects, and narratives are interpreted. Critical theorists and Marxists have much to say about the imperialistic underpinnings of museums as institutions (Karp & Levine, 1991; Karp, Kreamer, and LeVine, 1992).

Secondly, the details and implications of social grouping in the interests, attitudes, and motivations of teenagers in relation to museums and cultural institutions serves as the key component to this research. Social crowds are well established as important factors in psychological health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacDonald, 2010). The arts can provide a pathway to inquisitive, creative growth facilitated by a network of peers (Latchem, 2006; Parker 2009), and can also be associated with sexuality and gender issues (Lewis & Seaman, 2004). The interplay between desirable social groups, familial socioeconomic status, personal attributes of the student, and academic achievement and motivation, is one of great complexity (Brown & Mounts, 2007; Kinney, 1990; Taylor & Graham, 2007; Wentzel & Asher,

1995). Pertinent to the present study are the social costs and benefits of interest in the arts and museum attendance for teenagers. These groups are particular to the United States, with distinct names and identifying traits of social groups as described by students (Brown & Dietz, 2009; Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1995; Kinney, 1990, 1993, 1999; Thurlow, 2001).

Thirdly, the history and placement of arts education in, and out of, school has an enormous role in the perception of the discipline. The cultural interpretations of objects are propagated by museum educators, frequently through museum gallery guides who may or may not follow the scholarship of curators and historians (Handler & Gable, 1997). Museum staff charged with leading educational efforts have varied backgrounds from public relations to classroom education, resulting in inconsistent pedagogical choices (Mulligan & Brayfield, 2004). The histories of museums themselves play a role on the educational philosophies and directions within each institution (Berry & Mayer, 1989), but so does the richness of educational theories that drives Art Education as a discipline in and out of the traditional classroom environment (Eisner & Day, 2004; Falk & Dierking, 2002, Gee, 2004).

The desired outcome of this work is a thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) of social crowds in relation to being artistically inclined and arts-based learning environments like museums. A clear, honest depiction of what the current generation of teenagers in the Southeast associate with artistic endeavors allows for further reevaluation of the goals of museum education. Do art museum and classroom educators work in a domain that is desirable for youth, or are we perpetuating outdated ideas that are addressed and contested in critiques of museums? The assessment by teenagers of art, art museums, and those involved in the arts should offer insights into the multifaceted challenge of art education in and out of schools.

Definitions

      As museum education is a rather small subset of education, there are a number of terms that should be clearly defined before moving forward. What follows are those terms, with descriptions of how I understand them, and how I apply them in this project. The most important terms, however, will be the ones described and defined by the teenaged participants as they share their social experiences (Cresswell, 2007).

      Free-choice learning environments – This concept has been most thoroughly discussed by John Falk and Lynn Dierking (Falk, 2005; Falk & Balling, 1982; Falk & Dierking, 2002; Dierking & Falk, 2003). If learning is conceptualized as the creation of new knowledge through novel experiences, nearly all human actions are part of an ever-changing understanding based on new perceptions. Each activity, each decision to attend and relate a new experience with the previously known constitutes "learning." Directly, Dierking and Falk describe it as "… learning that is guided by learners' needs and interests – the learning that people engage in throughout their lives to find out more about what is useful, compelling, or just plain interesting to them" (2003). In many ways this is the positive direction of human experience that Carl Rogers spoke about: each person is gaining new insights based on their own experience (1961). The choices people make to learn about new subjects may be as ordinary as a quick internet search on a phone, or reading a book about a particular subject, or watching a documentary. Most appropriately for the present study, the decision to visit a museum to gain insight on culture, one's self, a particular artist or art movement, or simply to visit with family or guests, is fraught with philosophical stances and superficial rationalizations (Falk, 2009). The amount of variability in choices are as plentiful as there are people, as each person has a distinct set of experience on top of which to build. Once in the free-choice learning environment, the variability

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is even further compounded. What one does and investigates in a zoo, museum, science center or other such location is not determined by an educator's lesson plan, but by the visitor themselves, freely.

Museums, collections, and cultural institutions – It would likely help to distinguish between terms specific to, and about, museums. I define a museum simply as an institution based on exhibition or interactive spaces, either permanent or traveling. For the purposes of this work, art museums are the most pertinent. Most typically these include a collection of some kind, but there is debate about the necessity of objects for all museums. Some institutions that are either smaller, or have solely traveling exhibitions, have opted for the descriptor of "gallery." In the present discussion I also use that term, but I must make the distinction that I do not mean sales galleries that exhibit and sell the work of artists. A *permanent* collection is one that is owned by the institution, displayed regularly in the galleries. Traveling exhibitions are organized apart from the collections of a hosting museum or gallery. There are, of course, notable exceptions and a fluidity of terms in the actual naming of various institutions. Some institutions that may be described as a "museum" have opted for "art center," for example, The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, or the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville. The Walker has an extensive permanent collection, but the Frist has only traveling exhibitions, yet both take on the moniker "art(s) center" because of their attention to various other programs and media (including film, dance, and theater). For that reason, I frequently rely on the umbrella term "cultural institution" and variations thereof. When the specific nature of the institution is pertinent, I will make note of those nuances. I also use "cultural institutions" as a descriptor of the *service* museums provide, as a part of the community in an educational role (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

Programs – I use this word to describe the organized events and activities officially offered by a cultural institution. These frequently include tour offerings of various topics, hands-on and product-oriented activities, lectures, film screenings, discussions, secondary student internships, and a growing number of possibilities that at times recreate classroom environments and methods, and at other times completely disregard classroom-based approaches (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011).

Assumptions and theoretical framework

"The more I see, the less I know for sure." – John Lennon (1984)

As this research unfolds, I have to acknowledge and identify what I bring to the project in terms of my philosophical groundings, assumptions about reality, approach to writing, and the methodological approaches that stem from my beliefs about the realities of human existence. This is never a short task, nor one that always follows clear demarcations or simple definitions. The entire basis of ontological and epistemological debates appears, to me at least, to come from the ambiguity and nuance between such abstract terms. I will do my best to frame this research by honestly describing myself, because as is the case in qualitative work, I am the instrument. My role in this project, and the biases that inform my choices are briefly resented here, and more fully discussed in chapter three.

Ontological claims. At the moment of writing, I could be broadly painted with the "social constructivist" brush, as I find myself viewing reality as an arrangement of understandings by participants mediated by the social context of the actions, whatever they might be (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, Gergen, 1994). I reject the idea that reality can be fully recreated in any form. Verisimilitude in research is just as futile as the same act in art; abstraction occurs at

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the moment of creation, regardless of the accuracy of the medium or technical skill (McEvilley, 2005; Ricoeur, 2007). That is, any translation in form, any reproduction, has inherently altered the "reality" of the experience. While this translation can overlook aspects of life, the process can also bring clarity and importance to the things that make life meaningful. I can provide a rich description of the shared social realities created by those who have experiences related to the topic at hand (Geertz, 1973). To do so, I will include the words of the participants of this study. I have synthesized their experiences, connected them, with research, ideas, and discussions from art, museum studies, art education, and educational psychology broadly. The use of narrative descriptions, interview transcripts, examples from pop culture, art, and literature in combination with academic theory provides a multimodal presentation of the results of the project. This approach, described as a "bricolage," brings a great deal of depth and context to the experiences of the teenagers (Kincheloe, 2001; Levi-Strauss, 1966; Rogers, 2012,). Carl Rogers said that "what is most personal is most general" (1961, p.26). The teenagers here have shared with us their personal lives.

Epistemological claims. Sharing personal stories and details about particular, personal understandings, we (participants, researchers, artists, writers) enter into a teaching relationship with an audience. My work here has been to document the reality of the teenagers as I understand it. As the words of the teenagers and my observations blend, I hope that it resonates with you as you construct thoughts and opinions about what it means to be artistic. Collectively, you and I, with the teenagers, are creating concepts and ideas. Mine is an epistemological stance that appreciates knowledge as socially and communally constructed.

By working with students as they describe themselves and their relation to the social networks in which they live, I am altering their understanding simply by asking them questions

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(Josselson, 2013). To this end the participants and I are creating new knowledge through our conversations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Relationally, the manner in which I engage and discuss with the participants of this research is based on conceiving the teenagers as collaborators. In joining their voices with the words of artists, sociologists, educators and psychologists, new combinations of thought are made. Thus, data collection occurs, but does not end with the recorded interview. This joint effort of melding academic research with the contextual and narrative details of their responses allows for a strength; I am traveler with the students, not a miner of their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 300-302). This constructivist lens I ascribe to myself embraces interpretations of art that focus on the personal meanings (Dewey, 1934), and complements how I teach and interact with docents and students in museum and classroom settings.

Like many educators today, Piagetian constructivism has been a strong influence on my development as a teacher (Brainerd, 2003). Viktor Lowenfeld has also been a major influence on my teaching style (Lowenfeld, 1960; Michael, 1982). The manner in which students grow and change in conceptions of reality and abstraction is critical to the instruction of drawing and painting skills (Kindler, 2004). For me personally, I have found other stage-based development theories interesting and applicable to teaching, particularly Erik Erikson's life-stage challenges (Erikson, 1968). I have also found that the more I work with kids I find more truth in an adage I was taught in my undergraduate coursework: Teach the child, not the project. This has been echoed in museum education. Guides restating curatorial lectures, have shifted towards structured open-ended questions of Visual Thinking Strategies (Yenawine, 1998), and further to a conversational and community-based pedagogy (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011). There is a tension within art education between the teaching of formal elements and craft, and the

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development of creativity and emotional aspects of art (Efland, 1989; Kim, 2006; White, 2004). This history of art education has formed enclaves of pedagogy in and out of museums.

Fluxus Champion Contest

Performers gather around a large tub or bucket on stage. All piss into the bucket. As each pisses, he sings his national anthem. When any contestant stops pissing, he stops singing. The last performer left singing is the champion.

Figure 1: Fluxus Champion Contest, Nam June Paik, 1962 (Friedman, Smith & Sawchyn, 2002).

Axiological claims. I have the great privilege of working in museums for the past 10 years. At the Toledo Museum of Art, where I got my start in a gift shop, and eventually found a career path working with docents and museum education, currently at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University. I am "inside the museum beltway," if you will. As a museum professional, I have great concerns over the manner in which students, particularly adolescents, relate to museums and cultural institutions. I am, admittedly, biased towards a positive view of museums and collections of art. I do, however, understand that museums have not always, nor do they consistently provide interpretations that are free from confusing and dismissive overtones. I have dealt with challenges from students and teachers about nudity in the arts, and the careful tight-rope walking concerning issues of race, status, and politics that must be done by teachers and museums. This placement of myself in the role of education curator, in charge of K-12 programming, puts me in the establishment, which I generally regard with great suspicion as the "panopticon" (Chomsky & Foucault, 2006; Foucault, 1972). The assertion of power from institutions that have authority, bestowed with clout based on academic backgrounds, enforced through physical and psychological means, hinders the voices of those without power. This removal of the voice is dehumanizing (Freire, 1970). Those that

have sought to share the stories of those that have been run over by the powerful have inspired

me, and I find the work of Jonathan Kozol particularly strengthening as I have grown as a

teacher (e.g., Kozol, 2007). With many of my education colleagues, Kozol's friend Fred Rogers

has certainly been a hero of mine as well. Both have directed my interested towards a deep

caring and concern for young people, with attention to the things that children find important,

scary, meaningful.

My other axiological claims are embedded throughout this work, but for the sake of

clarity and brevity, there are a few more that merit note. I find that the benefit of art, and looking

at art in museum settings, comes from the open, honest discussion with others about what is on

view. The value of art does not come from the prestigious name of the artist, nor the current

market value of the object. In the past I have wavered between valuing the technical craft, or the

content of works of art, but I find that both are valid,

important methods of creating. I adore the instructions

of a Fluxus performance as much as an engraving by

Goltzius. Within their context of creation, and

depending on my state of being, both resonate with me.

Rhetorical devices. Because of my desire for

genuineness, I feel that an honest dialogue begins with

clear language. While my tone and voice may border on

informality, there are many different linguistic and

literary tools that can be utilized in qualitative

Figure 2. Hendrick Goltzius, *Hercules Farnese*, c. 1592. Engraving. Staatliche Graphische Sammlung Munchen.

research. Metaphors and allegories, casual language,

pop culture references, narrative stories, and journalistic, editorialized descriptions are included

in the bag of tricks used by artists and writers (Cresswell, 2007; Sullivan, 2010). Based on the data, and subsequent analysis of the voices of the teenagers, the rhetoric of this work may change in order to best compliment the content. My goal as the investigator is to capture the meaning and tone of the participants in a manner that shares their attitudes with as much poignancy and subtly as their lived experiences. How that unfolds in a narrative bricolage is to be determined as their words and ideas are shared. Most of the approach is rooted in Van Maanen's "impressionist" tale form (2011). Highly personalized, the tone is one of introducing you to the participants in a very real way, without the harsh starkness of reality, or romanticizing about adolescence. Diversions and tangents along the way are chosen to illuminate the words of the participants, and I hope you find them helpful.

Methodological framework. Bricolage provides a unique framework that allows for fluidity and responsiveness to the research project as it proceeds. Simply put, my aim is to attentively listen to the words of the participants, and share them with you. How that comes about, and the manner in which it follows conventions of methodology and academic research is dependent on the words of the teenagers. The selection of a method is a choice made by all researchers, but there is also the path of combination. If I were interested in developing an abstract schema of the psychological processes and social outcomes, this project would within the definitions proposed by methodologists as grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Cresswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory, however, is only one "tool" accessible to me as the bricoleur. Other tools include the descriptive aspects of phenomenology, expounded upon through procedures coding (content analysis) of the data corpus (Krippendorff, 1989; Saldaña, 2013). My processing of the data is inherently subjective; a subjectivity that "is like a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1988). Through initial open coding, and then subsequent

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passes with more precise codes, an evolving framework emerges from the data corpus. My

justifications are, and will be, based on existent literature and my understanding of the content

the teenagers express. Their meaning can be explained in their (the participants) own terms, in

constructs that are actively defined by themselves. As they speak, a structure of understanding

will emerge from the transcribed interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Details of this process

will be outlined further later in this introductory chapter, and then fully explained in chapter 3.

These assumptions and claims are admittedly fluid. If the work I do has significance, I

will most certainly be changed and swayed in my opinions and understandings of how

adolescents and museums interact on the social stage.

Statement of the problem

I search here for an understanding of the conceptions of art and artists within the social

dynamics of adolescence, and how these conceptions are applied to arts education settings

(formal and informal). The problem is the lack of a rich description of the socially understood

location of art, artists, and art museums, for teenagers specifically. Embedded in this problem are

questions about stereotypes regarding artists, knowledge and assumptions about making and

appreciating art, philosophical stances regarding cultural institutions, and art as discipline. How

do students identify and characterize the artistic crowd?

Methodology

In order to add to the dialogue related to these questions, I have interviewed six teenagers

about their experience related to artistic social crowds. The conversations with these students

included descriptions of their own creative approaches, the social structure of their lives, and

how making things and interacting with peers relate. Unstructured interviews allowed for a wide range of topics to be discussed in the terms students felt comfortable with. I relied heavily on humanistic and relational approaches to the interview (see Douglas, 1985; Josselson, 2013), and flexible strategic guides for the conversations (Charmaz, 2014). The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and then coded without any special software. Codes were created organically at first, in an open coding pass, and then axially based on themes that were apparent as I read through the transcripts. The process of immersing myself in the text, and then carefully arranging and rearranging the themes provided a path for a crystallized vision of the meaning these students give their lives (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). The analysis is presented here in chapters four and five, the former focused on social groups, the latter on the act of art making.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this project is to document and share how teenagers relate to art in terms of adolescent social context. This work would add to the discussion professionally and academically regarding the social placement of art broadly, and art education specifically by engaging with critical and pedagogical debates regarding the interpretive efforts of museums. The efforts surrounding issues of race and imperialism, cultural hegemony, and repatriation of works of art, may or may not have an audience with teenagers, unless those teens have a working definition of museums that includes such cultural relevance. In other words, if adolescents decline to place art, and by extension, museums in a position of cultural power, art education discussions may not need to include these topics. Conversely, if adolescents are attuned to the importance of caution when defining cultural artifacts, then the conversations regarding the power struggles of ownership are apt. Or the lack of understanding of political power found in

fine art, or the cultural taxonomy of museums could suggest an increased attention to socially minded programs. This investigation would directly make claims about the nature of the social position museums hold for those in late high school (10th-12th grade). Any advancement in the understanding of the adolescent perspective on museums and associated artistic crowds would underpin future investigations of museum visitation and the placement of museums in cultural and educational contexts. I have included some of my suggestions in the final chapter, but the driving motivation for this project is to add to the knowledge base of what it means to be an artistic teenager today.

Significance

Given the number of museums, and the perpetual attempt to improve and enrich education and educational outcomes, much has been said about the way in which the arts can increase and improve classroom education (e.g., Kisida, Greene, & Brown, 2013). This issue has been discussed at great length, with a strong case to be made that transference is difficult (if not impossible) to prove. Even if it were to be proven, would undermine the importance of the arts as a crucially important aspect of human existence (Diket & Brewer, 2011; Eisner, 1998; Gee, 2004; Stake & Munson, 2008; Winner & Hetland, 2008; Winner & Hetland, 2003; Hetland & Winner, 2004). In many ways, museum education has perpetuated ideas and approaches common to the art classroom within a school, which has been muddled and conflicted in direction and purpose (Van Moer, De Mette, & Elias, 2008, White, 2004). This project has a role in determining the relationship between teenage visitors and the conception of art as a domain, as well as the museums and cultural institutions that mediate between professional artists and teenagers. The descriptions students have of social cliques within the school compared to those social interactions outside of the classroom might imply that museums should actively avoid

recreating classroom-like experiences. Descriptions of artistic crowds, characterized by students, should be important for museum and classroom educators to understand as they address the concepts of making works of art.

Museum educators, at least in my experience, are in need of more information about the students they aim to serve (Falk, 2009). I know that the docents I work with ask frequently about the ways students interact with one another and how the docent interacts with them. A better understanding of the social landscape regarding museums would certainly be significant for museum educators, and the entire field. I find myself intrigued by the potential of this study because of the words (again) of Carl Rogers: "the facts are friendly" (1961, p. 25, I should note that I interpret that as the *perceived* facts are friendly, after all, "perception is reality"). Honesty about the positioning and posturing of museums within social and community settings can only be beneficial for both the public and the museum profession. As we further explore and describe the situation as it is, we may find new, innovative ways to address misunderstandings, and find a better ways to create museum programming, and to become better involved in museums as visitors.

I have no shame in a pro-museum bias, I do want this project to be helpful in encouraging students of all ages to consider museums in new ways. Teenagers can be strong advocates for museums and speak to their growth as individuals. Based on our reading and discussion of the conversations here, this work can support art education programs that value and address social issues as adolescents transition into adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Strom & Strom, 2014).

Limitations

There are, of course, distinct limits on this project, which must be taken into account when reading and applying the findings I arrive at. First, this project examines a distinctly local phenomenon. I cannot make any claims that the regional slang, cliques, and social crowds are typical of all American teenagers, or even adolescents in the Southeast. This project aims to define and describe the context and placement of the arts currently, in a single location, with a depth that allows for new constructs to be formulated.

I can only add so much to the words and experiences of the interlocutors. There are likely bodies of research and thoughtful researchers that I have not had the pleasure of reading yet, there are ideas and concepts that I may not be aware of, and for that I am truly sorry. I know that I bring a certain amount of expertise, but I must admit that there is more to be known. Lines of questioning in the interviews might not be followed in the same manner as another researcher, analysis might fail to address questions from other perspectives. What I have done to address this seemingly problematic limitation is to include as much of myself in these pages, openly and honestly in an effort to provide you, the reader, with as much information as possible to understand the journey that has resulted in this work.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

At the Maryland Historical Society in 1992, a display case labelled "American Metalwork, 1793-1880" included a number of silver vessels, tea pots and cups, and a rusty set of shackles used to enslave Africans (Foster, et al., 2004). In another room, a line of busts of respected leaders including Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson faced a parallel line of empty pedestals. The vacant locations labelled with the names of Maryland natives, whose representations were absent from the museum collection. Marylanders like Fredrick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman. Another installation included colonial woodwork, with delicate spindle chairs with exquisite designs, facing away from the coarse wood of a whipping post. The juxtaposition of previously selected museum pieces, and shameful (or absent) objects were combined by Fred Wilson, an art historian, cultural critic, artist and educator. The exhibition, *Mining the Museum*, was a provocative challenge to the established role and importance of museums. It also provides a strong statement about the manner in which education related to the arts takes place. Central to this discussion is *authority*. The museum has traditionally been given the authority to prioritize cultures: selecting and curating objects from a culture, taking them out of their original context, and placing them in a location designed veneration. The trust placed in museums to make those decisions, and the expected results of those decisions by the public, are major issues in museum education.

Mining the Museum provides an example of the many facets of art and the art museum experience. Obviously, there is the story of museums as cultural mediators, serving as taxonomic experts of what defines people. There is the social context, how crowd membership or exclusion colors the conversation about art and artists. The pedagogical use of contrast and challenge in a free-choice learning environment speaks to a rich ongoing development of social constructivism in education. If what Wilson has done is considered art highlights the fluid definition of art making, and the process by which artists work. It is this summary of *Mining the Museum* that makes up the content of the following pages. The review of literature covers museum studies, social crowds of adolescence, arts education, and an overview of the art and artists that relate to the words of the teenagers found in chapter 3.

Adolescent Sociology

There are so many kids in this country who look at places like museums and concert halls and other cultural centers, and they think to themselves, 'Well, that's not a place for me, for someone who looks like me, for someone that comes from my neighborhood.'

Michelle Obama, April 30, 2015,

at the opening of the new building of

the Whitney Museum of American Art

Studying learning behaviors of children has been the essential focus of educational psychology for generations. The role and importance of social groups has been especially investigated over the past century. There are foundational works included below that frame the discussion about social groups and the importance of those groups for youth. In addition, there

are statements about the condition of youth that will help you, the reader, understand my understanding of adolescence. The Rogerian perspective that I am inclined towards, includes an acknowledgement that even the most anti-social behaviors, actions made out of fear and defensiveness, are made with a desire to find self-fulfillment (Rogers, 1961). The actions of adolescents that seem maladaptive are likely made in an attempt to be adaptive in a misunderstood direction. Their misdeeds are positive, often to gain favor with peers, or create a sense of autonomy and identity. I hope that in the following pages the theories and ideas about adolescence are framed in a similar tone. There are few prescriptions for change or judgement call, but there is a search for understanding.

The quest to understand adolescent social dynamics has continued with some regularity, with seminal works arising in each decade, from nearly every corner of thought. For brevity, we'll start in post-war America. In the 1940s the youth of "Elmtown" was documented by August Hollingshead, whose subsequent book became a classic of sociological study of stratified social class (Hollingshead, 1949). The in-depth study and analysis of a location that made Elmtown possible was based on ethnographic research, with Margaret Mead at the forefront of any discussion regarding the method. Mead's work continues to be cited in anthropology and sociology. In her later work in the popular press, Mead even discussed summer camp as a non-school educational environment very similar to the free-choice education found in museum settings (Mead & Metraux, 1980). Ethnographic research is not the only manner in which to observe and discuss adolescent social groups.

Others have approached the topic of adolescence from a stage-based theoretical perspective. Grounded in Freud, Erik Erikson defined the challenge of adolescence as one of identity formation (1968). The hallmarks of this behavior include a "persistent endeavor to

define, overdefine, and redefine themselves in often ruthless comparison" (1968). Finding and identifying the self in adolescence leads a person towards autonomy, according to Eriksonian thought. The manner in which students misbehave is described as mediated by the social structure of friendship: "…[the adolescent] would rather act shamelessly in the eyes of his elders, out of free choice, than be forced into activities which would be shameful in his own eyes or in those of his peers" (1968, p. 129). In the same book, he continues on to describe the "clannish" nature of teenagers, and the pettiness of their judgment (p. 132). The role of in-group and out-group affiliations were known by Erikson in the mid-century, and led him to describe adolescence as a time when individuals are challenged with finding their identity, or suffering from role confusion. Even romantic relationships are mired in the ongoing quest of identity; conversations in young love are heavy with statements about *who* the partners each are, individually, and in relation to one another (Crain, 2011).

Other stage-oriented theorists also place importance on adolescence, including Robert Selman's role-taking theory (Selman, 1980). His work investigates empathic relationships with peers, that is, the manner in which an individual understands the perspective of others. At first, egocentric children are unable to understand the perspectives of others. Later in young childhood, children begin to understand context (Selman, 2003), but are a bit like the audience witnessing dramatic irony: they know something that other characters in the situation do not, but do not act differently based on that knowledge. By adolescence, children are melding the understanding of context and perspectives of other individuals, and the societal norms of a broader culture. To this end, Selman offers a theoretical basis for the stages leading to social crowd development, but stops short of directly addressing the manner in which crowds form, develop, and interact with an individual, between individuals, and between crowds.

The currently understood dynamics of social crowds starts with placing emphasis on all humans as social beings, with social connectedness being a primary desire (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, Gere & MacDonald, 2010). From there, research has investigated group formation, and how they differ from friendship dyads (Brown & Dietz, 2009; Hartup, 2009; Kandel, 1978). Other foci have included how and why children change group affiliation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Berger & Rodkin, 2012, Kinney, 1999). Highlighted here is work that has delved into the personal needs for social inclusion, friendship dyads and crowd membership based on homophily, the caricaturization of crowds (stereotyping), and how crowds and organized activities interact. Other pockets of research related to crowds, are also mentioned, ending with the small amount of research of arts-related crowds.

The psychological need for belongingness has long been noted as important, by Maslow mid-way up his famous hierarchy (Maslow, 1943), and by numerous others. Baumeister and Leary delved into this body of research in a seminal work (1995). They state that a fundamental motivation should:

> …produce effects readily under all but adverse conditions, have affective consequences, direct cognitive processing, lead to ill effects…when thwarted, elicit goal-oriented behavior designed to satisfy it…be universal… not be derivative of other motives, affect a broad variety of behaviors, and have implications that go beyond immediate psychological functioning. (p. 498)

After a metatheoretical analysis that explored aspects of social belonging (bond formation, bond conservation, cognitive activity, emotional growth, results of social deprecation) they conclude that social belongingness fulfills all of the theoretical requirements, and should be treated as a

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fundamental desire (Gere & MacDonald, 2010). Most applicable to the present study are their findings regarding the cognitive effort exerted to identify and maintain social relationships, and the benefits of social belongingness that may include access to "specialists." Specifically, the need for the creation of social crowds includes access to others that have different skill sets. For the present study, this may appear in the addition of an artist teenager in various groups, rather than a singular all-art group.

Homophily is the tendency to group with like-minded individuals (Kandel, 1978). Based on research about friendships, it is common that pairs find each other based on similarities. This formation phase creates dyads, pairs of adolescents that share behaviors and values. The similarities between the two increases during a maintenance phase, while previous friendships have lower homophilic attributes. Eventually the dyads are dissolved, and new dyads are created based on similarities. While clean and elegant, Kandel's representation of friendship lacks the complicated drama of teenage interactions. Bradford Brown has addressed these more convoluted and personal factors in a number of studies and theoretical arguments (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Brown, Mory & Kinney, 1995; Brown & Mounts, 2007; Brown & Bakken 2011; Brown, 2013).

Brown's work distinguishing the size of groups has validated a bit of Kandel's work, and also opened up new areas of research. While a dyad exists between two individuals, a friendship group exists among multiple individuals, and not always reciprocally (Kinderman & Gest, 2003). Social *crowds* are more removed from the individual than friendship groups (cliques), and are based on commonalities of interests and personal characteristics (Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1995). Brown et al. also stated that crowds are subjective, with a common issue within adolescent sociology coming from discrepancies between statements about crowds and observed

behaviors ("Group A kids *never* talks to group B," followed by observations of conversations between members of both groups). However, the actions of individual members do not make up the crowd stereotype, and even the direct question about group membership can lead to "waffling" on the subject. Brown, Mory, and Kinney suggested that this may be from the fluidity of crowd membership; adolescents at different times may feel affinity towards multiple groups or want to deny external descriptors altogether. Regardless of the individual issues stemming from subjectivity, the creation of a group stereotype, interpreted by the authors through a "social interactionist" lens, remains an important aspect of the crowd.

A number of major considerations for investigating crowds have also been defined. Categorizations of individuals place students in groups that are somewhat defined by what groups they are *not* a part of, making them inherently relational to one another (Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1995). Crowds are schematics for peer interactions, and facilitate the interactions themselves. Talking to members of distant groups is more difficult than interacting with those within one's own group. Three features of crowds are defined by Brown, Mory, and Kinney as proximity, permeability, and desirability. Proximal crowds are close in the hierarchy to one another (and vary based on the larger context of locality). Permeable crowds are easy to become a member of, while others require uncontrollable attributes like family wealth or ethnicity (see Taylor & Graham, 2007). Desirability of crowd membership also varies based on the regional context, and relies on the relative visibility of the crowd itself, and the personal values of the individual. The challenge is made that "[I]nvestigators need to consider the broader array of crowds that exist in most schools." The nature of the art crowd has not been addressed specifically in the literature. The framework offered by Brown, Mory, and Kinney provides a strong structure to further investigate these aspects of social crowds in relation to the visual arts.

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While that addresses the underlying structure of crowds, what about the attention and interest in organized activities? Brown's more current work has addressed it clearly:

> Stereotypes seem to abound in Hollywood's understanding of teenagers: the dumb jock, sexy cheerleader, geeky math team member, or avant-garde participant of the drama club. Neither the accuracy of these images nor their impact on adolescents' decisions to join an activity is well studied… the caricature feature of organized activities may affect adolescents before they ever actual join an activity, as well as because of their participation. (2013, p.81)

For Brown, among the salient aspects of the crowd in relation to organized group activity are the *channeling* of participants, the *caricaturized* depiction of participants and their associated crowds, and the *context* of the activity itself. Organized activities, found in and out of school contexts, channel participants by increasing the proximity of likeminded individuals. Friendships are likely to occur in such situations, and social crowds may emerge from those friendships. This is particularly important at key moments of fragility in the social milieu, including the transition to larger schools (typically from elementary to junior high, and from junior high to senior high). The evaluation of reputation is a mixture of the social context, the students that have been channeled towards that activity, and the sponsorship of the activity (school, church, or, in the case of the present research, museums).

Poulin and Denault's work is in the same vein (2013). Looking at participants in organized social groups, they found that 70% co-participated in official groups. The basic findings were that those in individual event sports were associated with higher academic achievement, and those on team sports found more support from peers, but with an increase in

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problem behaviors (e.g., drinking). Overall, those that participated in organized activities had higher correlations with academics, and lower correlations with deviance than those that did not participate in at all. One of the activities that was included in the analysis was "art related activities" that were most often dance or music. The authors note this conflation of multiple forms of artistic expression by the authors, "…[P]erhaps a distinction should be made in future studies (using a larger sample) between activities that are purely individual such as painting, photography, poetry or playing a musical instrument, as opposed to activities that are more collective, such as drama, band, or choir" The caricature of artistic students in relation to museum-sponsored educational activities, therefore, will be especially important to define. How a teenager perceives the act of art making, and how it relates to peers, is a crucial question in this investigation. There is scant research on these conceptions in the education field, although it is a frequent topic in the arts (later in this chapter we will see how those in the art world often see the inherently social aspect of the visual arts). Orr addresses the manner in which assessment in higher education arts courses is related to identities (e.g., artist-educator, ex-art student, artist practitioner) (2011), but I was unable to find anything about the conception of artists by teenagers.

Frequently, adolescent crowd studies are projects focused on one behavior or academic domain (Chung-Hall & Chen, 2010). Those behaviors are frequently related to antisocial or aggressive behavior patterns (Berger & Rodkin, 2011; Chang, 2004;Chung-Hall & Chen, 2010; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007; Shi & Xie, 2011). Some of these studies offer interesting insights that may have relevance to crowd structure in general. For instance, some offer suggestions about the relative power of influence of new groups (Berger & Rodkin, 2011). Or the role that visibility of crowd affiliation plays in behavior (Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007). In that case, hierarchical linear

modeling was used to demonstrate that more visible groups are likely to be more intense in their identifying actions (including both prosocial and problem or deviant behaviors). In short, the more visible crowds contained individuals that were more extreme in their behavior: the well-known "nerd" group would increase their nerdiness to match their reputation. This could become instrumental in examining the visibility of the artistic crowd, and the intensity or subtlety of artistic behaviors. If the arts-related crowds have low visibility, their actions may not be taken with the same enthusiasm as a centrally located crowd.

Another pocket of work has been on parental influences on social crowd selection and behavior (Brown, & Bakken, 2011; Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000). As one might expect, parental expectations are significant influences on adolescents, despite the reluctance from youth to admit it. Embedded in the parental-peer relationship are larger cultural norms and values, which are closely tied to racial-ethnic identities. The racial component of crowd selection has been studied from several perspectives (Fuller-Rowell & Doan, 2010; Hill & Cleven, 2005; Kumar & Karabenick, 2011; Walton & Cohen, 2007). From the body of work on ethnicities, one can find evidence that minority youth have higher social costs than majority adolescents (Fuller-Rowell & Doan, 2010). In terms of art museums, there may interesting applications of how minority students see participation in extracurricular art activities, as well as the racial stereotypes of artistically inclined youth. There are also choices made by various ethnicities that serve to channel students (Hill & Cleven, 2005), and beneficial methods of increasing a sense of belonging in academic departments (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

The academic response to peer group and crowd interactions has some research in domains like Physical Education and sports (Eder & Kinney, 1995; Hill & Cleven, 2005), as well as mathematics (Eccles, 1983; Walton & Cohen, 2009). Other broader analyses have brought

attention to the damage to cognitive actions when belongingness is threatened, particularly with more complex cognitive stimuli (Gere & MacDonald, 2010, for more about the complexity of art creation, see Safar & Press, 2011). Further, group associations have, either by influence, or the channeling function of crowds, an effect on self-regulated learning: "Given the important role of peer interactions in academic performance… this research is particularly germane to the field of educational psychology" (Jones, Alexander, & Estell, 2010).

In summary, the framework of sociological research of adolescents defines social-crowd specific terminology, and salient aspects that should be utilized when examining art crowds. Key factors that should be addressed in the line of questioning, and the analysis of data, includes the caricaturization of artistic students and museum-sponsored activity participants, the proximity of artistic groups to other crowds, and crowd permeability and desirability.

Artistic Crowds

Aside from Poulin and Denault's work that included arts groups (dancers and musicians) (2013), very little has been done in terms of arts related groups. Music groups have been studied some (Parker, 2010), but not visual arts groups, which may prove to be distinctly different. Parker's work was a participatory method focused on interviews with her own choral ensemble students (2010). The small group interviews found that the uncompetitive internal dynamics of the ensemble fostered social bonding, a shared experience, and a space of social safety. Choral performance trips increased the bonding, and were frequently mentioned by the students as being meaningful. Adults affiliated with the chorus also mentioned the "extra-musical" outcomes of confidence and critical thinking skills that often accompany defenses of the arts in school curriculum. The case could be made that social outcomes based on collaboration and group

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travel could be applied to visual arts education for the benefit of increasing the importance and visibility of artistic social crowds. Parker does not address the broader school context of the social crowd, or the relational aspects of the choral ensemble to other school-sanctioned extra-curricular groups.

Some arts-related research has been addressed with an interest in gender issues (feminist and queer theories), but little has directly discussed the topic in relation to adolescent social groups and the visual arts. Girls have been noted as being more prone to defining cliques than boys (Henrick, Kuperminc, Sack, Blatt, & Leadbeater, 2000). In regards to creativity, at least one study has posited that intensity in gender identification (very masculine or very feminine) correlates with higher creativity scores (Jönsson & Carlsson, 2000). However, that study was based on the Bem Sex Role Inventory, which relies on self-reported scores, and culturally created gender norms (Holt & Ellis, 1998). Creativity is an equally murky concept to standardize and measure (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; Sternberg, 2000). For Jonsson and Carlsson, "flexibility of ideation" is described as the premise for the Creative Functioning Test used in their work.

Other metrics regarding gender and sexuality identification have also been difficult to measure. Homosexuality has been difficult to define and measure: social stigma results in denial from respondents, self-identification can be wrought with personal, non-standard, definitions, or categories based on solely sexual acts (Lewis & Seaman, 2004). Despite these challenges to clear parameters, those that have had at least one homosexual partner during their adulthood are 16-19% more likely to attend cultural arts events than heterosexuals. Additionally, museum attendance, and being an arts professional were both shown to be statistically significant (museum attendance, LGB: 59.6%, Straight: 43.3%; Professional artist, LGB: 5.9%, Straight,

1.1%). While this is the case, there was no significant difference between straight and lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals regarding creating art as a hobby. If stereotypes of the homosexual artist appear in adolescent caricatures of artistic crowds, there may be some modicum of justification. However, the actual source of the stereotype may be perpetuated by cultural media, rather than interaction with actual LGB artists or peers. Regardless, the social ramifications that comes with sexual identity can converge with the caricature of the artist.

Likewise, stereotypes are often based on cursory information and media perpetuations of associated behaviors. An interesting example of this appearing in adolescent culture is found in a short independent documentary film. Available online, Michael Lucid's 17-minute film documents a group of girls in his high school (2013). *Dirty Girls* is about a clique of girls dubbed "dirty" by other classmates. Their appearance, lack of make-up, and raw, punk attitudes were in stark contrast to the popular students they denounce as being obsessed with material goods, money, and sex. The suggestion that they "haven't bathed since Kurt Cobain died" indicates the influence of media in the categorization of individuals. Their grunge styling was recognizable as an archetype for other students, who immediately cast them into the role of a "dirty girl." The girls themselves, however, disregard the typecasting, and instead offer that they do what they want as a part of being Riot Grrrls. The Riot Grrrl ethos is a punk feminism, which coincided with musical artists like Courtney Love's band Hole (Strong, 2011). The creative aspect of the Dirty Girls was a zine, a photo-copied pamphlet outlining the feminist response of the girls to the social conditions of their school (see Schilt, 2003 for more about feminist zine production). Other students responded to the zine with skepticism, scoffing that it was "dime-store feminism," or dismissing anyone would want to be anything other than a popular girl with the associated fashion style and behavior.

These dirty girls exhibit some of the features described in the literature regarding social crowds. They are soundly caricaturized by others, and undesirable for most within the social hierarchy. While nothing is noted about their proximity to other groups, their distance from popular students is distinctly noted. Stemming from their high visibility and centrality to the social landscape, is a more aggressive form of behavior, intentionally causing controversy, and engaging in politically charged creative acts. This act of making a zine is particularly interesting and relevant to the current study of social crowds and the arts. Do students see artistic expression as needing the level of intensity that comes with making feminist statements through an avant-garde medium? Is the creative political act even seen as artistic? How does this intersect with the roles students take in regard to school-sanctioned activities, sports, or academic achievement? Some insight might be found in a longitudinal ethnography of teenage social groups with attention to the political and social stances students take.

Hippies, Headbangers, and Punks

Such an in-depth project can be found in the dissertation of David Kinney, and his subsequent follow-up analysis (1990, 1999). One of the problems that has been identified with adolescent crowd research is the need for a longitudinal examination of crowd structures. In the original work, Kinney spent two years interacting with teenagers, discussing the various crowds, their hangouts, and their distinct features. His observational work included areas of town that students of different crowds congregated at, and the events they attended. Interviews were unstructured and informal; he even acknowledges that his youthful appearance as a young graduate student allowed him to be seen more as a peer than an adult. From this work, Kinney was able to define a number of discrete groups. The "dweebs" and "normal" were categorized similarly, they did not have enough presence to be independent crowds. They were not socially

savvy enough to be high on the popularity hierarchy, but not deviant, social (or antisocial) enough to have a high visibility either. "Trendies" were a combination of preps and jocks typical of the popular crowd. They were well-dressed, attuned to the "right" music, somewhat academically oriented, and interested in only certain team sports. Adversarial groups to the trendies were the punks, the headbangers, and the hippies. "Punks" were defined, somewhat obviously, by their choice of music. But, they were also noted to be politically and socially aware, despite a cynicism and opposition towards traditional academic achievement. "Headbangers" were also identified by musical taste, but their interest was in deviant, disruptive behavior without a connection to any socio-political stance. They hated authority, and were not afraid to voice that opinion without any underlying statement of belief. Youth interested in the social and political struggles of the past and present, and listened to folk music, were the "Hippies". Re-embodying the spirit of the 1960s, these students were focused on developing nurturing friendships based on mutual respect, and interested in academics in order to make a change for the better good of society. They were opposed to the materialism and cattiness of the trendies, but respectful to them all the same.

Kinney returned to the subject in follow-up analysis and articles, refining the hierarchical and specific aspects each group. An overarching structure appeared that included popular groups of preppies, trendies, and jocks, deviant groups including burnouts, druggies, gangbangers, and headbangers, and ostracized groups of nerds, geeks, brainiacs, dweebs, and losers. The symbolic interactionism that Kinney ascribes to is described as seeing the role of others in relation to the self as important in the formation of personal identity. The labeling of a person by their peer group, and self-applied labels, happen in conjunction with an ongoing attempt in adolescence to

describe and define one's future self. In addition to these group monikers, Kinney included more contextual information for the students and their group affiliation.

In-crowd kids, the popular preppies, trendies, and jocks, had the highest level of participation in extra-curricular activities. The large group of "normal" kids that were not actively deviant or ostracized were engaged in similar activities, and like the popular crowd came from middle to upper-middle class homes. Alternatives and punks were defined by a complete lack of involvement with extracurricular activities, however, they were attentive of social and political issues. A few new groups were noted in the second analysis, including rednecks or "grits" that were defined by their vehicles (pick-up trucks), and had a notable overlap of membership with the jocks.

The change that was most interesting was the change in group identity for the teens that had been associated with the headbangers crowd that had since become a part of the hippie crowd. During the two-year study, a new group had formed, created by disenfranchised members of the headbanger crowd. As students changed in high school, those that wanted to become more supportive of one another, and involved in meaningful issues, left the headbanger crowd and began to self-identify as hippies. Throughout the course of the change many of the friendships were maintained, placing doubt on previous research about the dissolution phase of childhood friendships. The manner in which later adolescents soften the edges of friendship, clique, and crowd boundaries was demonstrated by the way students involved in the study spoke about the way in which they had changed. Their increased comfort with their own self-identity was met with a decreased attention to defining others.

In summary, the role of social crowds in adolescents has a number of distinct elements. The nature of crowd formation, the actions that define stereotypical behaviors of crowd members, and the relation between various crowds all create a reputational bias. Some adolescents may find the aspects of these group alluring, or find them incompatible with their own personal identity as they search to define themselves.

Arts Education

American education has recently shown a trend towards focusing on discrete domains (Buehl & Alexander, 2009). Running parallel with the growth of domain-centric education, arts education has emerged in a precarious position with conflicting outcomes and needs (Efland, 1990; Gee, 2004). There are many different ways to view arts education that range from a therapeutic catharsis, to craftsmanship, critical thinking, to reduction of the principles and elements of design. Cognitive transfer (the arts leading to improved abilities in other domains) has also emerged as a particularly important debate within the field (Eisner, 1998; Hetland & Winner, 2004). Defining the arts has created advocacy groups and special interests that influence pedagogical practice in arts classrooms, and by extension museum settings (Gee, 2004; Mulligan & Brayfield, 2004). This cacophonous process defining and describing the role of art in 21st education also includes the professionals within the field, the cultural producers (Bourdieu, 1993). At times, the professionals in the field are unable to effectively share and discuss issues in the field with educators, limiting the breadth of knowledge discussed with students (Buehl & Alexander, 2009; Handler & Gable, 1997; Mulligan & Brayfield, 2004; Sayers, 2011). This mismatch between "the field" and students has been documented in some domains, but has not been thoroughly examined in the arts. This project aims to address some of the conflicts between the arts and how adolescents understand them. The complexity of the pluralistic post-modern art

world results in convoluted discussions, which poses a number of problems for art educators. What follows are very broad brushstrokes of themes in art education.

Although there have been few complete histories of art education, there are three vital works that elucidate the background and current state of arts education in the United States. Efland (1990) wrote about the entire history of art education, starting in antiquity, and providing a very strong theoretical and philosophical genealogy. This flow of ideas, because of the expansive timeline, limits its utility for this project, but I note that it does offer some long-held beliefs that appear in the tone and attitude of the participants. White (2004) has focused specifically on the history of American art education in the modern era. Gee's work (2004) adds to the sociopolitical context of art education. All three, along with exemplars from art education textbooks and guides for parents are used here to describe manner in which art education has been used to address needs of personal emotional release and communication, skilled manual labor, and critical thinking skills (which often places arts education as kind of savior).

Efland's 1990 book about the history of art education was followed with subsequent encouragement to move past this linear pattern, and towards a "spiral lattice" (1995). Curriculum in this model is reiterative, examining ideas in a complex pluralistic community (May, 2011). Efland further explored the role of art education as critical analysis of a singular object, as well as the emotional and political content of the work of art (2002; Dorn, 2005). These ideas stem from what has been termed the "Creative Expression Movement" (Kim, 2006). Based on the ideas of Viktor Lowenfeld's seminal art education text *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947), the focus of the Creative Expression Movement is on personal meaning. Much of Lowenfeld's work is reduced to his developmental stages of drawing (Michael, 1982), but his influential writings, lectures, and leadership in the National Art Education Association remain relevant to

contemporary art teachers. The avoidance of adult intrusion in the creative process was a hallmark of his approach; the distance between art teacher and the student drawing was by design, as interfering with the child was problematic (Lowenfeld, 1960). Stages of drawing development were something natural, as important phases for students to work through and explore. Works of art are considered successful when the participant engages with them, and participates in further inquiry after the class (Van Moer, 2008). The successful student is transformed, changed towards an emotional openness to new ideas and concepts. As it has been put, "the problem of the artist is to express one's self aesthetically at the highest human level" (Michael 1983). With the arts defined as a personally inventive act, much of the research on motivation in the arts is centered around self-efficacy (Beghetto, 2006; Moorefield-Lang, 2010; Pavlou, 2006). Emotional release and personal expression was a recurring theme in the conversations with participants of this study.

Novel ideation is an essential element of arts education. Creative thinking skills are desirable in many domains, but the relationship to the arts has placed Arts education as a sort of pack mule for the rest of education. "We want [children] to develop into people who appreciate the breadth of human accomplishments" (Greene, Bowen, & Kisida, 2014). The way in which students of the Arts think creatively is used to justify the domain has developed into an uneasy relationship between advocates for Arts education, and educational reformers (Gee, 2004; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Winner & Hetland, 2008). A question at the heart of this debate (and this research) is about the definition of art. Justifying the arts by cognitive transfer to other domains places the arts as a lower support for approved classes. Defining the Arts (the visual arts in the context of this project) is crucial in order to discuss the merits of being artistic.

Arthur Wesley Dow defined visual arts in terms of structure and form (Dow, 1899; White, 2004). This developed into the formalized principles and elements of art that have been a staple of arts education for the past hundred years (Efland, 2004). The resulting works of art are carefully composed, and follow general rules of color theory and balance. While there is some subjectivity in the evaluation of these works, there are very clear aspects that are examined. They are the elements of art: form, line, color, space, and texture for the elements of art, and the principles of design: unity, balance, scale, dominance, and contrast (Ocvirk et al., 1997). By creating set criteria for art making, students (and artists) are able to make objects that can be effectively judged and compared. This formality and orthodoxy present in the pedagogy of some art teachers, has been supported by calls for assessment and evaluation in all domains of education (Connelly & Wolf, 2007; Diket & Brewer, 2011; Mason & Steers, 2006). Some have taken these conservative perspectives and decried that the entire art world is problematically unstandardized (Kamhi, 2003), but they have been soundly refuted (Stewart, 2012). Even testing and measurement experts avoid evaluation of paintings, primarily because art is inherently subjective (Thorndike & Thorndike-Christ, 2010, p.320).

The tensions between creative expression, specific technical virtuosity or compositional skill, and the concept of a well-rounded student because of the arts results in islands of theoretical positioning. This is the case in art education, and in many ways the art world as a whole. The popular trendies, following the fashion of the day, could be likened to the current art market, rife with speculators buying with an investment strategy. Or, they could be the artist, changing styles to meet the demands of clients. More likely, as seen in some of the research, they could be the artist that doesn't want to create anything innovative, for fear of being ostracized (Berger & Rodkin, 2011). The dweebs and normals, working hard on academic pursuits, have

corollaries in the classic academies of art, following the rules, trying to make a career, without making waves. The deviants, raw and cutting in their critique of society have a great number of connections to artistic practice, including the active subversion of the systems that be. Hans Haacke carefully researched the slum tenement empire of a New York businessman, Harry Shaplosky, and presented the information in a series of photographs for a 1971 exhibition at the Guggenheim. The show was subsequently censored, amid gossip about the relationships of Shaplosky with trustees of the museum (Foster et al., 2004). That cynical deviance and subversion would likely fall into the category of "punk rock." The zine-making Dirty Girls would most certainly be interested in the work of the Gorilla Girls, whose anonymous collectively-made posters lambasted the Metropolitan Museum and others for their disregard of women artists, often with comical zeal. The hippies, however, might find a kinship with the social realists of the 1930s, or perhaps Andy Warhol. Social Realists like Ben Shahn were focused on issues in the community, connecting with the working class. Warhol's take on the materialism of popular culture might be too tongue-in-cheek for the hippies as described by Kinney, but the critique of the popular crowd itself would have resonance.

While interesting to consider, these connections and relationships between artists and corresponding social crowds are somewhat contrived. There are two distinct possibilities based on the body of literature regarding social crowds. First, there could be a singular group of artists that have a crowd identity. If that is the case, what are the features of the artistic crowd? What groups are they proximal to? Are they permeable? How do they interact with other groups? Artists could be a well-enough known category to be made into a schematic caricature, or they could be absent in the minds of adolescents as a particular type or kind of person. Subsequently, artistically inclined students could be dispersed into various crowds and cliques of students,

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serving as specialists within the group, with little contact between each other. How youth today

view art and artists, while having social ramifications, start with the creation of the artist

caricature, and caricatures start with basic (albeit incomplete) knowledge of an entity.

Chapter 3: Methodology

'There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump

of symbols is a brief, urgent message describing a situation, a scene. We

Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any

particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has

chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of

life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle,

no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books

are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.'

-Tralfamadorian books, as described in

Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five *(1969)*

Research purpose and questions

This project is at the nexus of adolescent social dynamics, the arts, and art education. My

aims are to expand on the understanding of how teenagers categorize and characterize those that

might be called "artsy." I hope to define and describe the nature of interaction between social

crowds during adolescence and cultural institutions, specifically art museums. What is it about

artistic people that is so appealing to some, and appalling to others? How do overtures to

teenagers made by art teachers and museum educators play out in the minds of adolescents? I am

particularly interested in the choices, academically and socially, youth make in regards to their own artistic actions. Understanding the current views of a specific group of teenagers can help us (museum and classroom educators, academics) more completely comprehend the social costs of being creative. How youth on the cusp of adulthood view artists and artistic peers will likely be interesting to many teachers, enlightening to museum professionals. Additionally, this work is a vehicle for the voices of the youth I have interviewed. Invariably, my own perspectives about their words will be a part of the dialogue. Projecting my thoughts onto their experiences is not a desirable outcome, so I will do my best to identify clearly my own interpretations throughout the analysis, and allow for their words to take center stage. I am working to be as transparent as possible along the way. This chapter is an offering of my methodological stances, which embrace the interests of "perspective, passion, polemic, and politics" (Agger, 1991).

So far, I've suggested that the arts as a whole (museums, artists, aesthetic philosophy) are part of an ongoing critical enlightenment; artists actively discuss their identity, just as teenagers are coming to terms with their own place in society. Art education is trying to work between them all, with little guidance about the role of the arts in the social world of adolescence. Art education has been described as a method to save and redeem education as a whole, offering improvements in attention, empathy, and memory retention (Greene et al, 2014). Others that have taken strong stances against such justifications for arts education, taking exception at the assumption of skill transfer across domains, and the relegation of the arts as a supportive role for "core" or "real" educational disciplines (Eisner, 1998; Winner & Hetland, 2003). Some have noted issues of gender and sexuality in relation to the arts (Lewis & Seaman, 2004; Jönsson & Carlsson, 2000), and there are long lived debates about the role hegemonic and imperial cultural overtones in the arts (Karp & Lavine, 1991). The challenge of art education as a field has been

complicated by the changing interpretations of the arts, and the resulting curriculum (or lack thereof) (Gee, 2004; White, 2004). Further, the role of the museum has drastically changed from the Victorian model of a repository of high art used to inspire the masses (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). The museum has shifted from being *about* something, to being *for* somebody (Weil, 1999), and in the past 10 years, *with* someone (Korn, et al., 2013). This change is a drastic move in the midst of a cultural shift that extends far beyond museums, but to society as a whole. Just as young people in the past have been at the fore of social changes, teenagers today are at a crossroads between following the biases of previous generations. What they said in the interviews that comprise the data corpus of this project is within the context of an ongoing debate about the placement and role of cultural institutions and their hegemonic power at the time of this writing.

I wonder about the teenage conception of museums and museum education. The research questions I am starting with are about students describing the groups they see as associated with art. What about those groups makes them "art-" or "museum-people?" Are these features desirable? How do students discuss these attributes? What are the social costs of being an artistic teenager? I want to hear adolescents describe and define themselves, and their peers, in terms of the arts, in and out of school. Teenagers are in the midst of developing their own personal identity (Erikson, 1968), what role do cultural institutions take in that process? If not cultural institutions themselves, what clubs, activities and supportive structures *do* engage students in discussions about the arts? What role do the arts take in the formulation of the self for teenagers socially and personally? The resulting depiction could inspire a more sensitive approach to developing educational programs for teenagers, a sensitivity that addresses gender, culture, ethnicity, and the wide range of possible categories that students define as important. It could

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offer a more enlightened approach to talking about artists, and how educators perpetuate the power dynamics associated with the arts (Handler and Gable, 1997; Joo & York, 2011; Karp, Kratz, Szmaja, & Ybarra-Frausto, 2006).

Ontological and epistemological positioning

When students take a tour with me at the museum where I work, I start with introductions. I want to know who they are. I often ask questions about what they like about art, or what their favorite type of art is. As we explore the galleries, I continue to ask questions about what students notice about works of art. "Which work in this gallery do you want to know about?" or "Why do you think the artist chose to depict this scene?" These questions are earnest. I avoid the questions that are pre-scripted, and asked to simply check them off of a list on a lesson plan. I genuinely want to hear their opinions about the works of art they are looking at. I chime in and share my experience with the works, adding to the conversation details that might be pertinent. I follow additional information (the artist's biography, social context, politics) with questions like "how do these ideas or thoughts change your interpretation of the work of art?" Sometimes it doesn't. It's not about changing interpretation directly, but adding to the multiple perspectives of works of art. My pedagogy and questioning strategies on tour follow a line of thought that extends to my actions as a researcher. The impetus behind this approach comes from an array of sources. Most are the great standards that many of us in education cite: Vygotsky and Piaget, Paulo Freire, Jonathan Kozol. Others are more personal, like Thich Nhat Hanh, and Kurt Vonnegut. Some are from related fields, psychologist Carl Rogers, artist John Baldessari, and certainly a wide range of philosophers and thinkers. All are in the realm of humanists and postmodernists in the broadest sense. What follows is an overview of the ideas and thoughts that have influenced my research specifically, and descriptions of why these topics are pertinent to

the project at hand. While the previous chapter was focused on the state of research regarding

social crowds, art education, and museum settings, this chapter explores the underlying

philosophical stance that has led me towards the type of qualitative research that I employ,

bricolage. The second half of the chapter moves from the philosophical towards the pragmatic,

with a description of the specific processes that I used during this project.

I view life through a lens of existential humanism (Sartre, 1956/1975; Heidegger, 1946).

Succinctly put, it seems to me crucial for each individual to make meaning out of their life,

defined by his or herself alone. I hold the more modern and casually applied beliefs of

humanism: that the individual is not an object to be acted upon, but part of a community of

humankind that is independent of any presupposed meaning or purpose (Kakkori & Huttunen,

2010; Palincsar, 2003). This is pragmatically seen in the work of Carl Rogers, who stated in his

clinical psychotherapy, that "the more I am open to the realities in me and in the other person,

the less do I find myself wishing to rush in to 'fix things'" (1961, p. 21). This approach is also

found in my pedagogical methods, "Most children express themselves freely and creatively if

adult interference does not inhibit them" (Lowenfeld, 1960). Although Lowenfeld made that

claim over 50 years ago, the impetus remains the same: changing a person externally, forcefully,

is anathema to the conception of the person as an individual working to make sense of their lived

experience. Education, for me, is about supporting the capacity for students to fulfill their own

aspirations (see Freire, 1970). There are many other voices and philosophical debates on

existentialism. I am aware that such debates occur, and that the discussions are pertinent to how I

perceive and interact with the world around me (see O'Leary & Falzon, 2010, for the multiple

meanings and nuance between humanism in various geographical locations, anti-humanism,

existentialism, and the role of Foucault in this unfolding debate). However, this project is not

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about dissecting those ongoing conversations, but I do, however, recognize their importance and relevance, particularly as I too am in the perpetual process of becoming (see Rogers, 1961, 108-124).

People create meaning through experience within their perceived social environments (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). While we often use words like *domain* or *discipline* to discuss various groups of ideas and content, *intelligibilities* has also been put forward to define pockets of thought (Gergen, 1994). The conventions of an intelligibility form an in-group: a population of people sharing assumptions and beliefs. The dialogue within that group is bound by the conventions of speech and thought that are defined by the participants themselves, who are aware, but not always cognizant of, those boundaries. As Gergen states, "through relational coordination, language is born, and through language we acquire the capacity to render ourselves intelligible" (1994, p. 253). Words are couched in meanings that are fluid, defined often by difference from other objects and ideas (Derrida, 2001). The language that is used to describe something is not dictated by the object or idea itself, but rather by the context in which we understand the "thing" (object, construct, idea) (Gergen, 2010). While an art aficionado might discuss a painting in terms of formal elements, or an established critical lens regarding an historical movement, an art insurer might view the work in terms of financial cost. A religious person might focus on the spiritual content of the work, or a chemist on the minerals and materials that create the colors and sheen. This is the situated conversation, bounded by the social structures that the person identifies with. Placing social settings in the role of mediating personal interpretation is the heart of social constructionism. The social settings of teens in relation to artistic behavior is the theoretical location of this work; how students interpret the world around them based on their intelligibilities is precisely the aim of this paper. To investigate

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these social constructions, phenomenology has been used historically (Cresswell, 2007; Gergen, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 2003), however, there are a wide range of options available to the qualitative researcher that are complementary to the ontological positioning of social constructionism (Charmaz, 2014).

Methodologies

The goal of this project is to present an exegesis of the interviews with adolescent participants. These are the *personalized conceptions* of artistically inclined peers, and the participants themselves. I decline to seek a natural law or theory, since my position is that contextualized social interactions are too diverse to be encapsulated in any theory. Even if it was possible, a written document *including this one* would inevitably fail to completely replicate the richness of social life as experienced by the participants (Agger, 1991; Gergen, 1994). A quest for an explanatory theory would likely be inadequate, since any theory regarding the current social landscape would not be a long-lasting explanation. The current experience of teenagers with the arts may have drastic changes as culture and social cues are in a constant state of flux. Of course, this perspective can lead towards a "nihilistic self-removal" of the academy from the issues that face humanity (Greenwood & Levin, 2003). I am intentionally fighting that outcome. "Enriching the range of theoretical discourse with the particular hope of expanding the potential for human practices is one of the central challenges for constructionist scholarship" (Gergen, 1994, p.185). My offering here is the "thick, rich description" described by Geertz (1973), combined with theoretical analysis to address the socio-political problems in the arts. Pragmatically, I keep in mind that the discussion here should be appropriate for museum educators and classroom art teachers to use in developing new, innovative ways to interact with teenagers. The feelings and experiences of the six participants here may be helpful as the field

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continues to explore what it means to create art. To better teach adolescents educators start by deeply understanding the perspectives of youth.

Research questions themselves provide the most insight on which approaches are appropriate (Janesick, 2000). Given the nature of the research questions (focused on personal experiences related to artistic peers and social status of the artistically inclined) individual and small group interviews would be appropriate. Interviews are one of a number of methodological approaches that would all have potentially enlightening results (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The power of qualitative research, particularly within my epistemological and ontological stances, is in the rhetorical ability to share the poignancy of lived experiences, dovetailed with selections from a rich pool of philosophical and theoretical viewpoints. This hermeneutic combination of transcribed interview text, a description of the context of the interviews, and supplementary interpretations brings a richness to the analysis here (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

What follows is a summary of the different methodological frameworks that I find bring interesting perspectives to my research questions, and are complemented by the use of interviews. This list is certainly not an exhaustive list of potential methods or positions, but I have selected the lenses that were most pertinent during this project. Different intelligibilities (critical theory, symbolic interactionism, constructivism) can be useful in elucidating the experiences of the participants for various readers (museum professionals, educational psychologists, art teachers). The hope is that at least one of these combinations will strike a chord with you. Each of these methodological approaches offer applications to this project, and issues that limit their expository power in the context of this project.

A complete in-depth ethnography of artistic students would seem ideal for describing the social lives of adolescents, but would necessarily be a deep, longitudinal project, which given my current limitations (full-time job, dissertation, available time) would be difficult to complete at this time. Such an ethnographic project would likely follow a grounded theory model, with the eventual creation of a conceptual framework that could be used to describe social interactions of teenagers related to the arts (Cresswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The approach of established grounded theory methodology is that a theory can be discovered out of the data corpus, implying that "truth" emerges (Åge, 2011; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). More recent scholarship has developed a constructionist grounded theory framework (Chamaz, 2006), but classic Glaserian grounded theory is focused on the development of a "core category" of incidents that becomes the basis for an explanatory theory (Åge, 2011). This emphasis on a theory that describes a generalizable structure is at odds with my interest in the individual lived experiences of participants. While I will be using a form of open coding method in the analysis of data (appropriated from grounded theory, and further described later in this chapter) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994), the emergence of an inclusive theory of the social placement of the arts would be ancillary to sharing the experiences of the participants. If I was more interested in the underlying structure of the processes by which social crowds define people based on academic domain interests, grounded theory would be a good fit. However, for this project there are tensions with grounded theory as a single technique that lead me to draw from other methods.

Since social constructionism and phenomenology have long been associated with one another (Schwandt, 2007), examining the phenomenon of artistic youth would be an appropriate methodology. Phenomenology, as framed by Husserl and expanded on by Schutz, is predicated

on the idea that perceived lived experience is the substance of consciousness (Gubrium &

Holstein, 2000, Schwandt, 2003). This closely aligns with my beliefs about reality, but there are

issues within phenomenology that prevent me from embracing it as the sole method for this

project. Notably, the phenomenologist approach is interested in defining the construction of the

Lebenswelt (life-world) (Schwandt, 2003). Like grounded theory, this desire to create a

schematic "reconstruct[ing] the genesis of the *objective* meanings of action" (Outhwaite, 1975, p.

91 quoted in Schwandt, 2003, emphasis mine) is ontologically problematic for me because of

that word, "objective." Many researchers are using phenomenology mediated by a social

constructivist lenses, but the phenomenological stance that the researcher can remove their bias

intentionally is not something that I feel comfortable claiming. "…The qualitative research act

can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective" (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2000, p. 18). The bracketing of the researcher, the *epoché* supported by Husserl,

removes or suspends the social, historical, and cultural biases that the researcher has during the

research process. Phenomenology has been described as "shun[ning] critical evaluation of forms

of social life" (Schwandt, 2007). My biases include perspectives from critical theorists that

discuss the manner in which art, art history, and cultural institutions deal with the approval and

perpetuation of cultural standards. I cannot, with an honest voice, claim to bracket my opinions

about the importance of museums for social dialogue and as a part of a socio-political scenario

that has class-based oppression to be challenged through education (see Freire, 1970). Any

attempt to disregard presuppositions of mine would be "politically undesirable and

philosophically impossible" (Agger, 1991). The critique of cultural institutions (i.e. museums),

paired with the open discussion of how such locations are perceived, will likely involve

discussions of class, gender, race, and sexuality.

The aim here is to empirically and honestly share the experience of students, and then to further push the underlying conceptions towards a deeper understanding of the positions and roles of cultural institutions, including Art as a concept. Critical theorists, then, are a touchstone for explaining my perspective. The power struggles analyzed through a critical theory lens will likely be applicable to youth as they identify the cultural capital needed to be a part of the museum setting (Bourdieu, 1993; Sayers, 2011). If teenagers are keen to notice the manner in which museums control and approve cultural artifacts, and disenfranchise those without an art history academic pedigree (and visitors that fall outside of "approved" cultural categories), then critical theories could offer an enormous amount of insight. Academia as a whole, including cultural institutions like museums, are locations that are based on approval or dismissal of lines of thought, but can also be places for "empowerment rather than subjugation" (Kincehloe & MacLaren, 2004). By identifying who benefits and who is dismissed by museums and the adolescent-perceived "art world" (however they might perceive that world), my work has strong connections with the modes of thought found in critical theory.

The challenge is that critical theory is an overarching lens, but not a specific methodology. The work of critical theory has a genesis in Marxism, re-evaluated in Frankfort in the 1930s. Of late it has blended with postmodernism and poststructuralism to form a framework for dialogue about methodological practices and the substance of specific research projects (Agger, 1991). One methodological implication of critical theories is a drastic change in perspective of the research act. Methodology (according to critical theorists) provides a technological artifice that obscures the personal influence of the researcher. Methodology "is not simply a technical apparatus, but a rhetorical means for concealing metaphysically and politically freighted arguments in the densely technical discourse/practice of quantitative analysis

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and figural gesture" (Agger, 1991). Critical theorists directly challenge "methodolatry," (the idolatry of methods) (Janesick, 2000) in order to democratize the shared meanings of lived experience. Removing the artifice allows more people to read and understand the substance of the work. Similarly, in the application of humanist psychology, Rogers stated that "it does not help, in the long run, to act as though I were something that I am not" (1961). Deconstruction, based on Jacques Derrida's work related to meaning of words and context (Derrida, 2001; Gergen, 1994), has been applied to methodology in order to acknowledge the predilections of the researcher, and the assumptions that researchers and readers make while writing and reading, respectively (Agger, 1991; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). This is the garment of subjectivity described by Peshkin (1988), unremovable from the researcher, and too, from the reader. We (humans) are perpetually subjective, despite enlightenment era echoes of scientific truths with capital "T"s. The deconstruction of methodology found in poststructuralist and postmodernist thought places an emphasis on critical honesty. Traditionally, the critical theorist would be distinctly honest about the struggles found in political, cultural, and social power. These themes are also found throughout the arts themselves (McEvilley, 1991; Nelson & Shiff, 1996; Sullivan, 2010) and in museum studies (Handler & Gable, 1997; Karp et al. 1991; 1992; 2006).

Derrida's influence on philosophical thought in the arts is evident in the work in the 1970s of artists Marcel Broodthaers and Hans Haacke: turning "the critical tools of… the Frankfort school tradition of the Marxist critique of ideology and the poststructuralist practices of semiological and institutional critiques back onto the actual institutional frameworks of the museum, the exhibition, and the market" (Foster et al., 2004, p. 554). Broodthaers' work involved the creation of a new, contrived, museum (without a permanent physical location, without a permanent collection, and with Broodthaers self-appointed as director). The *Musèe*

d'Art Modern, Dèpartment des Aigles, Section XIXème siècle included objects that were essential to the display of an exhibit, but without traditional works of art themselves. Pedestals and frames, labels and lights, but no real works of art. This removal of the heart of an exhibition, with only the implements meant to deliver the content, has parallels with Derrida and the intentional discussion of the technical artifice. "Not only do all these objects evoke the museum as their source, but with their resounding emptiness, they strip that source of its meaning, substance, and historical significance, thereby constituting it as an 'allegorical structure'" (Foster et al., 2004, p. 551). Deconstruction by focusing on the structure. I make note of it here to point out the similarities in trends of artistic thought that have some of the same roots as ontological discussions regarding structuralism/poststructuralism. Critical examination of the inherently political process of the creation of a museum (and Art itself) is made intelligible through such lenses. These works of art are as influential on my research as the literature of methodologists that I have included above. That these topics are addressed in late 20th century art, and in contemporary museums, are important for me as a museum professional. More appropriately for this study is that the content of some works of art may have importance for adolescents. The ongoing philosophical debates are potentially curious for teenagers, or possibly frustratingly esoteric. The only way to find out is to ask them directly. How the perceived content of works of art, and the manner in which artists discuss the meaning of their works, may be a part of the caricature of artistic peers and others. Knowledge of artists and approaches to making art may tell us much about how these participants understand their potential as artists, and how they understand themselves. The participants here are dealing with the same issues of validation that have defined postmodern art, in the sense that artists and their works deal with defining themselves (McEvilley, 2005).

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Another feature that has been a consistent thread in 20th century art has been the use of appropriation and combination (Gompertz, 2012; Nelson & Shiff, 1996). By opening the door to mixed media and installation work, moving past the visual mimesis of painting (the work of art replicates the subject matter, simulacra), artists have been utilizing tools and techniques in novel ways in order to create the outcome that best solves the aesthetic problem and address critical issues of social and political concerns (Camille, 1996). In terms of both the arts, and in research, this approach has been stated as creating bridges, rather than barriers, between domains (Sullivan, 2010). Works by Broodthaers, Guerilla Girls and others exemplifies this approach; utilizing text, didactic posters, objects that viewers interact with (McEvilley, 2005; Foster et al. 2004). This combination of multiple modes of thinking, utilizing what is available that provides poignant insight, often with an undertone of clever mischievousness, is in essence a *bricolage.*

Bricolage methodology

Bricolage uses of a wide range of tools and interpretive frameworks to create an approach that gains strength from the variety of methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Levi-Strauss, 1966; Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2012). The act of bricolage can be applied to all aspects of the research process, allowing a reflexivity in approaches regarding theoretical and political stances, methods, interpretation, and the narrative tone (Rogers, 2012). Hopefully you will have some sense of my theoretical and political fluidity based on what you've read so far. The mosaic of pluralism that grows out of social constructionism encourages a much broader range of thought than the constrictions of the "engineer" (Levi-Strauss, 1966), who may get caught in the proverbial "everything is a nail if all you have is a hammer" trap. The bricoleur uses what is at hand, and what gets the job done, with flexibility in theory and practice. A bricolage of theoretical

frameworks (social constructionism, existentialism, humanism), supports a collage of technical approaches as well.

The *bricoleur* starts with a kind of reflective dialogue with the content of the project. "Far better to probe one's own soul first, discover the quagmires of emotional conflict and the morasses of unsupported convictions, the better to avoid them when exploring other souls" (Douglas, 1985, p 41). Reflective examination of the topic, and the contextual problems surrounding the research questions, helps establish the multiple frameworks regarding the topic. For instance, this project can follow the established sociological terms of adolescence (permeability, visibility, channeling). A different context is one of the current state of curriculum in public schools: describing how students perceive the arts in a formal, interdisciplinary educational environment (Sullivan, 2010) is distinct from a free-choice learning environment (Falk, 2002). While I wish I could explore each of these aspect fully, I must find the mixture of interpretive frameworks that best reflects and illuminates the voices of the participants. My interpretations of these frameworks are multiple "I's" involved in the process of a qualitative inquiry (Peshkin, 1988). I am an educator that works with school settings, but I am also a critic that wants to fight the manipulation of students (see Freire, 1970; Kohn, 2011). I am also sensitive to the manner in which artistically inclined students might feel ostracized or shunned (or possibly admired). I am a social psychologist, and an artist, and an art historian who wants the world to have and appreciate more artists. These multiple perspectives and positions may shift in importance, allowing for layered understandings of constructs and their meanings. This allows multiple interpretive frameworks to intermingle, despite potentially overlapping or contradictory conclusions (Rogers, 2012; Schwandt, 2003). Continuing to reflect on questions throughout the project includes challenges that many academics have pondered; from the

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essential "does this project make sense?" and "is this a worthwhile pursuit?" to the practical, "how much time will I have to recruit if the IRB requires more revisions?" I will address these ongoing fears and questions throughout, including how some of these concerns limit this project.

One of the pertinent reflexive questions is focused on the specific technical methodologies. While other projects apply bricolage to the technical procedures, adding analyses of cultural artifacts (like yearbooks and created works of art), or field observations, or participant journaling (Hodder, 2000), I've kept this project rather straightforward. I have kept the data corpus restricted to the transcribed interviews because expanding to potentially useful observations of participants in the social setting, analysis of yearbooks, club membership, teacher observations, or comparative ethnographies with other school settings grows this project into an undertaking that I cannot do alone, nor in a timely fashion. Additionally, while those other methods would indeed shed light on other facets of the social dynamics related to the visual arts, analyzing and examining the lived experience of participants would still be a required first step to help determine the constructs that expanded methods would investigate. For now, interviews will provide the bulk of the data corpus, but the challenges of interviewing belies any simplicity. I will return to the idea of bricolage later, but for now, let us turn to the technical artifice of interviews, and the specifics of data gathering here.

Setting

It has been suggested that teenagers have a peak in awareness about social cliques in 9th and 10th grade, particularly when paired with a transition to a different school building (Brown & Dietz, 2009; Kinney, 1993). Older students (juniors and seniors) have been described as less likely to care about the categories their peers place them in (Erikson, 1968; Kinney, 1999).

Students at the end of high school are looking towards the transition to the next stages of their lives (career, college). The six students that had conversations with me were 4 seniors, and 2 juniors. Their perspectives, as analyzed in the next chapter, have moved past hard social divisions, but the influence and sway of social crowds remains prominent in their interpretations of high school life (or at the very least were coy in their descriptions of the politics of social interaction). The school that this study takes place in is a 10th through 12th grade high school, with six elective art classes, including International Baccalaureate (IB) and AP courses. There are approximately 1,700 students attending the school, which is located in a university town of 58,000. Theatre and music programs are well established, along with a small number of arts-related clubs, including an anime club, performance art groups including show choir and theatre, a monthly poetry publication called *The Page*, and a chapter of the National Art Honor Society. The size of the school is similar to schools with strong social cliques and crowds (McFarland, Moody, Diehl, Smith & Thomas, 2014).

Select art classes at the High School received a recruitment flyer, found in Appendix A, distributed in September. Flyers were also distributed to youth attending free public art classes at the museum (where I work). Interested students were asked in the flyer to have their parents contact me. From there, consent and assent forms were distributed, via the preferred method (electronic, standard mail, picked up at the museum). Location may have an influence on participation, and the amount of information students may be willing to share (Elwood & Martin, 2000). The interview sites were determined by the participant, in order to provide the most comfortable venue, ensuring that the setting facilitated honest conversation. The school and the museum were both reserved, but only one of the interviews took place at the school (which was then re-recorded at the museum due to computer malfunction). For the sake of personal

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reflection between each session (and the slow process of recruitment), interviews were spread out over four months. Time in between interviews allowed for me to have some reflection on the conversation. Initially, the timing was arranged to prevent students from running into each other at the interview site. Students that did not wish to have peers identify them as participants in this study would not want to run into a classmate talking to the same researcher. While safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality of the participant (i.e. pseudonyms), interview research is inherently non-anonymous.

There are few methods of compensation that would gain access to a wide enough population of students; money may not be enough of an incentive to gain access to students that are well off, which may include students from "preppie" social groups. Art supplies would also be more desirable to those already involved in the arts (and as the students noted, each artistic teen would have a preferred medium). A networked, or snowball, model helps extend the invitation to the research to students from a number of different social circles (Creswell, 2007; Josselson, 2013). The trade off in risk is the appearance of coercion, if students felt their teachers would be disappointed if they declined to be interviewed. In order to prevent such a case, teachers distributed the flyer without much of a "sales pitch." For the public programs at the museum I am often the teacher, but the nature of out-of-school programing, and lack of any evaluative outcomes (i.e. grading), limits any perception of coercion. Participants had no reason to think that there will be any added bonuses, since the museum programs I manage are intentionally low-risk and in an informal setting.

The second phase of recruitment was intended to occur through a reputational network (Creswell, 2007; Josselson, 2013; Kuzel, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Noy, 2008). Interview participants were asked about peers that may have an insight on how the social groups in their

school function. The initial group of participants grows by asking about peers that are similar, or distinctly different than themselves (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). Participants in the first iteration of interviews were asked to give their peers the recruitment flyer, and the process repeats. This was planned to continue until between 6 and 15 participants are interviewed based on suggestions in the literature (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). An interesting byproduct of this process is that organic networks are documented by the recruitment process itself (Noy, 2008). Students that identify artistic peers give evidence of networked relationships, particularly if multiple informants identify a single individual. This additional information can be analyzed as a demonstration of the interactions between participants and peers within the context of the "artistic" crowd. Highly visible (well known) members of high profile groups follow stereotypical behavior patterns more than the less visible members of less centralized groups (Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1995). The network recruitment did not work, for reasons I will discuss further on, but the social entanglement of the students was certainly clear.

There are suggestions that female interlocutors may have more social connections in relation to group membership (Noy, 2008). Seeking the perspective of adolescent girls is a key factor in ensuring a trustworthy examination of the social placement of artistic teens. Five of the participants were female, and there was a distinct difference in tone between the lone male participant (Hendrik), and the other interviewees. However, this is hardly a statement on gender differences, as all of the participants had remarkably different views and opinions about the social structure of the school. Furthermore, Hendrik was the first interview in this study, and the dynamics and focus of my investigation transformed and morphed over the course of the project, as expected.

In order, the students that I spoke with were: Hendrik, Natalie, Kristi, Maggie, Lillian, and Taylor. I will briefly introduce you to them now, and more completely in the next chapter. Hendrik and Taylor are both juniors, the rest are all seniors. Hendrik gives the appearance of confidence, and emphasizes accuracy in his art, while identifying with a crowd he describes as "weird" and "outsider." Taylor is an empathetic artist, talking little about herself in favor of discussing how she sees others approach art. Natalie and Maggie are both in the IB program. Natalie describes herself as a writer, and active in her church. Maggie is interested in the sciences, biology in particular, but also paints in short art-making marathons. Kristi is a cheerleader, and daughter of an art educator. She is part of a large, popular crowd, and is sensitive towards the tone of disagreements between social groups. Lillian is active in student government, and the adopted daughter of an art educator. She and her friends are deeply invested in politics and social issues.

Interviews

An "empathetic attitude of listening" is based on the interaction *between* participants and myself (Jossellson, 2013, p. 80). My end of the interview conversations are prompts for the telling of narratives which allow for tales of lived experience to flourish. When the interviews are transcribed, the data will primarily consist of the words of the teenagers (very few of *my* words, if I've done a good job of interviewing (Jossellson, 2013, p. 121)). But the content of what they say, the substance, is the great unknown area wherein this research really takes place. While I can make some predictions about what might come up in the stories that the participants say, the distinctly personal things they have experienced make up their own *Lebenswelt*. I can make choices about lines of questioning, in the preliminary stages of the project, which can theoretically set up the remainder of the work for "success" (whatever that might look like). But

the questions are negotiable as the interviews progress (and as each interview progresses). Not all of the participants will be asked the exact same set of questions. Some questions appear in each interview, but subsequent questions grow out of the aspects of the social life of artistic teenagers that the participants identify as salient. Importantly for me, there is an underlying assumption that *every* potential participant has a story to tell. Each of those stories are compelling and important.

At the interview meeting, participants and their parents were informed about the project, and consent and assent documents are verified to be signed and in order. It is noted that the participant or their guardian may halt the interview at any time, for any reason, without any repercussions. This was included in the opening dialogue with the students, before turning on the recording device. Every attempt was made to make the discussion clear and frank, without instilling and fear or trepidation about the project. The more build-up and warnings given by me sets the tone of the remaining time, which if too formal and bureaucratic can inhibit the free telling of personal narratives (Josselson, 2013). Those wishing to stop the process would have been completely removed from the project, and their words would not be included. None of the participants withdrew from the study.

Building rapport requires a delicate touch. Like my pedagogically informed questions during a tour at the museum, I must approach the interview questions with the earnest need to understand the participant. Carl Rogers "found it of enormous value when [he could] permit [himself] to understand another person" (1961, p.18). I too want to tap into this value of attentive listening. The nature of the questions allows for participants to tell stories about what they experienced during the school year (on and off their high school campus). The early questions start to identify the more visible crowds in the school setting, and how the participant identifies

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with, or apart from, those crowds. Five of the six interviews began by asking about the last time the participant felt artistic (I asked Lillian that question about a third of the way through). The questions become more specific, based on the answers of the participant. The fluidity of the questions is crucial to developing a rapport, as disjointed questions prioritizes my agenda, rather than the narratives of their lived experiences. But, the plan is that the deeper questions will move from the identifiable groups towards the definition of being artistic. "Tell me about a peer you think is especially 'artistic,'" and "who are the artistic kids at your school?" If they ask for me to specify, I can mention that I don't really know what "artistic" means anymore (and honestly, in the depths of doctoral study into the topic, I find myself less and less certain about that word means). The remaining questions start to delve into that realm. "What makes them so artistic?" "Are many artists like that?" "What makes 'good' art?" How participants answer these questions, both in tone and content, is important in developing a sense of the archetype of the artist for these youth.

The second vein of questions was meant to determine the role of museums as venues for interaction with art and with others. "Tell me about where you've seen art," can kick off the conversation about informal locations (museums, coffee shops, other community locations), and the people that are there. "Tell me about your favorite time at a museum" might have some interesting conversations, too, but may lead towards narratives that get away from the main theme of social crowds and the artistic persona. The follow-up questions "what sort of people go to those locations?" helps reorient the narratives towards the social crowds in relation to the museum. As will be demonstrated in the two chapters of results, museums were not a particularly well-known location for art viewing. There were some locations that were described as places for art, namely the homes of peers, and coffee shops.

The number of cases in research projects has been bound by theoretical sampling in the past, creating a careful selection of participants that fit into discrete, a priori categories. Given what you have read here in the previous sections, it should not come as much of a surprise that I decline such procedures to determine my sampling processes. First, the entire premise of the networked recruitment is one of reputational case selection (Kuzel, 1992). The research questions, focused on social groups and caricaturizations of other peers and their crowd membership, justifies a reputation-based recruitment. The number of cases that are needed is based on the substance of the interviews. A single interview, if rich enough in depth and meaning could be convincing enough for research, but are sometimes difficult to find. Multiple interviews allow for various aspects to be addressed, but inevitably there will be elements of social life that are not included in the words of the participants. The interlocutors here include those that identify themselves as artistic, and several that do not. The initial plan was that reputational cases would be identified in the interview, asking at the conclusion "Is there anyone else I should talk to that would know about the artistic students at your school? You mentioned that 'so-and-so' was quite artistic, would you give them this flyer?" From there, the reputational network coalesces as the participants share the flyer with peers, and the parents or guardians of those peer contact me. As noted above, I encouraged this, but there were no participants that were recruited by prior interviewees.

Rather than intentionally exploring negative cases, or reaching a theoretical saturation point, my ontological views make such an endeavor vacuous. Each participant had a distinctly personal experience with artistic peers, and their social placement. Seeking an amount of interviews in order to defend some external truth is not the philosophical position I have taken during this process. What I am searching for is a collection of poignant experiences that

"crystalize," showing the beauty of the various facets of being a teenager, of being artistic. The crystalized product of the combined experiences reflects and refracts the light of experience (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). While I have loose boundaries for the selection of participants, they are not set in stone. Limiting the number of cases is a pragmatic move; I want to make sure that there is sufficient interview data to construct the crystalized experience, but I must move quickly to capture the fast shifts in the organic social structure of adolescence. What the students shared are only aspects of *a* truth, applicable to this particular school, at this particular time, for these participating students. The poignancy of the cases comes from the humanity of the participants. The narratives of the participants crystalize together in the next two chapters to show a structure that might not be a firm reality. They have provided a lens through which we can discuss the role of the arts in the social realm of adolescence. I have limited the participants to a single school; the school setting is the primary location for social interaction (Milner, 2004), and blending multiple settings would undesirably complicate the identifying terms used by students of artistic peer groups. The social placement and importance of those groups could be muddled with the addition of other schools (each school with a different perceived hierarchy).

From conversation to data corpus

While I might be able to better understand the situations that teens have experienced, to expand the theoretical discourse and add to the potential of human interaction, I need to share this with others. Specifically, readers like you. All utterances are analyzed as a "text" (Ricoeur, 1973) and translating those utterances into a form that can be shared requires a process. I will make these procedures as clear as possible here, to prevent the technical artifice from being a hindrance.

To record and document the interviews, a microphone and audio recording software was utilized. The recording device itself can play a factor, as too much equipment can create a sense of formality during the recording session (Al-Yateem, 2012). I have suspicions that the comfort of teenagers with technical devices has improved with the growth of laptops, tablets, and ubiquitous cell-phones. So I feel comfortable using a USB connected microphone with a laptop. The recording software that I am most comfortable with is Audacity, an open-source option with many sources online for support. Recording as an Audacity project allows for altering the digital file to improve clarity (removing background noise, adjusting tone). Josselson recommends two recording devices (2013, p. 55); should the microphone fail, or the computer or software crash. The final interview, with Taylor, fell victim to a hard-drive failure (alerting me only at the *end* of the hour-long dialogue). She was kind enough to have a second conversation with me, repeating some of the content of the original discussion. After the crash, I wrote down as much of the content that I could recall, and used those notes to phrase questions for the second interview.

The creation of text, turning utterances into a fixed writing, is partially a fabrication. Tone, emphasis, and presentation are all subtle details that add to the richness of the spoken word. In the vein of thought explored by Deleuze and Baudrillard, transcriptions are inherently contrived; writing "fixes" the dialogue into a laid out argument (Ricoeur, 1973). The words of the participants are cemented, as if they are timeless documents, eliminating the ethereal nature of spoken words. Participants cannot clarify or edit, or revise their statements, unless they were responsible for the transcriptions themselves. But then the transcriptions would lose the rawness, and candor of the conversation. I present them here to you, the reader, and you must decide how trustworthy they are. I cannot release the audio without breaching participant confidentiality, but I can share with you examples of how I have transcribed sections of the audio.

It has been noted elsewhere that transcription is not standardized but based on the needs of the research problem (Josselson, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). My method of transcription is close to verbatim, without dialectical or discourse notation (Gibbs, 2007). In short, the transcriptions will not have non-verbal codes or symbols. Ellipses and bracketed descriptions (i.e. [laughing], [makes sour face]) have been included at times. The non-lexical vocables like "uh," "um," and "hmm" might have some importance to the flow of the dialogue, so they have been included with transliterations as close as possible. In the analysis, many of these, and phrases "sort of…" "like, ah…" and other repeated fillers have been excluded unless a meaning was clearly discerned. For example, this is the raw text from the interview transcript:

> "I think of cool people as… ah… people who are… fun to hang out with, nice to be around, don't have opinions that, you know, are much different than mine, they're intelligent, they think for themselves… just, stuff like that… ah… people that are, you know, more fun to hang out with, I don't sort of go on like a popular level of, like, you know, coolness, you know…"

Was transformed slightly to this:

> "I think of cool people as people who are fun to hang out with, nice to be around, don't have opinions that are much different than mine, they're intelligent, they think for themselves… just, stuff like that. People that are more fun to hang out with…"

My words, questions, and prompts were also included in the transcriptions in a similar

manner. When used in the following chapters, my words have been printed grey for

clarity.

A: What else would you like to say, to share?

T: Probably that um… I think now, people my age, they're figuring out like, what art is. Because a lot of people think that it's just… you know, a picture, or it's just a painting, that's just what it is, it's a category. And I don't think it is, I think that you can see art everywhere, in… as I said, I think that my definition of art would be creative expression, through creation, and… you're… you're um… doing something and you're making something, even if exists only for a day, maybe you're making an outfit, maybe you're… you know… you're just… you're trying new

Andrew Henley: Social dynamics: Shared experience, group growth and development (projection and egocentricism)

Andrew Henley: Definition of art: Categorical aspects, surface understanding.

Andrew Henley January 08, 2016 ★Definition of art

Andrew Henley: Content of art: →Fashion →Experimentation →Self or others

Figure 3: An example of the open coding process in the transcriptions.

Coding and analysis

Coding processes are often tied to the nature of the research questions. Miles and

Huberman lay out a system of codes and coding that I find a bit cumbersome (1994, p. 59). I

used a personalized coding process in a Microsoft word (.docx), relying on marginal comments.

Since the coding is a shorthand to the *meaning* of the construct, the codes I used are descriptive

words and short phrases.

The *a priori* plan was to have preliminary passes for determining codes focused on the

personal relationship students have with museums, the second pass looking for examples of

personal association with groups, the third pass for interactions between groups and museums,

and fourth, for attributions of museums broadly. Of course, this changed during the process, as

the narratives the participants shared guided the development of themes. I began by reading the

transcripts in their entirety, making short notes in the margins about the content of the passages.

The figure above is an example of the result. The unit of analysis remained meaningful

statements. The length of the units was variable, as some stories with an overarching point were

long, and other, nearly off-hand comments were still imbued with substance. After reading all six transcripts, I returned to the first interviews, and re-read both the transcript, and my comments. I made changes throughout to try to create consistency across all six. I created axial codes on the following axes:

- Social groups in general

- Social group conflicts

- Issues and ideas (namely feminism)

- Attribution of art ability

- Social interactions related to art

- The artistic personality

- Personal identity and self-attribution

I created word documents for each of these seven axial codes, and then re-read the interviews again looking specifically for quotes related to these themes.

Based on the readings of transcripts, and the open and axial codes, I began organizing a conceptual outline of ideas that were present. This is a loosely modified template stemming from the data (see Crabtree & Miller, 1999). I then populated the outline with references to quotes from all six interview transcripts that were related to the topic. As I read these quotes, the outline was adjusted and rearranged in order to create some sort of logical flow. It was during this process that I followed a pattern of Immersion and Crystallization (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). By reading through the transcripts entirely, and then reading excerpted text alongside quotes from other interviews, I began to make sense of the data, adjusting the outline to match my thinking. I then used this long outline to guide my writing of chapters four and five.

Credibility

With all research, the results and conclusions are debatable. The process of my coding, as described above, is fluid and subjective. With qualitative research, and the removal of formulaic evaluations (i.e. statistical tools), there is an openness that is helpful to the reader, yet challenging to the classical empirical model of science (social or otherwise). The measure of believability for this project is how much you trust the words and experiences of the participants, and how much you trust me as a researcher.

To encourage and gain your trust, I offer these insights into my process. Relying on the discussions provided by Lincoln and Guba (2003) about reliability, I have reflected on the manner in which this project unfolded. When discussing qualitative reliability, there are terms that are more accurate to the nature of the project. *Authenticity* is the desired outcome. As Lincoln and Guba have described, there are essential aspects of authenticity that researchers should consider, including fairness, ontological authenticity, educative aims, and the outcomes of the research as a catalyst (2003, p. 278). To these specific aspects, I have been aware of my own relationship to the participants. I have looked at the transcribed texts, and through the process of coding and arranging concepts attempted to balance the voices of all six participants. While some of the students were significantly more vocal than others, I tried to use them individually and collectively in manner that is fair and equitable. I ask that you remain aware of the amount of quotations from each of them as you read on.

From a perspective on credibility that prioritizes a certain moral authority, it must be noted that I have a stake in the role of cultural arts education. My credibility to you, the reader, must include a shared understanding that there are educational outcomes for us as academics and

practitioners, and in many ways to the participating interviewees. As you read the excerpts of the interviews in the following chapters, note the role that my voice takes. There are times when I challenge, in a loosely Socratic manner, the statements of the interlocutors. I have included some of my questions intentionally in order to share with you exactly how I presented questions to the participants. I have also relied on ample sections of transcribed text in order to demonstrate and share the ontological positions of the participants. It is the combination of our voices that you must determine as credible. I have included as much as I can in terms of quotations and explanations for you to determine not just my thesis, but if that thesis is believable.

There are issues of credibility regarding the potential of this project to answer the questions I have presented. Can interviews with students really tell us what they think about art and artists? I posit that they do, and have. But, I must be authentic with the recommendations found in chapter six. This research, as a catalyst for change in philosophical claims, pedagogy, or curriculum, must be examined with this in mind: Do these six students and I provide enough depth to incite change? As you read the words of the participants and my interpretations, determine what you would do if you were their teacher. If you were their parent. If you were their friend. Question my credibility as you read *how* this project changes the way that we teach and talk about the arts. I have offered chapter two as a support for my suggestions, and return to those sources in chapter six to buttress my claims.

However, there remains a central challenge to credibility. In postmodern thought, in the philosophical vein that I ascribe, credibility is only good within our shared intelligibility. What I offer here is not a singular, objective truth, but a crystalized experience. This is not a "valid" claim, but an *authentic* claim. I have been as real and transparent as I can about the technical approaches and processes, including that I acknowledge that my interpretations are debatable. I

do not insist that my interpretations are objective reality, but that they are informed by the

participants and available prior research. They are honest interpretations. And these are the

honest words of participants that shared their experiences with us.

Chapter 4: Analysis – Social Groups

"Okay… so, I don't know if… okay… so there are choir kids, there's theatre kids, there's you know, there's really sporty kids, there's um… you know there are the kids that are really into writing, that's a group, which you wouldn't think that it would be, but it is… there's… there's IB, IB is a really exclusive thing, and uh… hmmm… there's sort of a group that doesn't want to say they are, but they really are kids that are trying to become themselves, you know? Figure out how to be original, but they're only doing it because they think that it's cool, and they want other people to think that-… They want to be validated. I think that's unfortunate. They think they have to do these things to be accepted. It's not about acceptance, it's about figuring out what you want to do, and be, because this is the time you're supposed to do it, it's high school. They're just confused about it, and there's kind of a judgement towards people… there is a lot of judgement about people that follow trends. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. There's a big push to be different now. Because of the Internet we see more things, and we see things that people like, and I guess a term for that would be 'basic,' people don't want to be 'basic.' It's really funny, because there's nothing wrong with that, I mean, if you like something, you like it, the only thing is… there's nothing wrong with this either, the only thing that's kind of unfortunate is when people think that you have to be something just to be accepted, tying that back into like, the groups… for some reason, I'm not sure it's like this at other high schools right now, or maybe

it's everybody, but at [this high school], the groups really overlap, they mix together, and… you know, there's sort of, um… there's things… I think a lot of the clubs have to do with that, like the Poetry Page, and the LGBTQ+ club, and the environment club, um… everybody is kind of figuring out like, what… that things don't have to be really exclusive…"

-Taylor

At the onset of this project, I had hopes of identifying and describing the distinct group of students that were artists. It became quickly apparent that not only did the group not exist, but that my premise may have been misguided. The reality experienced by these six students, Hendrik, Natalie, Kristi, Maggie, Lillian, and Taylor, are far more complex and dynamic than a simple clique of artists. Social groups provided a sense of stability and identity, but also facilitated conflict and deep rifts between groups. Hendrik saw the group dynamic as passé, "…groups… high school is… I don't know if it's looser now, but maybe I'm just not part of a group enough that I don't see the fine lines, but it definitely seems less divided than it's made out to be usually." He was still able to identify the discrete groups of students that exist within their high school, often placing them at a distance when describing them. The role of the "other" kids in defining oneself was noticeable in many of our conversations. They also offered insight into the nature of being artistic within the social milieu and about their conceptions of art as a domain. They expressed trepidation about their futures, and reflected on their pasts. They also provided clues to the manner in which artistic tasks are approached and avoided. These insights are vastly different than the original intent I had when conceiving of this dissertation. It has been a joy to see the project unfold, and the students that are our guides into their lived experiences were remarkably open and happy to share their experiences. There is seemingly little risk in

talking about art, however there are many ways to defend and protect one's self when discussing things that have been created (Covington, 2006).

I have included as much detail in these two chapters of data as I can without compromising the anonymity of the participants. I have changed their names, as well as the names of the school, teachers, clubs, and publications that would identify them. I have included a plethora of quotes from the participants, which for the most part are somewhat removed from their context. Some excerpts will be brought up multiple times throughout this chapter and the next, in order to present a discussion of the different perspectives they provide. Quotes have been rearranged from their chronological order in order to highlight their meanings and contradictions. Often in spoken conversations, topics are revisited, with digressions and tangents. I have tried to present the text here in a manner that brings clarity to the reading. There are side notes and descriptions embedded in the quotations to help describe the tone and attitude of the speaker.

The participants

As an introduction to the participants, the next six short vignettes describe each speaker. I hope that this foreshadows their attitudes and personalities that will unfold as you read their thoughts on the arts and the social groups at their school.

Hendrik

I have worked with Hendrik on a couple of occasions over the past five years. I first met him when he was in elementary school during a summer camp I taught art at, and more recently he has attended popular programs for teenagers at the museum.

"I sort of had a group of friends in drawing, because I take an art elective every year… we're like the *Breakfast Club* or whatever, we just hung out in art class… often times not doing art."

Hendrik talked about how he had not always been successful in finding friends, but that his high school social life had developed as he and his peers matured.

"I've been in art classes as long as I've been in school, although, you know… you enjoy the class, and the people there are doing the same thing as you, [but] you don't necessarily associate with any of them, and then you don't become good friends with them."

"Sixth and seventh were not good years for me, I was way introverted and didn't have many friends… I've just sort of grown into myself as time has gone on. With the high school, people are just way more chill."

With this new found confidence, Hendrik identified with a circle of friends that he described as separate from the mainstream students, as well as in a group of video gamers. Those that were "outsiders" he associated with making art.

"We mostly sort of stay in the weirder, outsider kids sort of area. It's just who we were drawn to."

"Unfortunately, my lunch table was not… I didn't have the same lunch wave as many artistic people, so I sort of hung out with a different clique, a different group… Gamers, essentially."

Along with this assured social placement, a network of friends in the arts and gamer communities, there also emerged a slight disdain for others outside of his realm, and a cockiness about his own abilities (artistic and otherwise).

> "I'm intelligent as well, I've been carrying people pretty much my entire school career."

> "Almost everyone I talk to doesn't seem to have *real*, you know, sort of preference, most people listen to the *garbage* that comes out of top 40 radio."

Hendrik's high standards in music are echoed in his preference for precision in his works of art, and his conceptual understanding of the role of art. Overall, he is an opinionated young man, and tended not tell long narratives. Interactions with others, and even with art, were presented in generalized terms, without a specific time, and with vague group definitions.

Natalie

Natalie was quite a bit more specific about herself. "I write a lot." She had a short-lived feature in a local publication when she was younger, which was discontinued after she wrote about a local political issue. Her interest in writing extended from op-eds and now is demonstrated by her attention to literature in her academics. She spoke at length about a project for her IB English literature courses, and about her own personal writing.

> "I focus a lot on nostalgic things, like childhood. I like to write about childhood. I like to write about like, I don't know, like sort of your basic six-year-old topics dreams…" she says while laughing.

"…if you looked at my work, like a cumulative review of my work, it would basically be centered around childhood, soccer, I don't know, things that are important to me, religion, stuff like that."

Her adolescence started with an initial search for identity through fashion:

"My parents… parent very differently than the majority of parents. I've always… from the time that I was very little have always been treated as if I was 23, and so I never really considered myself a child. I always thought I had the mind of an adult, and I would never-… my parents just sort of let me do… not whatever I wanted to, but within reason, obviously, but basically, I really could just do anything, so long as there was trust. They would basically let me do whatever I wanted to do, and they never really monitored. I know a lot of moms always monitored what their kids wore, and I never really had that. And so I would have to figure out how to do makeup on my own, and like how to do hair on my own, and what was okay to wear," she says with a laugh. "So it was really very much a product of my own… I wouldn't say imagination, but I definitely chose my own style."

"I was voted on school-wide as having the worst awkward stage of the grade… like literally that is my superlative! It was horrible. Major transformation!" she chuckles as she thinks back, "I did not know what to do with my eyeliner, I had like raccoon eyes practically, if you can even visualize that, and I walked around in all… I had like um… I wore like black plaid shirts all the time, and I had like these customized converse, I had all sorts of customized converse, and I had a red Fender Stratocaster, which was," she sighs, "Ugh- I loved that Stratocaster. But I

wasn't an outlier, which was the weird thing, I was very much in the center of the [social] diagram, I just dressed so strangely."

Natalie's initial phase of creative independence included playing that Stratocaster guitar in a band, but she actively dismisses the idea that it was "music." She shared that she still finds frustration in creating art, in her case in the creation of nametags at frequent church events, including a series of summer camps,

> "There's summer camp, and then there's sectors of camp, which is what the youth [department] runs. So we have six or seven different events throughout the year at camp, and," she whispers with a laugh, "they all have woodchips!"

> "We have nametags, they're called wood chips, they're literal wood chips, and you um… obviously put your name on it, and you can decorate them however you want, and I could never think of anything to do on my woodchip. I always stay with the simple things. And some people have the most detailed, wood chips. They can make anything out of their wood chip, and they can cut their wood chip to make things… I could never do that."

Overall, Natalie is an active member of her church, embedded in the IB program and highly focused on her school work, and has a number of stories about the social shifts from younger adolescence to late high school. She's attentive to the projects and activities of her peers and classmates, and identifies closely with other writers and poets her age.

Kristi

A popular cheerleader, Kristi is the daughter of a local art educator. She is polite, and well-mannered, with the raspy voice that has become more prevalent in recent years with young women (to the dismay of speech language pathologists) known as "vocal fry." Along with her Advanced Placement (AP) courses, she has taken a number of art classes, including graphic design.

> "Recently, I feel like I've done more graphic arts, and that sort of stuff, um…
> honestly like, the latest thing wasn't really like a design, it was more graphic
> design… it was a t-shirt design for cheer…"

Like Natalie, she is also active in her church, although Kristi had fewer stories specifically about that aspect of her life. She did mention that people from church had gone on mission trips, and that conversations about religion were welcome.

> "…some people from church went to the Dominican a couple of years ago, so we
> painted a picture of the village we went to…"

> "…when we were painting the Dominican [conversations were about] that…
> when we were painting the crosses, we ended up talking [about] Jesus, and that
> sort of stuff… But I guess like flowers is just fun conversation, like what's going
> on…"

Like Natalie, Kristi also had moments in her youth related to art, but rather than exploring creative acts, she had a short period of avoiding art.

"Well, seventh and eighth grade, I didn't like art… well, mostly seventh grade… I did not like art. Because I see… My mom's like, 'Kristi, you're good at this, you need to do this.' And I'm like 'No, I'm not going to do this.' And so, I kinda, just didn't enjoy it, because she wanted me to. But then I enjoyed it, I was like 'I actually do like this, still.'"

The dynamic between Kristi and her mother continues to be a touchstone for Kristi's artistic inclinations.

"…We used to live in Birmingham, and there, K through 6 is elementary school, so she taught me in kindergarten… she taught me all the way through 5th grade here. And so, I've learned a lot from her in school. We have some of her pictures in the house, and when I was little, I would always go find her portfolio from college, because they make so much stuff, and look through all of it… My grandparents have so much art from her in their house, their beach house, so it's just like, through looking at her stuff, seeing how she does that. And like for school, [if] I had to draw something, I show it to her and she'll help me, but she'll never like… okay, it made me mad when I was little, but like, because other students would be like 'how do you do this? Like, what should I draw?' and she would give them ideas, she'd be like 'you can do this…' and I'd ask her, and she'd be like 'No, I'm not telling you. Every child is an artist. This is individual, you can figure it out.'"

I asked her if she felt like her mother was a tougher art teacher for her.

"Yes! She was so tough. But I guess she wanted me to do like, my own ideas, and be unique, and she was like, 'you're capable, you can do it, I don't know what these kids are capable of.' So that was frustrating, but it turned… it made me a better person. I love her, she's so great."

Kristi's overall attitude is non-adversarial, with a desire to find the positive messages in her life. This comes with perhaps a bit of flattery to others in order to avoid conflict.

"I feel like [this city] is a real chill place, and everyone's like… I don't know if that's just my friends, though… but we all get along with each other, and even if you do different stuff, like different sports, or like different stuff, everyone just kinda gets along. And like, 'oh, that's cool…' even if they actually don't think it's cool. They'll like agree… just to be a caring person."

Maggie

Being a caring person was a recurring theme in the conversation with Maggie. Her personality matched this theme, and she was very self-aware of this trait.

"I'm a really sweet person. A lot of people know who I am, but I'm not popular because I'm not going to change and conform to be popular, so that's the group I fall in," she says with a laugh.

In the IB program as well, Maggie has an academic focus, plans for college, and a penchant for logical, scientific thinking that creates a tension with her desires for more emotionally fulfilling activities.

"I have dreams and aspirations," she says with a smile. "Oh my gosh, I see all my art teachers, and you will never find an art teacher that's angry at the world, or like… depressed or like, unhappy with their job… Art teachers are so happy to be doing what they're doing, and that is so cool to me. I fantasize about that but then I'm like…" she sighs, and says with a laugh, "'well, I'm good at math and science!' The body intrigues me, so I want to go into the sciences…"

Maggie expressed a sense of belonging because of the IB program, without much chance of connecting with those in the "core" academics.

"I'm kinda in the bubble of… nerds. Being in IB, a lot of our classes are um… our classes are all together, you know, we are together for most of the day."

"We can kinda push out of the bubble, but then like, we'll get bounced back in!"

However, that doesn't stop her from being kind to those around her.

"We have the kinda like, nice people who aren't popular, but a lot of people know them, and I feel like that's kinda where I fit. I'm a nice person, if you see me I'm usually smiling, and I'll say 'Hi' to you if I've met you before, if I haven't and we're next to each other I'll be like 'Hey! I'm Maggie, nice to meet you!'"

This of course has introduced her to wide range of people, even if it comes without the prestige of being in the elite popular crowd.

"I'll get to know you, so I feel like, I wouldn't call myself popular, but… I'm *known*. Like, a lot of people know who I am…"

"Personally, I have a lot of groups, I have my IB group, and then, my inner IB group that I really like, and then, um… I have my sports group, and then I have my best friends, who all fit into my sports group pretty much…"

But, like most people, there are interactions that are unpleasant.

"Like, *I*, I pride myself for being open and accepting to as many people as I can… um… of course, like, there's those few people who like, just irk me! But I really try to be open to everyone…"

Maggie's openness was sincere; as are the works of art she has created. She told several narratives about creating works of art for people in her life, including supportive family members. However, she is not forthcoming with works of art without an invitation to share them.

"I wouldn't want to show any-… show it off, because I don't want to seem *boastful*. Because unless someone inquires about it, then it's kind of like, *random*. Unless it comes up in conversation, or something like that."

Lillian

The fifth interview was with Lillian, whom I have known for eight years. I know both of her parents well, as they are both career art educators in various capacities that intersect with mine. Although we had not had an extended conversation in a number years, our preexisting rapport made the dialogue comfortable and casual. She was upfront and open about her life, perhaps more so because of our previous discussions, which I see as a benefit to this project.

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She is active in student government, and in political discussions at the high school. She is in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and associated with many of the students in the IB program.

"I'm AP only, but most of my friends are IB, and they're probably the most diverse group."

She sees her circle of friends as a bit more mature and aware than her peers, and the students in the year behind her.

"Maybe just like because my friends and I were always friends with the older people, we kind of matured, and knew like certain things about partying, because [the juniors] were… very immature acting, and just not handling their alcohol, or anything, it was just like… if the cops came, I did not want to be a part of that. So, we were just like, 'we need to go do, like, our own thing somewhere else, because this isn't…' I mean, this isn't fun, this could end bad, and we don't want to be a part of that, so…"

Some of those older people are now at the local university, where Lillian and her friends hang out. The proximity and access to the university campus, as well as her current focus on college applications, has left her with little concern for her peers.

"…a lot of my friends and my mindset, is [that] I don't really want to meet new people `cause I'm going to be gone next year. And I mean, that sounds horrible, it's not like, if someone is like 'Hey… whatever,' I'm not going to be like, 'No.' But, at the same time, I don't want to be making like, life-long friends right now… because I want to- next year hopefully- be in another like, state, and I can make friends there."

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Her college applications have not only been forms and paperwork. She sees parts of them as an artistic challenge.

> "I've been applying for a lot of scholarships, and got to write a lot of essays, and guess if I had to pick a form of art, I like writing. Last week. I had to write all these essays, and [I] had that part of me that wanted to fancy my writing up, so I'll try to… I'm really good at descriptive writing… so I think… at least that's what I've been told… So I think that's my artistic… thing about me."

She has taken a number of art classes, with encouragement from her father.

> "I took studio art, I took photography and ceramics twice, and I was going to take graphic design, but it didn't fit my schedule."
>
> "That's a lot of art classes."
>
> "Yeah, my dad got mad at me because I didn't take ceramics, so I had to take it twice. And then I like photography."

Despite the multiple classes in art, she still withdraws from the idea of being an artist.

> "I've never been super proud of any of my art I guess, um… Ah… I mean… I feel like there is a time where I actually wrote a piece of decent literature I was really proud of, and I can't think about it, but… um… I mean… I've had a lot of experiences I feel like I could write about, and that could work out in my favor, but nothing really so far that has really made me feel like I am an artist."

One of those experiences is likely her racial background. Lillian was the only participant of color (a disappointing aspect of this project). Indian by birth, and adopted by white parents, Lillian's

racial categorization is complicated, and in the context of the racial divisions she sees at the school.

> "A lot of the white kids hang out with the white people, and a lot of the black kids hang out with the black people, and because we have that huge Korean population, they kind of go with themselves, but if you're kind of in between, like me and my friends, we just hang out together, and so that works out for me… We walked, when we went to the party. My friend was like 'there are too many white people, I don't want to go,' and I was like, 'okay…' She was like, 'I don't want to be the only color here.' I was like, 'you have a point.'"

This feeling of being "in-between" sets Lillian apart, and also provided a bit of an outsiders view to the high school dynamic. She noted a number of distinct groups, and had more certain names for the various crowds. Her circle of friends have not always been political, and was the only participant that told about a distinct change in group membership.

Taylor

A junior who has taken a number of art classes, Taylor is active in *The Page*, as well as taking photographs. Her demeanor is very empathetic, and most of the conversations with her were focused on others, rather than herself. She frequently spoke in broad terms about her peers, rather than being specific. When asked about her recent works of art, she started with a time and place,

> "I'd say last time I felt like an artist was in photography class, because… I mean, I'm there every day for, um… a certain amount time…"

But then quickly averted the attention to the creative process,

> "…and the whole point of it is to focus on like, you know… [making] something
> that's expressing what you want to express. It's not prompted, it's just: 'do
> something.' And with photography, I think there's a lot of room for that since
> there's so many people around, in that place."

The concerned way in which Taylor spoke about others, although it took the attention away from herself, still provided many insights into how she sees her peers. Throughout our conversation, she was saddened that others had not approached art making as an expressive, meaningful pursuit.

> "it's kinda sad, because I feel bad for them, because they're not really being what
> they want to be, and so they'll say, 'well, I'm artistic,' just because they want to
> say it, and… and then when they actually do it, they copy something, or they trace
> something, just so that people think they are, and they aren't really using art to its
> full extent."

She also spoke in collective terms, using the word "we" more than any of the other participants to discuss many aspects of teenage life.

> "You know, **we** all started off, you know, drawing potato people with like, stick
> hands and legs, so um… it's not like anybody was born being amazing at
> something, they realized they had an interest, and they developed that."

"The joke between **everybody** is after, you know, maybe 7'o'clock, when they close, it's like, 'well, it's time to go home because there's *nowhere* else to go.' **We** only have coffee shops."

"It changes um… what you do… if you're helping someone, you and a friend, like… most of the time, you know, **we** don't offer help unless it's asked for, because you don't want to come off as rude or anything, because, you know, **we** don't want to offend someone when they're putting themselves out there like that"

"Because of the Internet **we** see more things, and **we** see things that people like"

That last statement, in context, demonstrates Taylor's sensitivity towards others. Rather than being judgmental or derisive, she presents a case that others have opinions, and that they should be allowed to explore the vast possibilities of trends and fashions.

"There is a lot of judgement about people that follow trends, and you know… I don't think there's anything wrong with that. There's a big push to be different now. Because of the Internet we see more things, and we see things that people like, and I guess a term for that would be 'basic,' people don't want to be basic. It's really funny, because there's nothing wrong with that, I mean, if you like something, you like it, the only thing is… there's nothing wrong with this either, the only thing that's kind of unfortunate is when people think that you have to be something just to be accepted"

In developing friendships, she also noted a hesitance to be forthcoming about herself.

"…it's a little embarrassing to say, but yeah, probably sophomore year, um… and I had art class that um… third period that day, and that's when we would go to lunch, and the

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girl that I would sit by, she's my friend, and we'd… well, she's my friend now, at that

point, it had been nine weeks, it's a nine week class, and we didn't talk to each other at

all. We sat next to each other, we walked to lunch together, we sat at lunch together, and

we just didn't talk, because… we were afraid to… um… I don't know, we didn't know

what each other was like, so we didn't know… 'Maybe I'm supposed to be like you,' and

we were afraid to, you know, show the other person for fear that they weren't like me."

The conversation with Taylor was rich, she spoke at length, leaving me with the sense that I was

a witness on the banks of her stream of consciousness. Her words however belied a feeling that

she *had* to say something universal or meaningful for her entire cohort. As noted by sociologists,

teenage girls are more aware of the social network, and I felt that Taylor exemplified the

descriptions of feminine morality by Carol Gilligan (1982). She spoke about relationships in

terms of social bonds, rather than differences. About desire for the betterment of many, and not

just herself.

Those are the six young people that spoke with me. Their personalities are rather distinct,

and their perspectives on similar topics are equally diverse. For the remainder of this chapter, the

voices of the participants are presented in juxtaposition. The responses and narratives that related

to one another have been schematized, organized by themes, and interpreted collectively. Many

of the concepts have conflicting information, so I present them below intentionally in conflict.

First is the tension between groups as being recognizable, stable entities, and as being fluid and

overlapping. Next there was a good deal of discussion about groups forming a bond and shared

identity, and how they cause conflict and derision. In the next chapter there is a concept of arts

and artists that is clearly demarcated, and one that opens art up to all people. I have included a

fair amount of commentary throughout these two chapters, creating a murky mix of ideas. These

little nuggets of ideas are nuclei that will develop into the crystalized experience of these

students that will emerge in chapter six.

Social crowds

All of the students with whom I spoke understood immediately when I asked about

crowds at their school. They quickly responded with stories and examples of interactions with

different social crowds, and for the most part elaborated on their own placement within these

groups. There were several features that became apparent as the participants spoke. There were

locations and activities attached to crowds, more so than dress or appearance. Spaces at the

school, particularly classrooms channeled because of a shared curriculum. Curricular interests

also led into club membership, some of which had a class element (a choir class during the

school day for members of the show choir). Participants used a number of different

organizational layouts to describe the groups, which I empathize with after trying to organize

them myself. There are messy overlaps, differences between expectations and lived experience,

and a constant turmoil around self-awareness, identity, and group membership. Groups were

copacetic, and hostile. Making art was solitary and communal. There was a desire to create, but a

fear to share things that were made. I have attempted to arrange all of these moving parts in a

manner that is clear, but also respects the confusion of the *libenswelt*.

Social groups witnessed in physical locations.

"I don't personally even know where the art room is, and I'm a senior, that's an

issue. The theatre is right next to the cafeteria, and then there are classrooms next

to the theatre, and that encompasses photography class and graphic design.

Outside of that, I have no idea where any art classes are. Normally you say visual

art, that normally goes along side [or] near the classrooms. I haven't really seen

any visual art."

The attachment of a discipline with a physical location has potential to provide access to those outside of the group when there is a physical space that encourages interaction (*sociopetal*, per Osmond, see Borman, et al. 2007, p. 29). In the quote above by Natalie, she notes that there is a distinct absence of artistic production visible in the school. While non-theatre kids can see the theatre kids in a very real way at a performance, non-athletes go to sporting events, the school as a venue for the visual arts is lacking, at least for Natalie. There are other venues and school facilitated interactions that do lead to the sharing of art, and creation of social groups. There are also activities and non-school affiliated locations that propagate artistic social groups.

Given that high school aged youth spend the majority of their time at school, classrooms are a primary location for groups to form. Individuals demonstrate their group membership by the interactions that take place in these rooms. Kristi noted the camaraderie found in classes by already knowing people in class, "…if you went to class, you could sit with anyone in [the] big friend group." New connections are made through classes,

> "Everyone's always split up a lot [in classes]. You end up talking to other people.
> I did a creative writing class last year, it only had seven people in it. So you were
> sort of forced to talk to like everyone. That was kind of cool… different opinions
> and stuff."

Hendrik had become involved with a group of peers through his art classes.

> "Depending on the art class, you find people who are sort of likeminded and
> interested in the same stuff you are… it's definitely not always the case; I've been

in art classes as long as I've been in school. Some art classes, although you enjoy the class, and the people there are doing the same thing you do, you don't necessarily associate with any of them, and then you don't become friends with them."

Last year, Hendrik did find a group of friends to hang out with in his art class. With casual rules about classroom behavior, Hendrik joined a group that would slack off during class in the hallway. Others would join in as the group:

 "…it's just sort of, just hanging out in a group, and whoever wants to… cool people can drop by, and just sort of get wrapped up into the thing, and whatever we're doing, whether we're playing *Cards Against Humanity*, or whatever else…"

While this occurred in an art class, it was not precisely an arts-related group. *Cards Against Humanity*, a popular but vulgar card game, is fun and entertaining (albeit age *in*appropriate). The students were associated with the arts, but their actions were not artistic or creative, they were just social.

At least one art credit is required to graduate. Lillian pointed this out, and that some students took additional classes. This facilitated interaction with other students, but defied categorization. There were no "art kids" in most of the visual art classes because *all* students went through at least one class. Consider this exchange with Natalie:

"Photography class? Um… I wouldn't put photography… like I couldn't associate a group with photography class. It's more of a…" she sighs.

"A lot of people take it?"

"A *ton* of people take it."

However, not all students take art at the same time. The interactions are somewhat at the behest of class scheduling. As Natalie lamented, "I took an art class in like 7th grade. And I think that actually counted that as my art credit, I was thinking about that on the drive over here…I have not taken an art class since 7th grade." Lillian noted that this these first art classes were randomly assigned, and that there was only one teacher, limiting the options. The random assignment of students into visual arts classes created groups of students, but there was an arbitrary connection between members of the same class.

For those that chose to join a class, intentionally, there was a bond that extended to social interactions. Academic tracks leading to a social bond was particularly noted for students in the International Baccalaureate program (IB). Students in the accelerated program are "in their own little school…" according to Kristi. The sequestered nature of IB has created a tight knit group as a channel that takes place through curriculum tracks. Students in IB see the effects of this as well, according to Natalie, "there's 33 of us, and we don't have classes with anybody else. And so we just sort of go around in this pack." Maggie elaborated:

> "Being in IB, our classes are all together. We are together for most of the day, and
> most of our classes. We know each other really well, and we don't judge each
> other very much, and, so… it's kinda cool"

At times this was painted as an adversarial position to other curricular tracks: "AP and IB *versus* core [curriculum] people," according to Lillian, "I would say that we, referring to like, IB, would be the ones that people would see as pushing the boundaries," according to Natalie. Both comments have an interesting perspective on individual placement: Lillian, an AP student lumps

her program in with IB, while Natalie did not mention AP as an affiliated group during our conversation. Kristi, who is also in AP, described the dynamic in this way:

"I'm really good friends with a couple of people in [IB], and it's just really hard, because they're always working on school. I don't have that much time, I'm taking AP classes, but it's not *that* much that I have to do… I'm working on essays all the time, [but] they just don't have time to do anything. I mean, ours is hard, but it's fun."

This intensity of coursework creates a cohesive group of members within the class, and seems to stymie relationships with those outside of the program. We will see that some of the ideas of the advanced classes create a sense of respect, the bond was presented in relation to the logistics of being in the class together, and the *esprit de corps* from the amount of work and dedication involved in the advanced school work.

Taylor spoke about the role of arts education for individual growth. Particularly about the way arts classes encourage personal exploration of interests that was not found in the discussions about the IB curriculum, or other classes.

"I think a lot of other kids – maybe [when they're] younger – there's an 'I want to be a rebel' thing, and – it's definitely a phase that's all about really fitting in with those people, and trying to come out of being a kid… trying to find yourself. But you're really not, because… it's kind of funny to see all those kids… they go into art class, and they discover things, more themselves through that. I think that a lot of kids that are in that point in their high school life, they get into art class, and they actually figure out, 'Hey, maybe I don't need to be like all these people

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around me, I don't have to try so hard to do this, I can just… be me, and do what I

actually want.' School shows you things you didn't know you wanted to do, or be,

or just… I don't know, relax, and figure out what your interests are."

This positive view places high school as a venue for exploration. Classes are a location wherein personal growth takes places, and identities are formed and defined. In the above quote, the arts are especially apt to encourage such growth (participants did not specify such a personal growth stemming from work in other classes). Taylor echoes what many of the participants said, that there is a persistent desire to become something, to grow and mature. This comes with a reflection on the past self as being naïve or vapid, and the present and future self being meaningful and deep. Classrooms are a venue for individuals to demonstrate their position and potential, and find others to bond with. Because of the conflicts of scheduling, including requirements to take some classes, those bonds fail to form consistently. In informal education, when participants actively choose to be a part of the educational activity, those bonds are more easily formed.

Outside of school, there were few locations that were specifically mentioned as spaces for social interaction. Church and church related activities were described by Kristi and Natalie, while the others often spoke about the importance of homes of their peers. As they grew up, coffee shops began to be recognized as an arts-friendly and mature location. They were places that allowed young people to dabble in abstract conversations, and experience art in a non-academic environment. Natalie and I talked about her patronage of a local coffee shop:

"When coffeehouses and stuff started to become a big ordeal, like, *art* started

becoming a big ordeal."

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"When was that?"

"It was probably when we all started driving, but um… maybe a year or so past that."

"What were some of those early trips like? Did you go with your friends? What did you talk about? What did you do?"

"I was probably more concerned about liking the coffee" she laughs, "Knowing that I didn't like coffee, and tried to make it seem like I did at the time, that was probably the first couple of trips. When we were little – like before we could drive – and we had to be *dropped off* at these coffee houses, I think it was more of trying not to stand out too much. Obviously thinking we didn't belong there. And so that was probably what our conversations were based off of. Like, 'oh, he's in college, do you think he can tell I'm like 12?' Now some of our friends play [music] in the coffee houses, and my friends work at the coffee houses, their art is in the coffee houses."

Drinking coffee is not an act typically associated with children. Being worried about drinking the right beverage, learning coffeehouse jargon, started as mimicry. Trying to fit in included feelings of doubt combined with a fear that others were keenly observing how out of place the participants were (essentially adolescent egocentricism). However, as Natalie and her peers matured, the coffeehouse as a location becomes *their* location, to the point of employment and exhibition of created objects. Conversations move from the internal, personal fear, to about the activities happening within. For those that were interested in these types of conversations, coffee shops were the main location described. From Taylor:

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"…coffee shops… and there's a lot of them here in [the town], the joke between

everybody is uh… after you know, maybe 7'o'clock, when sometimes they close,

it's like, 'Well, it's time to go home because there's *nowhere* else to go.' We only

have coffee shops. But you know, the museum is awesome because you know, a

lot of people go out and see the stuff, it's something that people would *want* to do.

I think that art being in the coffee shops really inspires people to [make art]. A lot

of the baristas are artists, or musicians, and you see them, and it's a really positive

influence because you see them succeeding, and you see them happy, they're

doing something that they like, and it's all around you, if you're in that

environment. It's a good place. It's a safe environment. You hang out there,

there's nowhere else to go, but still, it's a really cool place, because there's art on

the walls – not like a print of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* – original pieces by local

artists, and you see, 'well, these people live here, these people are doing this, I

could do this too,' and you just learn to appreciate it more."

Group membership, including with the community at large, occurs within these venues for

Taylor. The physical location facilitates interaction with others, with the positive, educative

outcome of more art production. However, not all of the participants felt that same comfort.

When I asked Kristi about art and coffee shops, her response was, "I thought those are more like

college students, or like friends' older siblings will do that kind of stuff and put it in places, but

like… it's older people." Perhaps, on some level, she, Natalie, and Taylor, have similar

perspectives: coffee houses are for a more mature audience. By being in that location, by making

connections to those that work there, display art there, talk and drink coffee there, they are

creating themselves as a more mature person.

School remains the primary physical location for social interactions. Hallways and lunchrooms provide spaces for unfettered interactions, while classrooms have the potential to create domain-related groups of students. This is strong in advanced curriculum tracks like IB, and rather weak in required classes that all students have to pass through. However, the exploration and personal growth in required art classes was described as poignant for students seeking to come to terms with themselves. Locations away from the school were attended freely by students with trepidation until they felt a camaraderie with others in that place. Once that connection was made, locations were signifiers of crowd membership. Coffee houses were the primary location for artistically minded youth. In lieu of actual physical locations, activity-based groups were identified in the conversations, most of these were school sanctioned clubs.

Clubs and extracurricular activities. All of the students mentioned activity with at least one club at the school, although membership was not always a channel for social interaction. "Yeah, I mean, there are big clubs, but I wouldn't even consider the clubs, they're just things you join for your résumé" according to Natalie. Kristi agreed, "Junior Civitan, Future Teachers of America, or [the baseball pep squad], like the government clubs, stuff like that, people just *do*. But it's not [that] you do it with all your friends, you just do it." The focus of this section is on the clubs that *do* present a distinct group of students. Clubs that have stereotypes and biases attached to them, along with narrative about how the participants experienced the interactions these clubs had with one another.

The cultural appreciation club "would have presentations on certain cultures and then they would go see plays, or view art from that culture, and kind of discuss it" according to Natalie. The club was initiated by IB students, and advised by one of the faculty members that teach in that program. She elaborated, "they had like an 'Africa Night' or something like that,

and there was an orchestra, and all sorts of things. It was this major thing, and you had this dance lesson and stuff like that, and. It was cool…" However, this was not a particularly large club, and was not referenced much by the other students.

The anime and manga club is another smaller club, with the strong, devoted following that has been attributed to anime fans. Hendrik was impressed by their technical skills, "I went to the anime club for a little while just to check it out, and a lot of people there [make] art that's really good." Natalie was aware of their presence as well, "the kids you see in like anime club, and like theatre are always the ones that come up with the 'art.'" However, Kristi had a different interaction with them:

> "I accidentally walked [into the anime club meeting] one day, trying to get to a different club, and they all just stared at me. So, that wasn't fun. They're like 'why are you here?' So, that was an awkward experience…"

> "How come? I mean, would they have expected you to come to Anime Club?"

> "I guess not. I don't think so…"

> "Why not?"

> "I don't know… it's like, they're all friends, and they're like 'what are you doing here?' like "you aren't… I think you're in the wrong place." And I was!

> "So they all know each other, and hang out in their own little bunch, too?"

> "Uh-huh."

"Do they hang out with other kids, too, otherwise? Or is it sort of insular like the theatre club, or IB?"

"I think they just hang out with each other, I don't really know…"

The distance between the participants and various groups came with less certainty about their behaviors and actions. Just as Hendrik has little knowledge of popular mainstream kids, Kristi has little knowledge of those in the anime club.

A club that was more centrally located in terms of visibility and interaction with most students is *The Page*. As Lillian discussed, "…is it a magazine? It's like a poetry, literary magazine, run by like, the IB/AP/Band/Theatre kids, so it's very liberal." The IB connection is logical, since the same faculty member that teaches IB, and facilitates the cultural appreciation club, is the advisor for *The Page*. Taylor illuminated the subject more,

> "*The Page* is just a big piece of paper, it's got two sides, and it's just… it's a page
> of paper, and so… um… it's got poems, short stories, quotes, anybody can submit
> that, and pictures, you can draw things on it. It's got to fit into kind of a vague
> theme… There are groups of friends that submit, and there are groups of friends
> that want to join it, there are groups that submit anonymously, and sometimes
> you'll see someone walk in, and they'll like talk to the teacher, but they'll put
> something in the box, and you never see their name on it, but you know they
> submitted something. It's a creative outlet for some kids, and you know, they
> don't need to have their name on it, and a lot of times, people will start putting
> their name on it when they realize that 'hey, people liked this, it's okay for me to
> do it.'"

The broad appeal of *The Page* creates an audience that spans the entire school. While

championed by those in IB, the poetry flyer allows for creative expression in an open manner.

The ability to create and share anonymously allowed students to create in a non-hostile

environment, with the ability to gauge interest and feedback. The interaction with peers via *The*

Page was used to create relationships. Maggie, who is also on the editorial board of *The Page*

with Taylor, said this:

> "Yeah, it's pretty cool! And the most famous issue is the Valentines issue every
>
> year, so for February, every year, there will be a Valentines issue, and that gets
>
> the most um… reaction from like, the school body, and submissions and stuff like
>
> that…"

When asked about the Valentine's Day issue, Taylor responded with, "the Valentine's Day one is

funny. It's cool to see, because people are really… sometimes we get people asking people out,

and it's cute." Thus, the club itself facilitates direct social interactions on behalf of the

submitters. There is a channeling aspect in that the both the club members who act as editors get

to know one another, but also that submitting to the publication is done in social circles. And

then, the actual poetry can be directed at individuals, creating a new (possibly romantic)

friendship dyad. Despite this, Maggie thought that *The Page* was a fairly static group, and that

those that submitted were different than those that would be more in tune with social networking.

"So there is a big difference in the [popular and poetry] groups, and [they] don't mix that much,

that's why it's not a growing group, it's kind of consistently small…" There is a bit of a

conflicting view: the creative submitters to *The Page* are groups of students from across the

school, but there are only certain types of people that write and submit poetry. Maggie defines a

sharp contrast between the popular crowd and those that would write poetry, indicating that

poetic verse would be created by quiet authors. It is worth noting that she does not describe herself as particularly gregarious, and she submitted poetry, confirming the attributes of those that write for *The Page*.

In summary, the anime club is proximal to the outsiders and "weird" group as described by Hendrik, and quite distant from Kristi's social crowd. The popular social crowd joined clubs for résumé building. *The Page* offers a creative outlet that is popular throughout the school, but because of a focus on poetry, there may only be a certain type of person submitting content.

Social groups by name. While there are precise venues (classes, the lunchroom, clubs) for these social interactions to occur, the groups themselves have complicated interactions and relationships as small collectives. Larger crowds, by definition, are more visible to the entire student population. Crowds in the literature are described as cohesive theoretical groups made up of many individuals. As noted in chapter two, the relative hierarchical relationships between crowds allows for more individual fluidity between proximal crowds. In other words, a student can move between crowds that are close to one another in the perceived hierarchy. Hendrik noted easy movement between the friend group in his art class, and a group of gamers at lunch, suggesting that the two may be proximal to one another. His regard for the popular crowd had a tone of disrespect, along with limited knowledge of their behaviors, suggesting quite a distance between his "weird" outsider group and those at the top of the pyramid.

This popular crowd is a bit of a trope for the students. Hendrik's dismissive use of "those people" was echoed by Lillian, "of course you're always going to have the popular kids, or whatever." Natalie described the hierarchical nature of the grade above her, "they have few popular people who control the majority or the rest of it." Stating that they dictated "clothing,

extracurricular activities, what you're doing with your free time… attitudes." Maggie identified this in their own class: "the popular group… if it's not cool with them or whatever, then they kind of push you aside, and you get cast out almost." She described the senior class as this:

"I have different categories. It *is* the popular group. Then we have the fake popular group that will do anything to be popular, then we have the genuine popular group, who are pretty much good people, they're just popular because they're nice people, and a lot of people like them. And then, we have the nice people who aren't popular, but a lot of people know them (I feel like that's kind of where I fit in). Like, I'm a nice person, if you see me I'm usually smiling, and I'll say, 'Hi' to you if I've met you before, if I haven't and we're next to each other I'll be like, 'Hey! I'm Maggie, nice to meet you!' And then… I'll get to know you, so I feel like, I wouldn't call myself popular, but… I'm *known*. Like, a lot of people know who I am, and I feel like just being *known* doesn't make you popular, but um… so… we got the fake people, the genuine nice people (who are popular), and then the not-so-popular but nice people, and then the people that are also not-so-popular, but are like, just… average, normal… not boring, but… a lot of the athletes that aren't in the popular group I feel like kind of fall into this group, they're not popular, they're not super nice, but they're like… the kind of group that has their own little friend groups. So… and then… there's the group that kind of doesn't fit in… and, they're kinda loners, and you know… some stuff they do, people might, you know, kind of outcast them because of what they do or what they look like, and…."

"Do you have any sort of examples of what they…"

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" Yeah, it's really sad to me, but" she says with a laugh, "um… like, some people who… like… dye their hair, like… who have like blue hair, or purple hair, or stuff like that… that's a very like, extreme thing… and it's a little… what we would call… no me, but… people would call weird. Like, *I*, I pride myself for being open and accepting to as many people as I can… um… of course, like, there's those few people who like, just irk me! But I really try to be open to everyone."

This lengthy description provides us with a starting point for describing the hierarchy and interaction of the various groups. The popular crowd is quickly subdivided into categories, including the "fake popular" group. Maggie further described them as "the ones that will look at someone and be like, 'oh my gosh, do you see that person? Like, we cannot be seen with them,'" and that their involvement with others was limited, "the fake people, they um… kinda don't do much, beside just… be with their friend group." Maggie was the only participant to give such a lucid description of the social structure. A basic outline of the groups could be organized in this way, for clarity:

- The popular crowd
    - Fake popular (they do anything for popularity)
    - Genuine popular (they are actually nice)
- Nice people who are not popular (but a lot of people know them)
- Not-so-popular people who are not particularly nice (unpopular athletes)
- Loners, outcasts (dyed hair)

Lillian provided some insight on the upper echelon of the social scale, but like Hendrik, lumped the entire popular crowd together. Her damning appraisal of the popular crowd was based off of this narrative:

"I feel like a lot the popular kids, if they don't understand [art] immediately, they kind of dismiss it, so… maybe something like that. Might just think that they could spend their time better, but… they could use a little bit culture, probably."

"When you say that, a little bit of culture, what do you mean by that?"

"I dunno, they're just very kind of closed minded, I mean, I don't think they're all racists, but… there's probably a good amount of them that are. And I don't know, I just know that um… just some of… I guess, like this happened like two days ago, I was talking to one of my friends, she's Indian, about curry, we were talking about curry, and um… this white girl was just like 'curry's not spicy.' And I was like, 'sweetheart, you've never had good curry before then.' She was like, it's just a spice, and we're like 'well, it's kind of like a sauce,' and I don't know… I don't know a lot of words in Indian language, but I know one, I don't even know what language it is, but it's a slang word for a white girl, it's *gori*, and so I like, I'm in this class with my Indian friend, and I texted her and was just like, "I know this *gori*'s not trying to tell us about Indian food," because like… like… you're literally telling people who invent… I got really annoyed, but um… they could use some culture, like some spicy food, or some art, or… you know… review of the Jim Crow laws, just anything…"

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The popular crowd is depicted here as ignorant, which Lillian takes quite personally. The role of cultural understanding, through (spicy) food, art, and historical context can be taken as a description of the popular crowd. According to Lillian, they are white, racially insensitive, and disinterested in cultures other than their own. There is also a sense that the popular crowd exerts a sense of propriety, the ability to dictate and define things. They are intrusive, offensive. It is rather poetic that the discussion is about curry, a term with a rich history of complicated race relations, heavily intertwined with the British colonization of India.

Lillian also described those that were not insensitive, what she termed NARPs (Non-athletic Regular People). This would probably be the Nice-people-that-are-not-popular-but-are-well-known category that Maggie described. While the popular fake crowd would dismiss peers to the hinterlands of social exclusion, the NARPs/Nice people would be more interested in those on the fringes.

> "The genuine people, like, it's really the fakes that are the ones that will look at someone and be like, "oh my gosh, do you see that person? Like, we cannot be seen with them," or whatever." She laughs, "The genuine people, they're not going to talk about it, but they're not going to go out of their way to meet, to get to know that person. Now, the sweet people, that I would say I am, kind of, to an extent, would maybe not care about being seen with them, or like, talk to them, or say something to them… and then the normal people," she says with a sigh, "eh… they're just another group of people, they don't really pay much attention to them. I don't know, It kinda isolates them, and… yeah, I don't know."

The fringe group (weird, outsiders) was mostly described by Hendrik, who seemed to have the most contact with them. While Maggie seemed to think that they were isolated because of rejection from the popular crowds, Hendrik was less saddened by the exclusion, but was aware that being rejected from others was part of the coalescing of the outsider crowd. According to him, the group consists of,

> "…likeminded people, people who don't sort of fit with the norm… ah…
> especially people with slightly different sexual orientations, something like that…
> some… you know, people who sort of slipped through the cracks, and haven't
> gotten the best education or social contact ah… you know, just… sort of… not
> necessarily the no-good-niks, but you know, just the sort of people who don't fit
> into the… the norm, and that sort of thing…"

There were very few descriptions of what, exactly, made these kids stick out as outsiders, with only the mention of hair color as being as shared attribute. Lillian and Maggie both associated dyed hair as being a bit outsider, but did not seem completely sold on the idea. Lillian herself stated that she associated it with theatre kids, saying that, "I can't talk, because I dyed my hair purple two days ago," with a laugh.

Athletics formed another activity-based social crowd, one that was seen as both a distinct group of students, and one that provided a cross-section of the school population. Natalie placed them in the middle of her depiction of the hierarchy, and Taylor spoke about them in opposition to arts-related activity groups:

> "…most groups are related to art in some form, there's choir, there's theatre,
> there's art class, obviously there's writing… but you know, sports doesn't really

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have anything to do with it. A lot of those people think that 'I'm supposed to

focus on *this*. I'm supposed to focus on this, and then the other things don't

matter, they'd just be a waste of my time. I need to spend my time on sports, I

need to do that.'"

Thinking back to the structural chart of the social hierarchy, we can begin to see that the

experiences of the students is convoluted and contextual. Adding to the previously established

groups, we start to see:

- The popular crowd
    - Fake popular
    - Genuine popular
    - Some AP and IB students
    - Racially biased
    - Most athletes
- IB students
    - Diverse
- Nice people who are not popular (but a lot of people know them)
- Not-so-popular people who are not particularly nice (unpopular athletes)
- Loners, outcasts (invisible to the popular crowd)
    - LGBTQ+ youth

This format however, is entirely arbitrary. One of the hardest things to consider when

documenting and constructing themes out of these interviews has been the inherently complex

nature of social groups. The students themselves used a wide range of descriptions and language

that are incompatible across the interviews. All of these seemingly stable crowds, when put into

context are not stable, nor even well defined.

Social groups as loose constructs. The idea of a social group is fabricated. It is part of

an intelligibility that includes categories that are described in popular culture, interpretations of

individual personalities, and personal theories and explanations about what one has experienced.

References to pop culture included allusions to *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985), a

movie famed for its depiction of groups of teenagers. Hendrik used this to describe his group of friends in art class, highlighting the inevitability of friendship through captivity within a class. If *The Breakfast Club* serves as a cultural touchstone for Gen Xers, *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004) may become a similar social crowd movie for Gen Y. Maggie mentioned the movie as a point of

Figure 4: The style of clothing in *Freaky Friday* (Gunn & Waters, 2003).

reference when talking about cafeteria dynamics. To quote the movie, "where you sit in the

lunchroom is crucial." Lindsey Lohan, the star of *Mean Girls*, was also in *Freaky Friday*, (a

1972 novel adapted to film in 1976, television in 1995, and in film again in 2003) wherein a

mother and daughter switch bodies, learning about the struggles each face (Waters, 2003).

Natalie mentioned *Freaky Friday* because of the manner in which the characters dressed (see

Figure 4). These movies, particularly *Mean Girls*, suggest a tribal structure of high school that is

rigid (and then challenged by the heroine). While these images of high school culture present

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such standards and set norms through vicarious learning, they are not the only source of media for students. Taylor cited the Internet for presenting other options for behavior and dress:

> "…because of the Internet, I think that you see all these things, and think 'oh, well, that's interesting, and maybe I could that,' and it's… a lot of things are becoming more into the public eye than they used to be. Molds are kind of… they're not really there anymore. I think you still come into high school thinking 'I'm supposed to be in this crowd, I'm supposed to popular, I'm supposed to be this, or look this way,' but as I'm seeing just being there for these two years… it really doesn't look like anybody can really pinpoint who somebody is… or what their stereotype is. It's really melting away. Sometimes you see people that are hanging out with this crowd, and then the next day you'll see them with another."

This creates a messier organizational chart, removing the boundaries between people. This created a challenge for the participants as they were asked about the distinct groups at their school. The structures that were used to describe the social landscape included pyramids, blobs, and pies. Hendrik, when talking about the fluidity between groups, particularly his connection with the friends in his art class, and the gamers, stated that:

> "I think a bunch of people sort of have their fingers in a bunch of pies, and they can shift between them, and I think I'm one of them. I've got a couple of different areas of friends who wouldn't necessarily get along by them-… you know, with each other. But I can bounce back and forth."

Suggesting that he is impervious to the demarcations of social boundaries, Hendrik distances himself from the categories, and defines them. This places him above the social norms, which is

a definition of "cool" (Danesi, 1994). Similarly, Natalie describe the same fluidity, but in retrospect, "I guess I had friends in each of the blobs, so it didn't really occur to me that I was doing something different than everybody else." Despite what she called a "marring" effect of social divisions, she described the different grade levels as pyramids and pods, "I view our grade as sort of a pyramid system, but I view the other grades as sort of individual pods." A few moments later she says "So, like the grade above me, is very much a pyramid. Us, my grade, I would say are like blobs. Like, Venn diagram ordeals," she laughs, does she think that the complexity is a bit absurdist? "The grade below me is sort of like *blob*, mini-blob." As she says this she places her hands in ovals on the table, suggesting the relationships between the blobs. After talking about some of the groups, she comes back to the structure, saying "Athletes," with and oval in the middle of the table, "church," off to the side, "people who don't do anything, but are still liked," to the other side of the table, and then finishing with "IB, band, theatre overlaps with band, um… then you've got like, clubs over here somewhere." As she says "somewhere," she shakes her hand above the table dismissively, as she has a hard time finding a logical place to cement them in relation to the rest of the groups. When asked about those on the fringes, she states that: "I wouldn't say that they're social. I think a big aspect of the blobs is interacting with other blobs. If you keep to yourself, you sort of fall behind…"

Social interaction facilitated by the blobs allows for contact between people. Taylor identified this as well: "I think a lot of the clubs have to do with [social mixing], like *The Page*, and the LGBTQ+ club, and the Environment club… everybody is kind of figuring out that things don't have to be really exclusive…" This new dynamic to me speaks of personal growth. As students mature, they take on new understandings of what it means to be part of their society. This became an important theme that corresponds with theories in peer relationships, and

personal growth (Brown & Dietz, 2009; Erikson 1968). As Hendrik was talking about the

manner in which popularity is established at younger ages, he spoke about the new looseness of

social interactions as the cohort grew up:

> "…The cool people who become popular become so because people are seeing
>
> them for who they are. They're developing and realizing that 'yeah, this person is
>
> actually pretty cool.' I'm not sure if there's really as much of an in-crowd as there
>
> used to be. It's more split up, especially now, because the number of followers of
>
> alternative people has increased alongside the traditional popular kids."

This transition was in line with Hendrik's own emergence within a group, and finding a sense of

himself through peer interactions. "I've just sort of grown into myself as time has gone on… [at]

the high school, everyone is sort of really relaxed, they've matured, especially the teachers. I

love high school teachers." The interactions between teachers and students was apparently

different than in his younger years, and he even projects that growth to his teachers (he has

implied that they have matured alongside the students). In many ways, the lax attitude of the

teacher, allowing students to congregate in the hall and play adult-themed card games, provided

the space for Hendrik to become involved in a social crowd. "I just sort of emerged in this

crowd, because I haven't been really cliquish or anything for most of my high school/junior high

experience."

Middle school and junior high years were discussed in passing, often quite dismissive

terms. Natalie called her written work (poems) a bit "futile" because of their topics. However, it

was during this same time period that she grew artistically and socially, in large part due to her

involvement with her church affiliated summer camp. When reflecting back on younger ages, the

participants all noted maturation and growth. Often this came with stories paired with eye rolls and sighs, these were embarrassing tales of past awkwardness Kristi also cited this time period as crucial for exploring the arts. Natalie noted that her growth to today included a change in perception of artists.

> "I think my idea of your stereotypical artist changed a lot, from when I was younger to now, like I guess when I was younger, like middle school, I would have thought of them more as like, kinda punk rock, sort of like *Freaky Friday* type ordeal, but now… now I guess that's changed a little bit, to where I wouldn't want to say like 'hipster,' because to me that sort embodies something like, 'basic.'"

Basic will be described further in the next chapter. She continued on a bit later:

> "I… did not know what to do with my eyeliner, I had like raccoon eyes practically, if you can even visualize that, and I walked around in all… I had like um… I wore like black plaid shirts all the time, and I had like these customized converse, I had all sorts of customized converse, and I had a red Fender Stratocaster, which was –ugh- *loved* that Stratocaster. And um… but I was not like an outlier, which was the weird thing, I was very much like, in the center of the diagram, I just dressed so strangely."

She continued to tell a story about she and her neighbors playing together in a "band," learning guitar chords from a video game, and playing in the driveway for passersby. Not all of the students were enthralled with this raccoon-eyed, guitar wielding energy, Lillian was aware of groups of students trying out this style:

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there's one part of like, the creative kids is like, in middle school they would be
considered like, goth, in a way, a lot of them kind of took that turn, and then like,
calmed down a little bit in high school,"

Natalie's style was obvious to Lillian, particularly at the time when adolescent egocentricism becomes a well-established phenomenon. The visibility of Natalie during this time period is implied by the school-wide superlative moniker of "worst awkward stage." That others saw her, and agreed about the assumed ridiculousness of the fashion tastes, hints at a shared understanding of what constitutes style. It also uses contrast as a method of definition. By describing the faux punk outfits, bad makeup, and apparently aggressive street-corner busking, Natalie describes herself *now* as distinctly different, mature, and put together.

Pushing away from child-like attitudes and behaviors also includes approaching late adolescence, and the upcoming collegiate careers for the participants. As Kristi described high schoolers in her city:

"A lot of people are coasting. Also in art, but people coast in general. And a part of it is living [here], living where [the] university is, because they see college, and like, by the time at the beginning of junior year, you're already ready to graduate, which I don't know if that's the case for people at other places, like they love high school, like everyone [here] is like 'Oh, I want to be in college, I see what everyone there is doing, and what they're involved in,' and like, 'I want to do that.' So I feel like people almost waste their junior and senior year, trying to like hurry through them for that."

Lillian is the type of person that she might be talking about:

"...we're also seniors, and a lot of us are leaving, so... a lot of my friends and
like, my mindset, is like, I don't really want to meet new people because I'm
going to be gone next year. And I mean, that sounds horrible, it's not like, if
someone is like 'Hey... whatever,' I'm not going to be like 'No.' But, at the same
time, I don't want to be making like, life-long friends right now... because I want
to, like, next year, hopefully, be in another like, state, and I can make friends
there."

She also mentioned going to the library on the university's campus, and several of the buildings,
including the art department buildings. Maggie was also focused on the future, but with a less
indifferent attitude:

"Actually I do have a couple of ideas of stuff to make for myself, because I'm
going to be going off to college soon, and I'm going to get to design my dorm
room, so, I'm going to get to start making some stuff. So, I'm excited about that.
If I ever get any free time!"

There was an understandable frame of mind that students were looking forward for the most part
to the next phase of their lives.

Social groups and conflict. One of the noticeable aspects of the manner in which the
students spoke was the use of the word "we." If we examine Kristi's words again,

"I feel like [this city] is a real chill place, and everyone's like... I don't know if
that's just my friends, though... but we all get along with each other, and even if
you do different stuff, like different sports, or like different stuff, everyone just

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kinda gets along. And like, 'oh, that's cool...' even if they actually don't think it's

cool. They'll like agree... just to be like a caring person."

There is an assumption of group membership. "*We* all get along..." is telling phrase that includes

herself within the entire populous. Kristi separated herself from IB students when talking about

her friends, stating that course load was stressful, and uncertain, but that she was happy with her

status in AP classes. Lillian, also in AP classes, lumped the two together. Her identity with her

friend group was used to change the borders of the group itself, creating a hybrid AP/IB group,

"there's an International Baccalaureate versus, like, AP and IB versus like, core people..." The

maneuvering of groups to create an acceptable identity also uses the personal strategy of

contrasting one's self. Individuals are defined by their crowd membership and the differences

one has from other crowds.

Although Kristi painted a picture of her town as being "chill," she was aware of conflicts

that had come up. When asked about specific issues that other participants had mentioned

(feminism, social equality), Kristi struggled to pinpoint the argument from the student-run

television program:

"I mean... for sure, people start talking about it, but it like it takes a little... like

not the beginning of the school year, but like last year, for sure... there would be

stuff on the morning news, because the morning news always tries to be –

...they're unbiased. People would see it and fight about it, 'oh, well... like,'" She

scrunched up her face, indicating the dismay of her peers, "and they'll start going

on little tangents... ranting about it."

"Like what? Do you have like an example of it that comes to mind?"

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"I don't remember what the issue is, but I remember someone coming on the

morning news and being like, 'this will just make our school even worse than it

already is,' and all this stuff. I'm trying to think what it was about though…

Hmm… It might have been… no, it wasn't… I mean it wasn't like more the issue,

but what it actually is, it was their view of it, which wasn't what it actually was. It

was like they had convinced themselves that it was something different."

Kristi's response is primarily about the medium, the manner in which the discussion was framed.

At first this is presented as changing the topic, or misrepresenting the argument. When asked

further, she stated that, "some people are able to control *it*, and other people just aren't." The "it"

was an emotional fervor that came with political arguments. This was a hindrance to her

involvement with the discussion. I pushed her for more details, and she offered that "some

people, they use their words, but not in a positive way. Just like, 'I'm gonna tear you down,

that's how I'm going defend what I believe by tearing you down,' which isn't right." The

wrongness of the approach, fraught with personal attacks challenged Kristi.

Those that were involved in discussions about politics seemed to have little concern for

the feelings of others. Lillian's group of friends was described as politically active. They

expressed quite vocally stances about issues related to race, gender, and sexuality.

"We're a very politically charged friend group and we talk about politics, we're

all very Bernie Sanders. We talk about the wage gap a lot, and talk about race,

and how it affects college, and how certain schools require quotas from certain

states. So my friends all applied to Ivy Leagues, and they did the math on how

many students from [our state] will be accepted into like, Brown, and then it

comes to like, how many white people, versus how many…" She trails off, "[We]
talk about that a lot. I mean, we're also girls, just teenage girls, we talk about guys
a lot, just, whatever happened that day… sexism in classrooms we talk about a
lot… I don't know why guy teachers still think sexist jokes are funny. It's beyond
me, but whatever. I just don't laugh anymore… we'll just talk about stuff like
that, how [the] dress code is sexist, I don't know, just random stuff… We like to
be angry all the time. Teen angst. So… Yeah, our teen angst shows a lot, but stuff
like that…"

These issues are far beyond the school campus, and relates to the focus on the future self. The
topics are not localized to personal narratives, but to larger issues of national importance. AS far
as the tone and manner in which this is shared with peers, Lillian said, "I'll buy shirts. I'll wear
buttons. We'll just talk about it. We like to correct people." It is interesting that Kristi, who had
little interest in a place for older people (the coffee shop), and bemoaned the desire to rush
through high school, expressed little interest for debates about larger social issues. She was more
interested in telling positive stories from personal experiences. Lillian, on the other hand,
actively seeking out university locations, dismissing the high school life, was deeply invested in
political issues (an adult role). Hendrik, lacking in some social skills, was unaware of any
conflicts: "It's just sort of understood that you keep [politics and religion] to yourself." However,
when asked about the challenges faced by gay youth in his peer group, he associated the question
with regional and national politics. "This is [the South], I mean most people are pretty closed
minded, church going sheeple. Anything that's different they cast out and ostracize."

The conflicts, as interpreted by these participants, are approached with an understanding
of one's own self. Self-identity, including a desired image of one's self, changes the manner in

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which the participants talked about conflicts. If the individual felt that they were part of the larger, global community, the conflicts were large-scale issues. If, instead, the participant viewed themselves in localized terms, the conflicts were more about interpersonal dramatics. One of the larger scale issues was feminism. This became the cause of conflict between some of the social crowds. For Natalie, an attentive student, feminism seemed to be an academic pursuit. The topic first came up as the content of poetry slams that she had attended at the coffee shop.

> "I am the outlier in class, because I don't necessarily have a strong opinion even
>
> though I'm a girl. Obviously there are the girls who are emotionally attached to
>
> the issue, and then there are the guys that… some can like go with it, and others
>
> make fun of it, and others are… we only have four guys, so I don't really know
>
> why I'm making such a broad generalize-…"

> "That's okay, it's good to know."

> "So, yes, I would say that I'm definitely the outlier in that I don't have a major
>
> opinion about it."

From the start, Natalie associates feminism with her IB curriculum, after this exchange she related the topic to books they read for class. Her opinion on it is mitigated, explained, in terms of her class dynamic, as "the outlier *in my class*." Of the many voices on the topic, her classmates are the ones who are granted authority, and Natalie herself defers any commitment to a "side" (as if equality is a dichotomous choice). Because she has placed herself as a student, the context of feminism is the classroom.

The discussions were less prevalent in Kristi's AP classes, but her focus was on intrapersonal interactions. When she was describing the rudeness of arguments that she had

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heard on the student-run news program shown on TVs in the classroom, feminism was the topic she had difficulty recalling.

> "Guys and girls are different. Guys should be allowed to do stuff. Guys should open the doors, that's not like, saying 'oh, I'm any less of a like, a girl' because of that. They should still be allowed to do that. That's not *lessening* me in any way. Having the freedom of voice, and being able to stand up for yourself and not just submit to everything, that's more like feminism. Having confidence."

Kristi later added, "I'm going to find value in myself… not submitting to a guy, but allow[ing] him to just be a gentleman. Do that. That's right, that's how it's supposed to be." For Kristi, the priorities were conflict avoidance. "Allowing" male students to behave in a chivalrous manner was keeping the status quo. Challenging others (and traditional gender roles) would have gone against the ethos demonstrated in her comment about interactions with peers: "everyone just kinda gets along. And like 'oh, that's cool…' even if like, they actually don't think it's cool." In essence, denying the presence of a difference of opinion in order to protect others from dissonance.

Lillian had no qualms about conflict, and a very different perspective on feminism:

> "…my friends went to the gay pride parade in [a large city nearby], and they both got these t-shirts from this feminist artist, and they're really cool, they really depicted women in a very powerful role, and… not in like a gender role… yeah we like to talk about, like when artist will portray against gender roles, just stuff like that is kinda funny. Or comics about feminism, those are funny.
>
> "What sort of comics? Like books, or…"

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"Naw, just like little cartoons, yeah, um… when it comes to writing… one of my
friends is reading the *SCUM Manifesto*, something about like… how men are
scumbags, it's… it's funny, and um… a short book, but we were all going to read
it when she was done. So… we just kinda talk about that, we all have buttons,
um… my friend makes buttons, like homemade buttons, and they say like, 'pizza
rolls not gender roles,' just like… kinda silly things like that, she made Bernie
Sanders buttons, and we all bought those… um… just stuff like that."

Feminism for Lillian is a sort of humorous fancy. While seemingly serious about her political
views, she was also a bit cavalier. Many feminists have used biting satire to make strong cases
for gender equality, including Valerie Solanas, the author of the *SCUM Manifesto*. First printed
in 1967, the book calls for the complete elimination of the male sex. Solanas attempted to
eliminate at least one man, Andy Warhol, when she shot him the following year. The interest in
second-wave feminism, and the current state of the feminism (that has opened up to critical race
and queer theories) demonstrates an interest in being part of a discussion that goes far beyond the
classroom or school. Given Lillian's interest in higher education, this is a fitting combination.
But, since she and her friends are still in the school, there have been conflicts between groups.
When asked about the intent of their vocal approach to gender issues, if the buttons and shirts
were meant to cause revolution, Lillian replied that,

"Yeah, people will be like… 'what is this? What does it mean?' And then like
twenty hours later they'll understand our point of view."

"So there's a lot of conversation that sort gets started off by those?"

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"Yeah, I feel like we kind of annoy people, though, because people stop asking, but… We definitely do like to make sure our opinion is heard."

Lillian had previously been friends with the Christian girls, but her outspoken manner may have had something to do with a falling out. As she put it, "I don't really have to try to relate to those Christian girls anymore, because I don't have time, I don't want to, it's too much effort. And they're annoying." I asked her "how come?" And this was the narrative that followed:

> "They're very like… they want to shove their beliefs, kind of down your throat, and a lot of my friends identify as being an atheist, I guess, and that's such a harsh word to some people, but… they're about it, they just don't say much about it, because there's not much to say, because they don't really believe in anything, and they don't do anything, they just hang out, and then someone comes by and tries to like… change them, it's just like, I'm not trying to change you… so…"

> "When… how do you sort of reconcile that with… if you guys are wearing buttons and sweatshirts with political sort of…"

My soft suggestion of a hypocritical stance falls on deaf ears. She continues,

> "Well, um… Now that you mention it, I just realized… Planned Parenthood. So like, they have that thing, where it's like a uterus, and so like, my friends wore pink one day and took a picture like this…"

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Lillian makes a sort of "okay" sign with her hands, and brings them together, making an approximation of the shape of a uterus.

 "…and put it on Instagram, and just said 'we stand with Planned Parenthood,' and one of the Christian girls was like, 'so you like to murder babies?' And we were all like…"

Figure 5: Ovary gang sign pins, from Pinterest board anoncrafts.bigcartel.com.

She makes a face of shocked disgust, and I ask, "On Instagram?"

"Yeah, Instagram… and we were just like… You know… I mean, I'm not going to say what we said, but we kinda… we were shocked at first, that they had the audacity to say that, and also, how ignorant that was, that they really don't understand what Planned Parenthood is about… and like, it… we were kinda disgusted by the fact that she thought that was okay, and that's what Planned Parenthood was, and like… yeah we definitely sparked some nerves, and they don't like us, but that's just because we're not… like them, I guess."

"So did that all play out on Instagram, or was it…"

"Yeah, I mean, um… It really just played out, the girl commented on it, and we talked about it at lunch, but the girl never like, confronted us… and then I had a class with a bunch of the Christian girls, and my friend who posted the picture walked in, because we all have the same teacher, and asked the teacher a question, and walked out. I talked to her just a little bit, and then the Christian girls were like, 'Did you see what she put on Instagram?' and like, how crazy it was, and I was like… 'wow.'" She says this last word with a defeated sigh.

"So you guys talked about it a lunch, like, your friend group talked about it at lunch?"

"Yeah, yeah, we just kind of like, saw it, and were like, 'yeah, that's insane.'

"And then… so there was no…"

"Actual confrontation or anything? There's no, like, necessary need for like… it could have gotten into a conflict, and that was not the point of the picture."

So what *was* the point of the picture? Lillian and her friends were tapping into a trending social media tag, making their context one of national politics. The Christian girl who commented approached the topic from a religious standpoint, but interpreted the post from a local perspective (I make this assumption with the commenter *in absentia*), directly engaging Lillian's friend. Not only were the politics different, but the relationship between the person and the concept was shifted. A large-scale statement had become a direct, personal interaction. Disagreement about the purpose and reason for sharing a photograph exacerbated the conflict between the two groups. In the next chapter the students will describe how differences in the purpose and reason of making art is less contentious, yet remain discordant.

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In summation, the interlocutors shared examples of specific locations that are attached to social interactions. Classes and clubs introduced students to one another, with friendships and crowds developing on shared perspectives. These shared perspectives are anything but static, as crowds overlapped, and interactions had fluidity. IB students were also athletes, artists were also gamers. Obstructing any schematic of social interactions (pyramids, blobs, Venn diagrams) is the relationship between a personal identity and social group. As adolescents transition out of high school and on towards adulthood, they are in a position of establishing their desired self, and reconciling that identity within their social circles. This can lead to conflicts between individuals and their social groups as the underlying philosophical assumptions may be entirely different. The driving question is about the nature of being artistic for teenagers. What is the caricature of the artist? How do these descriptions relate to the individual sense of self?

Chapter 5: Analysis - Art and Artists

"I'm definitely not a professional artist, because professional means you get paid

for it, so um… I'm not that. I'm *artistic*, but, I feel like to be an artist you kinda

have… art as like, winding through your DNA. And, for me… art is fun, and it's

cool, and it's a great stress relief, but it's not what my day-to-day life is like,

centered around."

What it means to be an artist

Maggie's perception above of being an artist establishes the format of our discussion. There is a distinction between being *artistic*, and being *an artist*. There is the concept of the artist as a vocation, but also that being an artist is an established trait, engrained in the genome. Yet, it remains a discipline that is approachable, a physical creation that offers entertainment and therapeutic value. Despite all of that, she still shies away from being an "artist," opting instead to be "artistic." The distinction between these two terms, and the other definitions of both art and artists are the focus of this chapter. These conceptions become intertwined with how participants see themselves. Feelings of fear and doubt about the self are present in the emotions paired with sharing works of art. There is an absence of a cohesive visual arts social group. There are forms of art that lead to collective identity. They are built on shared intelligibilities about art and artists and have strong social bonds for the students involved. The visual arts are less discrete, and include painting, craft, and cartooning. At times they are also personally meaningful in a way that exposes the artist, leaving them vulnerable to harsh critiques from peers. The qualities of

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different artistic domains in relation to social groups should be considered by arts educators as we teach personal growth, the technical craft, and the larger context of artistic production.

Only a select few are artists. We start first with Maggie's suggestion that being an artist is an arrangement of proteins in a double helix. Beyond DNA, Maggie also discussed the role of talent in the making of an artist. Conceptually these two seemed synonymous.

> "It's like Beethoven. Who was born, and could like… he was so musically
>
> talented. Then there's people who get lessons and they become very well. I would
>
> be the type of person that would need lessons to become very well. Some people
>
> can just draw, and they have an eye for it and that's artistic, [too]. But, I feel like
>
> you can be born more artistic or less artistic, but it's also something that can be
>
> taught. But only to an extent."

Nature-nurture interaction. There is an innate ability that must be honed and practiced in order to reach a higher level. Hendrik agreed, saying, "good, good, good artists are few and far between, there aren't a large amount of them, especially those that have refined their style." He noted that refining a style takes more than coursework. Doing art on one's own was crucial to developing a personal aesthetic. "Being an artist and being in art class are very different things…" Hendrik's observation was also noted by Kristi.

> "People in my class aren't like that serious about it like some are. I feel like most
>
> people who like actually tried ended up [doing] really well, just because like, they
>
> put the time into it, but there were definitely like some people who like didn't care
>
> and it was like…" she makes a sour face thinking about their work.

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Part of the avoidance, according to Lillian, was due in part to the uncontrollable artistic abilities, "some people didn't take it that seriously because of that excuse, like, 'I'm not good at it.'"

If art ability is innate, what are the attributes that go along with being born artistic? What is the expected outcome, in terms of artistic production, that go along with predestined artisticness? What are the challenges that these afflicted individuals face?

First, the practical challenges to being an artist. From Maggie's perspective, the career possibilities present a difficult hurdle.

> "It goes back to what I kinda said about how safe you want to be. Or how much you can just like, 'give in' to art. Because you can't be in total control when you are an artist, because, I mean I wish I could say that art is necessary for life, but it's not… it always has been throughout life, but it's not one of the things that are necessary to *live*. Doctors? They're pretty necessary to live. And food? That business? It's necessary… art?" She shrugs her shoulders, "Meh… It's something that has consistently been there, but it's not necessarily… necessary, I guess."

When art is an inherited trait, it is a compulsion. It does nothing for the essential survival of the species, but acts like a disease. This state of being causes immense personal happiness, with the side effect of disregard for stability. By succumbing to this condition of artistry, and compulsively creating, the artist spends an inordinate amount of time working on their craft. Maggie continued to describe a peer in her class, a poet:

> "I feel like, the guy who is super good at [writing sonnets], he just kinda has a *gift* for it. How can you come up with a sonnet every two weeks? That's craziness! So, yeah… it was like all day, every day, he was writing poetry. And I feel like, a

lot of… people who I would peg as artistic, it's kind of like that, they're often

drawing, or sketching, or um… I don't know, doing… artistic type things in their

spare time."

This time commitment was intimidating and frustrating for other participants, Kristi in particular,

"I struggle with people. But like, I can… I can do it, it just takes a really, really

long time. And like, sometimes when I paint or draw… I mostly draw people. I

wanna be quicker… it takes so long to draw people."

"[My mom] enjoys art, she painted a lot in college, she doesn't anymore. She

doesn't have time to… with my little brothers, because they're little… so she

doesn't really have time to. She really likes art, a lot. She likes looking at pictures

and studying it, and she likes to paint when she can. But she doesn't have much

time for that."

When discussing her friend's paintings, Taylor noted the amount of time that it took to complete

the project.

"They work on them for like, months at a time, they just kind of slowly, like,

maybe they won't do it for a week, and then they'll like do it every day for, you

know, a few days, um… they… I think they put a lot of effort and emotion into

it…"

The internal drive of a genetic predisposition to being an artist is consuming. It requires a

commitment of time and energy that one seemingly has to fight, or "give in" to. When

artists do identify their condition, they are connected to specific materials of the craft.

The use of materials is crucial for those that recognized art as a product-oriented venture. Using the right materials (including unusual ones), was indicative of technical skill or novel ideation. Both were noted as being desirable to peers. There were some paths that peers took to begin making art, Taylor identified markers and notebooks.

> "Everyone gets a moleskin journal, and they draw in it, and some people realize 'hey, yeah, I don't really like this,' and put it down, and they never touch it again, but a lot of people think, 'I want to branch out and get into this more,'"

Natalie claimed that there was a distinction, a difference in the materials and how closely it was associated with art:

> "I don't really know of anybody who does like the classical…, I suppose what you think of as art. Like I don't really know of anybody that paints, or sketches. I guess I know people that draw… or music."

And later in the interview,

> "I attribute those characteristics [painting and drawing] to artistic people, but I couldn't tell you where that would be in our school."

This distinction, between Taylor's friends using markers and moleskin journals, and formal artists, starts to make a contrast in assumption about what it means to be an artist. The distinction is not intense, but there is a nuance in approach. For Taylor, this is a casual, comfortable friendship that allows for exploration of materials. Peers are either into it, or they put the notebook down. Returning to the concept of artistic proclivity as an innate talent, there is an easy explanation and defense for not being artistic: "I don't really like this." For those that continued

on, and worked in "classical" materials were invisible to peers like Natalie. But working with a material does not equate with mastery of the medium. Hendrik had some harsh assessments about the art world that he had experienced:

> "It's sort of on a scale, because things that you and I may deem as a very nice piece, or it's very well done, the layman nowadays has almost little to no artistic talent. So you don't have to be as talented as you do in an artistic atmosphere to be considered an artist. I think it is based more on skill, and not so much on personality."

Although talent is seen as rare, and precious, it's not necessary when all you have to do is be slightly better than others. The talent becomes skill, technical proficiency that supersedes any other traits. Being an artist is about virtuosity (relative to others). Hendrik tones this down some as he talks,

> "Of course, art is more than detail… a bunch of people sort of think of a good artist as someone who can do stuff that's photorealistic, but even if you draw cartoons or anime, just being able to a have a style that you cultivate yourself, and it's detailed and it looks professional, I think that's the biggest part."

Taylor reiterates this point, that being an artist is developing a personal voice, a style:

> "You learn how to do things by copying and tracing, a lot of the times you do. But then after that, you develop your own style of things, and it helps a lot. It gets you, you know, 'I can do this,' and you'll copy something to develop a technique. Someone can draw a line, and they can learn how to shade something, [but] it

doesn't mean its art, if it's just a bunch of lines on a paper. The important part of that is getting your own style, and developing your own originality."

That perspective prioritizes material usage as the key to art production. The performance of creating a work of, instilling a sense of competence, "I can do this," encourages repeat performances (particularly in Achievement Goal and Self-Worth theories (Covington, 2009; Maehr & Zusho, 2009)). From the perspective of those that do not consider themselves artists, this is a very different experience. Natalie spoke to that point directly, "I suppose if they can do things that I can't, I would describe them as artistic." The self-attribution as a non-artist coincided with an understanding that making art is unapproachable. Natalie does not approach visual art making tasks because it be futile for a non-artist to do so.

For those that identify as an artist, the resulting pride is palpable. Hendrik boasted about this status,

> "The biggest thing in the classroom setting that sets an artist apart is [that] when you're doing art people just sort of [have] a reverence for it, people are like, 'wow!' you know? You've created something. No matter what sort of clique they belong to, most people can really appreciate being able to create something that amazing, especially when by their own standards it's seemingly impossible."

The assumption of what others feel matches the emotional state of Hendrik when he looked at certain works of art as well. "I can appreciate art as just an amazing sort of technique and whatnot, especially pencil [drawings] before anything else, because I can't paint. I don't know how hard it is to paint, although I'm sure it's very…" This projection of his own feelings, attributing the same thoughts and feelings to his peers, is not an unusual practice. It is another

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aspect of the egocentricism of adolescence. Just as young children assume that others have the same physical observations and experiences, teenagers (and adults) assume that others have similar emotional reactions.

Some materials were not demonstrative of artistic ability. Natalie explained that the required photography class was dismissed as easy, "because you just go around the school with a camera and take photos." This lack of physical manipulation of a material resulted in works that were incompatible with judgement based on proficiency. She continued, "I wouldn't say that there's really any criteria for it, it's more of like 'just take pictures.'" The class is digital, so there are no darkroom methods, and the assumption is that the ease of pushing the button prevents critical discussion about the work. The need for familiarity with the medium is related to Hendrik's relationship to paint. Since he claims to be unable to paint, he is unaware of the challenges and success of the painter. Without knowledge of the process, Natalie is left unimpressed by photography.

Kristi seemed to have a little more understanding and respect for the medium. I asked her about taking art as an easy class: "When I think about photography [peers say], 'I'm going to take a picture and I'm going to be done,' but they don't think of like the back end of that, everything you have to do." Maggie added that it was beyond the work on the back end, that there was an artistic vision that was required to compose the image within the frame:

> "…photography is one thing that is becoming more popular, but you don't really
>
> see people that are great photographers. They might catch a good moment, or…
>
> and…" she sighs, "I mean, it takes artistic abilities to see that, but I don't
>
> know…"

The role of the photographer seems to be one of chance, fortunate timing. I asked about what made a "real" photographer better. She said,

> "Definitely… color, the scene that it's catching… the exposure, the focus, what is in focus, what isn't in focus. A photo that is a piece of art has meaning behind it. A photo that is a selfie? It's not art."

She backtracks this answer,

> "Or, I don't know… if there is an underlying meaning behind something, then… I feel like, if it's portrayed in a physical, or visual, or auditory way, and it has underlying meaning, it could almost be defined as 'art.'"

The interplay between message and medium has long be a part of discussions in the art world. How a subject is presented, including the form, changes the context and understanding that we can build from what the artist has given us. Take for instance, a blurry selfie taken in a mirror, the photographer's hand covering his own face. The flash from the cell phone making a star of white, illuminating the center. He seems to be in a crowded space, leaving me with a claustrophobic feeling. The artist in this case is Ai Weiwei, one of the biggest names in art currently. His selfie, *Illumination*, was taken in the elevator as he was being arrested by the police in what many have described as a politically motivated charge of tax evasion, with the

Figure 6: Ai Weiwei, *Illumination*, 2014.

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intent of silencing the frequently critical artist. Ai's work has often been about unsatisfactory working and living conditions in China.

For Maggie, she starts by describing the work in technical terms. "Color." "Exposure." "Focus." She justifies photography as an art *because it has technical actions*. These things, these variables that one must control in order to create an image must be wrangled. Yet, she very quickly moves to the meaning, opening up "Art" to a nebulous category that could include just about anything. She's not far off from some of the prominent artists and art critics of the postmodern era. Her transition, from a visceral reaction towards a reluctant admittance that just about anything with meaning can fall into a category called "Art," suggests that there is certainly more to being an artist than technical skill.

Art was described as a compulsion by Maggie, Hendrik and Taylor. Something innate. For Natalie, Kristi, it was a time consuming process. For Lillian, it was focused on traditional materials. These are the things that make up the physical act of making art. But what about the artists themselves? I will turn now towards what the participants said about being an artist, the attitude and caricatures of artistic teens.

Personality traits of artists. Above, when I quoted Hendrik in regards to artists, and he spoke about the layman not having artistic talent, he used a phrase that struck me. "I think it is based more on skill, and ah… not so much on personality." You can have the personality of an artist, but without artistic skills and production, the proper attire and attitude do little (at least for Hendrik). Our interlocutors offered a wide range of personality traits for visual artists. There were distinctions made between performing, literary, and visual artists. As Maggie was keen to point out:

"[Artists] are more keep-to-themselves. But then again, poets… people who are more artistic in the poetry sense, are more quiet. I think it has to do with the difference between performing arts… same thing with show choir… they're very big personalities. I think of a couple of people who are in show choir, and I just think… 'Wow, they're like… big, happy, like… big personalities.' Same thing with theatre. So I guess performing arts people have very strong characteristics, and then more visual arts people have similar characteristics"

The following are some of the characteristics that were associated with the visual arts.

Emotional and expressive

Natalie:

"Emotional."

And:

"I associate the humanities with being more in touch with your emotion, so when I think of artists, I sort of think of *mega*-emotion."

Kristi:

"Interesting… expressive"

Taylor (about art classes):

"…the whole point of it is to focus on mak[ing] something that's, expressing what you want to express"

Vulnerable

Maggie:

"I feel like art isn't something that can necessarily give you security, but when you become an artist, you're okay with that. You're okay with not having security."

Rebellious

Hendrik, on his friends in art class:

"Sort of a rebellious, good-offy sort of attitude,"

Natalie:

"I would expect somebody who pushes boundaries, they kind of step on people's toes a little bit."

Intelligent, divergent thinking

Kristi:

"[They] think differently… not like a weird 'thinks differently' type of way, but just like…' I'm not going to think inside of this box, I'm going to go a step farther and come up with other ideas,' which makes conversations more interesting, too, it's not just like, 'oh, well, how was your day?' 'My day was good.' It's deeper than that."

Liberal

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Natalie:

"Feminist. Leftist…"

Lillian:

"…we have this… is it a magazine? It's like a poetry, literary magazine, [*The Page*], run by the IB/AP/Band/Theatre kids, so it's very liberal…"

Hendrik, in contrast to others:

"…most people aren't [against art]… but the jocks, and sort of the more conservative, traditional people [might be]"

Attention seekers

Natalie, in relation to a project by the environment club:

"I don't think it was ever about the work of art itself, I think it was always about viewing the artists as trying to gain attention"

Hipsters

Natalie:

"Wannabe. Hipster. Um… wannabe-hipster."

Maggie:

"…there's this one guy from my school, who's really good at theatre, which is kind of artistic, he has a very distinct style. He wears a lot of button down shirts, with skinny leg jeans, and kind of [an] almost little vintage type look, and then his

haircut is kind of sophisticated. I don't know the whole look… it's very 'hipster.' That's a good way to describe it, a hipster type look."

Chill

Kristi:

"…if one of my friends said that [the new kid in school is an artist], it would be like, 'oh my gosh, that'd be so cool.' They'd be like very chill, and into photography."

And

"I feel like our view of artsy is more of a relaxed person who desires to paint… not just paint, but enjoys making *stuff*, I guess."

They stick out

Maggie:

"I feel like the artistic way of thinking is not as popular as just being normal. I feel like if you're seen… if you're super artistic, you're not part of the popular crowd or whatever. It's not a bad thing at all, it's just not something that so many people are in to. And so, I don't know many super artistic people. You can see people that stick out, and you know there's something different about them, and then, sometimes you just realize, 'oh, maybe they are kind of artistic.' There are some kids that just stand out in school, and then I realize, and I see them as editors of *The Page."*

"I'll see kids around school that maybe don't fit in with the popular crowd, um… something like that, and then I realize, that 'oh… oh… they're good at art,' or 'they're good at music,' or 'they're really good at something…'"

"I think a lot of artistic people fall into that outcast kind of group."

Taylor:

"The expectation [for artists is to be] the weird kids, I'd say. Weird kids, with like, colorful hair, thrift store type of clothes. People think that there's a big group, I don't really think that there is. I think it's just [that] people group together because they've found their own individuality and people think that, 'well, those are the art kids, that's where they belong.'"

Independent, private

Maggie:

"I feel like the people that submit poetry are more private people. I sound cliché saying that it's a way that they are able to communicate out their feelings, rather than being so flamboyant in their friend group."

Hendrik:

"…artsy people have a lot in common… often times they'll be more introverted types"

"…people who have worked a lot on their art are almost reclusive in nature, usually."

Dependent on others

Hendrik:

"Sometimes when I can't think of anything, I ask around. It's like, 'give me something to draw' or something like that. And most of the time, because people suffer the same problem, I don't get anywhere…"

Taylor:

"I think that everybody wants to help each other out with that sort of thing, we'll sit around the TV and we'll be doing something, we'll be drawing, and we'll compare, contrast, and say like, ask about like 'is this a good idea,' 'is it not?'"

According to the participants of this study, artists are at times introverted, relaxed people. Other artists are rebellious, divergent thinkers, with liberal politics. Their emotions and expressive nature sticks out through their hipster apparel. They need others to make art, both as support, and an audience that can give them attention. There are conflicts and contradictions, however. Hendrik and Kristi viewed art as apolitical. Being expressive and emotional is quite different than being introverted and refined. One of the problems in the creation of an artistic crowd is that the underlying premise of what it means to be an artist is unclear. The methods used by artists were equally convoluted.

Art media. The teens talked about many different materials and approaches that they identified as art media. The range of instruction available to these students, including ceramics, drawing, painting, photography and graphic arts was noticeable, as the students all talked these courses. There were also other forms of art making that the students clearly associated with

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creative pursuits. Some were "the usual suspects," such as poetry (*Ut pictura poesis* per Horace) and performing arts, others forms are further afield. The role of theatre and choir in the school was obvious. The scale and presence of these programs made discussing art without including them unimaginable. These will be examined after a brief overview of what the kids said about decorative crafts, and writing.

Very frequently, the idea of art and the production of specific decorative things were inextricably linked. However, the distinction was clear, "Doing crafty stuff, not necessarily art, but crafty stuff is fun," as Kristi stated. She had picture frames in mind, made "out of wood, and paint them." Other crafts included novel uses of materials, for one of Natalie's friends, old records:

> "I remember one friend of mine she used record labels, and she cut out the parts
> of the record labels that she liked, and she put it all together in a frame to make a
> picture. She would cut out the record label name, and would use it as a design."

For Maggie, the use of candy wrappers:

> "I did this one project that I absolutely loved, but it was so hard… I did stick with
> the stretched canvas, and the acrylic… it was for my grandmother, and her color
> scheme in her kitchen are sort of earthy reds, oranges and browns, so I painted the
> background really sloppy… free. Red, orange, brown, yellow, that kind of color
> scheme on the background, and then I sketched out a cross on it, and then I used
> gold Rolo wrappers, and I mod-podged it into the shape of that cross, and made
> sure it was cut out all perfect, and so, it had the background of the acrylic paint,
> and then the cross, it's shiny and stuff, it was a cool project."

She continued on to describe using the website Pintrest to inform a project: a vase with tissue paper flowers sprayed with perfume. Although Maggie was unaware of the historical context of her creations (gold-ground icon painting), she is employing a number of artistic approaches in a casual manner. The focus of matching a color scheme (warm analogous) and drawing contrast with the sloppiness of the background and the sharpness of the foreground. However, she downplays her acts, labeling them "kindergarten," and laughing at what she apparently perceives as unsophisticated, and therefore lesser. While the content is decorative, and the outcome meant as a gift (the perfumed flowers were for Mother's Day), the production still required art knowledge. Even so, she began her interview with the claim that "I've always felt artistic. But, I don't know if I would call myself an artist."

Natalie had a similar sentiment, taking the term "visual art" as a broad category that would include cinema and theatre, and "not just paintings or sculptures." Because of that, she was unable to identify a clear group of artistic individuals. The category was so broad that it included everyone. For Natalie personally, the form of art that she engaged in was writing. "I write a lot." Maggie noted a distinction between poetry and visual forms:

> "Poetry isn't necessarily my favorite form of art, because… it's auditory, not
>
> visual, and I'm more of a visual art type of person."

Being the "type of person" that does one form of art or another speaks to an underlying assumption of the students: there are different media for personality types. When talking about the visual artists, Hendrik was adamant that they were solitary, introverted people making paintings and drawings. Students involved in theatre were decidedly gregarious, and frequently cited as the "artistic kids." When I asked Natalie to describe the stereotypical artist at the high

school, she quickly identified them. "That's always their forte. The kids you see in anime club and theatre are always the ones that come up with the 'art.'" Maggie agreed, and noted the distinction from the visual artists.

"I know they all have a certain like, style, and kind of feel… like you can tell if someone is into theatre, they just think differently."

And,

"Theatre type arts people are definitely more social than like visual type arts people. I don't know… their personality is a lot more relatable, and they're more comfortable to be around, they can make you feel comfortable and are inviting, whereas visual arts art people, again, I'm making a lot of generalizations….

"That's okay."

"They're more keep-to-themselves, um… kind of, but then again, poets… people who are more artistic in the poetry sense, are more quiet, so I think it has to do with the difference between performing arts…" she brings up their personalities, and then finishes her thought "…performing arts people have very strong characteristics, and then more visual arts people have similar characteristics."

Perhaps this gregarious nature supported a more social interaction of the theatre crowd (or the social interaction encouraged more extraverted behavior). Taylor identified the collaborative nature of the art form itself,

"…if you want to get to know them, you can just join- you can take the class, and just be a part of theatre production, you don't have to be in the play, you can be

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backstage and all that, and you're still in the social circle, um… but I think that the people that try for the play, they want to be *in* it, they're really passionate about what they're doing."

This collective energy was seen as essential to the group interactions. Hendrik identified the collaborative nature of the artistic product:

"I think that when you're in drama or band – especially band – band is like a whole community, people there are very closely knit, and everyone knows each other and there's a whole dynamic. I don't know so much about drama, I think it's sort of the same thing since you have a lot of people sort of collaborating on the same project you get to know each other. But in something like [when] you're making your own personal art there isn't really a lot of group contact that you're forced or nudged into, so you can sort be more isolated from all of that…"

The format, the medium, of group performance channels participants in a very different way than creating visual works of art.

The commitment and level of dedication of the performing arts was similar to athletics, including a class during the school day that supported the development of band, show choir, and theatre. Also like athletics, Maggie associated show choir with the popular crowd.

"Especially the ones that have stuck with it. Now, when it first came, when we got into eighth grade or something, show choir was an elective, or whatever, there were more people that were kinda fake. But now, it's kinda moved into more genuine people have, are, are being… are in show choir."

This note offers more support for the need to have a passion and dedication in order to compete at the highest level. The fake, or "basic" crowd that might have attempted choir washed out. Those that stuck with the program were channeled in a similar manner to the other popular clubs and activities. They became a group that was distinct, and somewhat insular.

The nature of the performing art clubs and activities had these apparent differences: that performance groups worked together as a team, facilitating social crowds to develop. The final product was seen as a bit more entertaining than the politically charged creations of sculpture, buttons, and photographs. There were passing mentions of the role of choice by the actors and singers, but it was presented as a democratic group choice, rather than a particularly issue driven discussion. The social groups involved with the performing arts were more interactive, with personalities that were noticed by others, like the visual artists, they "stuck out," with passion and emotional expression on a personal level, rather than in terms of the works that they created. What the students did not address was the role of the composer, directors, and playwrights that originally produced the works that being performed. Lillian briefly touched on this distinction, comparing works of literature to the performing arts.

"I mean, I feel like visual and performance, they have to be aesthetically pleasing. To understand it you don't really have to read into it, you can just kind of look at it… but in literar[ture], you legitimately you *have* to read into it, and try to get a sense of… but I feel like with both when you do look at it or read it, something kind of clicks – or might not click – and you'll know how you feel about it…"

"Tell me a little bit more, what do you mean by aesthetically pleasing, what does that mean to you?"

"It either goes with your aesthetic, and you understand it, and maybe you want to be a part of it, or… you can tell 'I genuinely like this,' or 'its pleasing to the eye,' or 'I don't like this, it doesn't go with me,' but that, that's all opinion, or 'I don't understand it, and so I don't like it,' so… It's all your personality, too, and how you think something's going to work with it, or against it."

There are the deeper personality traits of aesthetic experience that move beyond the reasons of content (entertainment, political, class projects), and push us further into the realm of individual motivations for creating works of art. These personality traits were brought up when Natalie and Taylor talked about a project that the environmental club was involved in. Natalie described the incident like this:

"[The school] tore down the fountain [in the courtyard] this summer. But, I remember last year the Environmental Club, which I guess would sort of go along with the theatre kids, made a sculpture [promoting] recycling. They just threw in a bunch of trash, they filled the entire fountain with trash, and it was like, milk cartons floating around, and everyone was so confused, and no one really realized that it was 'art'…"

We returned to the topic towards the end of our conversation,

"When you're unwilling to learn about something, that's what I would say is sort of closed minded. A lot of people just kind of looked at the trash in the fountain, and they're like, 'well, why? What's your point in this? You're just making… You're doing this for attention. You're just throwing milk jugs in a fountain to get… There's nothing wrong

with me throwing away my coke can in the trash can,' you know? 'You don't need to do this,' stuff like that."

"So, they were more concerned with the physical concept, that it's just trash in the trash can? Did they have any like personal attacks based on that? Did they call out anybody? Was it about the work of art itself? Was it anything about the artists?"

"Un-unh, I don't think it was ever about the work of art itself, I think it was always about viewing the artists as trying to gain attention."

I asked Taylor about the work,

"I think it was promoting people to recycle and it was cool because it was surprising to walk into school, and it was in the middle, the exact middle of the school, where everybody sees it, and it inspired a lot of people to wonder, like, 'What is this? What is this club? I'll do it next year.' A lot of people were like, 'why is this here? I don't understand it,' and it… it just… it raised awareness for what they were trying to do."

"Would you consider that a work of art?"

"Oh, yeah. Yeah."

"How come?"

"Because, I mean… they were expressing an idea, they wanted to put out to the public through making something that… you know, it's not just a poster with words on it, it was awesome. It was a sculpture, it was cool."

There is a mismatch between the assumptions of the artists and the audience, and even between audience members. Natalie seemed frustrated with the work because it was not clearly didactic, her closed-minded peers were unable to understand the work. For Taylor, the confusion was described in a positive manner. The perplexed peers in her case were assumed to be more interested in finding out more about the environment club. The personalities of these two participants, their view of art specifically, informs their interpretation of others viewing the sculpture.

The artists involved in this particular piece are identified as theatre kids, or at least a large overlapping of the members of both groups. As we've heard before, theatre kids have "big personalities," (according to Maggie). These gregarious youths are vocal, involved in acting, an activity that demands the attention of an audience. In this case, they are presenting a work of art that was immediately noticeable, the courtyard fountain taking place of center stage. The materials, the props they use to tell the story are common, nothing but trash. This creates a problem when we reflect back on the manner in which Hendrik and Lillian discussed the role of material usage when it comes to working with art media. Where is the technical craft that Maggie was interested in? If anyone can put trash into a fountain, what makes this an artistic effort? Taylor offers this defense:

> "when you see people's works, like up in the hall, you see people doing
> something, you're like, 'That's nothing special,' and 'you think you're doing
> something awesome, but I could do that.' And… um… it's funny, it's kind of
> weird to see people say that, because, then you think, 'well, if you could do it,
> then why aren't you?'"

Perhaps it has something to do with the desire to *not* attract attention. Natalie seemed to think

that the work was dismissed because it was an effort to focus on the artists. In many ways, she

seems to be accurate. Acts like this have a precedent in art history that often comes with

discussion about the role of the artist. While the environment club students turned a fountain into

a work of art by adding trash, one of the more significant art actions in the 20th century was a

piece of trash turned into a sculpture called *Fountain*. Marcel Duchamp's work, submitted under

the pseudonym "R Mutt," was a standard urinal, purchased at a nearby plumbing store. The work

was the only submission rejected from the 1917 American Society of Independent Artists

exhibition (egged on by Duchamp himself, who wanted the piece rejected, yet still wrote an

official explanation from the rejection committee defending the work) (Foster et al. 2004). This

act nearly a hundred years ago transformed the relationship of the artist to the materials. Through

the magazine that Duchamp and Beatrice Wood founded, *The Blind Man*, the creation of

Fountain was defended in this manner: "Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the

fountain or not has no importance. He *chose* it." The act of the artists constituted the creation of

art because it transformed thinking. As Taylor stated, "they were expressing an idea." Note the

use of *they*, the artists, rather than *it*, the sculpture. While this does not present a problem in her

mind, it was an issue for those that Natalie heard. For some, this was an act to gain personal

attention. By doing this, the artists did indeed draw attention to the *act*, rather than themselves.

By denying any focus on media per se (using found objects, rather than manipulating a material),

the act of throwing garbage becomes the point. This is evident by the response, "there's nothing

wrong with me throwing away my coke can in the trash can." Past the initial confusion, the

premise is still understood, the installation was about the offending act.

This trash in the fountain emphasizes the characteristics that were described above. The artists are involved in a club that could be deemed "liberal" (in the current political climate). They expressed an idea in a manner that designed to engage viewers on an emotional level. They commanded attention, if not for themselves, for a topic they felt important. They caused trouble with this act, doing something that in another context would be misdemeanor littering, or at least a stern lecture from a teacher. But the work itself was met with suspicion. If this was accepted, then *all* actions could be considered artistic. If that is the case, there is no distinct discipline, no class that can incorporate all of the aspects of art. No shared criteria for peers to judge.

Art as a mode of thought

"[My mother] taught me in kindergarten… she taught me all the way through 5th grade here. And so, I've learned a lot from her in school… for school I had to draw something, I show it to her and she'll help me, but she'll never like…

okay, it made me mad when I was little, but like, because other students would be like 'how do you do this? What should I draw?' and she would give them ideas, she'd be like 'you can do this…'

I'd ask her, and she'd be like 'No, I'm not telling you. Every child is an artist. This is individual, you can figure it out.'"

-Kristi

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.

-Pablo Picasso

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If we understand the participants in this study, there are many different ways that art is made. They cited poetry, writing, painting, drawing, installations, cinema, and even the culinary arts. Their use of the term "art" extended beyond medium or product, and into a mode of creative, divergent thinking. In contrast to the idea of the artist as a distinct, emotional, expressive, liberal, hipster is the conception of art as a part of *all* people. Participants shared with me what they felt were the purposes of art, the forms art takes, and the reasons teenagers create things.

Approaching art making was not as straight forward as painting a canvas. Attempting to be creative comes with the possibility of being labeled *basic.* A relatively new slang term derived from the hip-hop term "basic bitch," it describes someone inauthentic, yet exceedingly common. The term has overlap with the "fake popular" concept described by Maggie, in the sense that these are poseurs. I asked Natalie to clarify the term, and with a laugh she replied that "Everyone does it. Everyone wants to kind of dress hipster, but then it defeats the purpose." The purpose being expressing individuality. In her loquacious manner, Taylor explained that being original is desirable, but there are some that follow trends of originality.

> "There is a lot of judgement about people that follow trends. I don't think there's
> anything wrong with [following trends]. There's a big push to be different now.
> Because of the Internet we see more things, and we see things that people like,
> and I guess a term for that would be *basic*. People don't want to be basic. It's
> really funny, because there's nothing wrong with [being basic], I mean, if you like
> something, you like it, the only thing is- there's nothing wrong with this either-
> the only thing that's kind of unfortunate is when people think that *you have to be*
> *something just to be accepted…*"

In a more callous manner, Lillian described Christian girls in a manner that seemed to fit the "basic" stereotype:

> "They make coffee cups because they all drink coffee. If they have to draw something, they're going to draw where they went hiking, and then bible verses as their senior quote, just stuff like that. Something relatable to their religion, it's all consistently the same."

Despite engaging in art making activities, the works are empty for Lillian. Her framework for looking at art prioritizes political meaning. Her previous and ongoing hostility towards the Christian girls complicates the interaction, but that is precisely the issue at hand. The manner adolescents interact with one another forms biases and challenges to understanding the artistic acts of one another. An underlying assumption is the rationale for creating works of art. For Kristi and the Christian girl group, it was a personal bond (and a strong one, see Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2009), but for Lillian it was meant to change the viewer. For others, art was a demonstration of skill, a personal catharsis, or just a class project. The motivation for creating a work of art has implications on how those works were shared with others.

The purposes of art. People do things they enjoy. Tasks that are challenging but accomplishable provide an enormous amount of joy. Kristi found painting to be in this position, "I like painting. That's my favorite to do, because it's more like… what you want to do. I can draw, but it's kind of frustrating to me." She elaborated on this idea of being responsive to the artist's control, "…when you paint, you can just paint over it and fix it, or do whatever." In picking her subject matter, she chooses thing that are achievable, "like, more abstract things. Or flowers. I can't do people, people are not my thing at all." Maggie also chose paint, as she felt

comfortable with the medium, "I use acrylic paint and canvas. Stretched canvas. It's really easier forms and cheaper." In talking about their work, there was a sense of personal enjoyment, particularly with Kristi, who found that art was a pastime that could be shared with her friends.

"A lot of people put [art] on Instagram … all right, this is kind of weird but a lot of people, they'll be like, 'oh… like, let's all go paint this picture,' and we'll all paint different things but we'll go paint stuff and that's fun."

"Where does that happen at?"

"Maybe at someone's house, it depends…"

I ask about the conversations.

"We probably don't even talk about what we're painting. I mean, we might a little bit, just like 'oh… how did you do that, like that looks great' and like that kind of stuff… conversations just kind of flows, because painting is so relaxing, so like, we'll just sit there doing that, and like the conversation will be all over the place."

Fun. Relaxing. For Kristi and her peers, the production of art is an event that is communal and comfortable, with conversations that might have to do with the narrative of the work of art,

"…like when we were painting the Dominican [the conversation] was of that… when we were painting the crosses, we ended up talking [about] Jesus, and that sort of stuff… But I guess like flowers is just fun conversation, like what's going on…"

For others, they had seen others create works of art that were humorous. Lillian shared this experience about a classmate being inspired to draw from a joke:

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"I know this one girl, she's very nice, I had a class with her and in tenth grade she like, drew our teacher this very articulately like… pictured… it was funny, because we called our teacher 'Lord Protector,' I don't know why, it's beyond me right now, but he was our AP European history teacher, something about… sometime in European history, so, we called him 'Lord Protector' as a joke, and she wrote, she drew a character that looked like him, that had like, his mannerisms, and he loves basketball, so she made a basketball, he had like a cape, and she wrote Lord Pro[tector]… it was really cool, and really nice, and he still has it…"

There is a theme of art production as a hobby or activity that takes some cognitive attention, but not a huge amount of rigorous study or preparation. It is not positioned within art history for the creator, and the outcome can be entertaining. The meaning is lighthearted, and the change in the viewer is limited. This is not always the case.

As we saw in the story about the environment club filling the fountain, art can be used for social and political ends. As Lillian put it,

"I think art can be used to start a revolution, for real. Buttons can start that. T-shirts can start that. One thing can spark a whole… spark anything really. And it can lead… [to a] small impact, or a big impact, it depends on… the magnitude of the issue in the first place, but yeah, little things I think can definitely make something bigger happen."

This was seen in the hallways of the school for Taylor,

"I see a lot of stuff on social issues, like political issues, and like, equality stuff… and that's really cool, that's really awesome. I've definitely seen a change in people's attitudes towards… certain groups of people that they discriminate against, or whatever, it's definite-… it's really changed, because they see things from that point of view, they look at this and they get the message, they get something out of it."

"Like?"

"I'd say a lot of racist, homophobic people, you know, and… and it's sad to say they are at the school, but they are, and uh… it's… you can see a difference in how they treat people, or what they say to people. You know, the other day, I heard someone say, 'Oh, wow, that's really gay,' and someone, their friend just goes, 'listen, it's the 21st century.' And it's nice to see people accepting other people because of um… things they've experienced at school through these programs."

Works of art start conversations between people, particularly when the topic is politically charged. Many artists also employ materials that challenge the visitor to make sense of the content of the work of art. Lillian's politically charged friends included a member interested in the use of the body in art.

"My friend… she does identify as bisexual, but she really likes vaginas, and how they can be used in art. So… she always tells us about performance art that involves someone's vagina, so we look into that… she informs us… it's like a daily conversation… she's a great person, but something about how… someone

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knits… they put like yarn in their vagina, and like knits it… it's weird. But it was interesting. *I* didn't understand it, she… enjoyed the fact that, I don't know… performance art like that… it's really odd…"

Casey Jenkins' work, *Casting Off My Womb* is a performance installation over the course of 28 days, wherein Jenkins sits in a gallery space with a skein of wool inserted into her vagina. She pulls the wool out and knits a band, like a scarf, for the duration of the installation, hanging the product across the gallery space. She discusses the work as a comment on the control of the body, particularly the way societal forces place control and limitations on the female body. "As the deafening response to my work demonstrates, there is a hell of a lot of clamoring noise in society about what a person with a body like mine should and shouldn't be doing with it" (Jenkins, 2013). The combination of artist and medium reiterates the previous discussion about the role of the artist in the production of art, particularly as attention seeker.

"One of the most common comments in forums is that I am an 'attention seeker' – levelled as a clear criticism. But as an artist, I do seek attention for my work – I want to express and communicate ideas, and I refuse to feel compunction for that. What I am not seeking through this work is external validation of myself – in fact, the work is primarily about casting off the need for validation from external sources."

When talking about the work, Lillian and her friends discussed the meanings that they saw in the work (although she wasn't clear about what those meanings were interpreted to be). I asked if others at the school overheard the conversations, some had, and had given "weird looks."

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Lillian's attitude was nonchalant. "I'm like, 'you do you.' If anyone says something to you, that's different, but a look is like… you're better than that, so you're fine."

At other times, the political nature of created works can be met more directly with challenges. Natalie experienced this first hand with her column. She was recommended to the editor of a local newspaper to write a weekly feature, which was originally placed in a section for kids. It was moved to a more prominent selection when this happened,

> "my column actually got cut off because um… one of my pieces they thought was too… adult-like for a child to write…"

> "What was it about?"

> "It was about local politics. And so, they like… in that sense I guess, I had to learn that my audience might have taken… I don't know… I envision my audience as sort of a community. And you have to think of what's going to be acceptable. If you're twelve at least."

Considering her current interests, "I focus a lot on nostalgic things, like childhood," she seems to have distanced herself from the politically charged content. "I wouldn't say that my work focuses too much on the '-isms,'" Maybe she is looking towards childhood in response to her feeling of always being treated like an adult, perhaps it is a safer topic than politics. Or she hasn't been offered much in the way of politically charged works of art in her studies:

> "Outside of poetry slams, I couldn't say that I've seen any artwork dedicated specifically to feminism, there are books we read in class, dedicated to that, but other than that I wouldn't say any visual art in particular I can think of…"

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She does defend her actions, stating that "I never think that 'I can't write this because no one will like it,' I think like, 'I'm going to make this sound good, while quietly stating my point.'"

That there are books being read about feminism, a monumentally important subject in the visual arts, and yet Natalie cannot recall any particular works, is a bit disheartening. There is an enormous body of work to choose from when discussing feminism in art, and numerous books about the subject. The role of classroom subjects in the production of art was noted by Hendrik and Maggie. Hendrik's response to the first question ("when did you feel artistic compared to your peers?") was about projects. "Well, sort of the major thing when you're capable of art, and you're able to do art is, it comes out a lot in projects, especially group projects, or solo projects when they sort of allow that avenue…" Projects in non-arts classes allowed students to explore new topics, or to apply an already existing idea. Maggie had an artistic itch she wanted to scratch, and did so under the guise of an assignment:

> "I remember what I did. I did a painting, and it's…" she sighs, "it was definitely
> not the best piece of art I've done, by far, but it was definitely the most
> meaningful. And um… I get kind of emotional talking about it… my cousin died
> in a car accident last year."

> "I'm sorry."

> "It's okay… thank you. I did a portrait of her, with some of the things that I had
> learned in an art class… using different values, using a gray-scale. So it was a
> gray-scale, the background was blue, because that was her favorite color, and so
> for this project, I um… I talked about perception and emotion. And how emotion
> changes your perception, because if I were to show that painting that I did to my

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uncle… her father, he would think it was gorgeous, it's so meaningful. Whereas, when I show it to my classmates, which is what I did, they were like, 'eh… the nose looks kinda weird… that background color is kinda weird… her hair looks kinda weird…' and um… it's just somethings a little off about it, and it's easy to point out but, when you have a connection with it, it's… it changes your perception of it so much."

"When you started that piece, was that your intent? Were you striving for a really accurate portrait, or were you…?"

"I actually… the reason that it wasn't as good as it could be is because… I did it all in one night!" she laughs. "Like I've said before! So I just um… I printed out the picture of her, and I real quick sketched out the values, and then I made a grid, so that I would be able to blow it up, and then I sketched it all by myself. It was not easy… but, I did it. And then I painted in the values, and tried to make it look as good as it could, but like, my techniques weren't as great as they could have been. But I just… I just really wanted to get it done, and I knew I was using it for the project. *I had had the idea of doing it, and then we had this project, and I was like 'hey, maybe somehow I can use this for my project.'* And I'm like, 'okay, I'll figure that our later,' so I went ahead and did it, and then, I got to thinking about like, art and perception, and emotion, and how I perceive it differently than someone that doesn't know her… I used some quotes from class, and it turned out good… and you can tell it's her, from the picture, it's just some things that technically, as an artist, you can see are off, but does that make it more artistic? Because if it was just like a photograph, how would that be interesting?"

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The role of non-arts courses in allowing, assigning, and encouraging the use of art in projects was an opportunity for Maggie. She was able to have a practical use for art in that context (unlike her perception of the real world, where art did nothing for health of food production). This was not equally beneficial for Hendrik.

> "…even on individual projects, um… stuff from German to English you're given opportunities, especially for projects… to use that artistic creativity."

> "When that comes up, do other kids… do they know who the artistic kids are, and sort of seek out a ringer for their project?"

> "Yeah."

> "Have you been in that situation?"

> "Definitely. And because I'm intelligent as well, I've been carrying people pretty much my entire school career. Which is why, given the choice, usually I do individual projects."

> "You have no desire to be the wanted artist?"

> "No. I've played that role too many times."

Hendrik's frustration at the idea seems about the interaction with peers. In a stark contrast to Kristi's interest in making art with friends because of the camaraderie and support, Hendrik views as "carrying people."

These different situations that provide a context for creation, as an entertainment, a persuasive argument, or for class projects. The way that these three reasons were discussed

involved others. From the hobbyist perspective, Kristi was viewing art making as a fun activity to do with friends. Political works of art are created precisely to instigate change in others, revolutions in societal norms. Class projects are assigned, at times to groups of students. These situations force the issue of creating a microsociety, venues that are with friends, adversaries, and unknown peers.

Being an artist. Deep reasons for creating art related to the personal experience of making works. They speak to a need that is intrinsic, self-rewarding processes. Whereas the entertainment value of art making as discussed earlier was (at least for Kristi) embedded in a social interaction, the political rational resulted in an external outcome of social change (and potential pitfalls of derision from peers), and class projects were motivated by a grade, the following driving forces have less reliance on external results. The catharsis of creation releases an emotion that has an immediately pleasurable effect. "A job well done is its own reward," like most trite adages, has a kernel of experience that some of the participants identified as a reason for creating art. But overwhelmingly, art was a state of mind, a mode of thought that was inherent to the artist.

Catharsis

> "…sometimes in art, it's just like a relaxing thing that you enjoy, but then other times, you need to pick it apart and look at every little piece to be specific, and learn from it… I don't know if that makes any sense at all… But [at] other times, it's really like relaxing… 'today's been a really stressful day, I'm just going to paint, and get my mind off of it,' because I don't really think of much when I paint. And so it's just relaxing to do that."

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For Kristi, the cathartic act is not specifically about a release. The distinction between making art with friends, where she described similar relaxing feelings, and this more personal level of creation is specifically in the rationale. The context, rather than doing something "for fun," she cites the stressful nature of the day as a motivation. While there is not a flood of emotional reconciliation, there is still a purification, a state change. Natalie's writing has a similar source: the stress and futility of teenage life.

> "I normally write about thing that I'm unhappy with, so I guess it's sort of like a release. Like a journal… a diary.

> "Do you do that every day?"

> "No, no, only normally when something major happens."

In stark contrast, Lillian saw some art making as a relief from pen and paper, "playing with clay is fun… working with clay relieves your hands from writing all day."

> Creating works without credit was seen by Taylor. In her role as a member of *The Page* editorial board, she would see students submit works of art anonymously.

> "Sometimes you'll see someone walk in, and they'll talk to the teacher, but they'll put something in the box, and you never see their name on it, but you know they submitted something… it's a creative outlet for some kids, and you know, they don't need to have their name on it… and a lot of times, people will start putting their name on it when they realize that 'hey, people liked this, it's okay for me to do it.'"

The act of creation began with some sort of reason, some desire to present the creation, and only once validated did the author come forward. Maggie's painting of her deceased cousin had a similar route, she had a desire to deal artistically with the loss, and applied the painting to a class project only because the circumstances arose. The painting was still intimately connected with resolving her emotions. In some ways, the class *allowed* her to deal with these by providing a less self-indulgent rationale.

This was not a theme that was easily identified, but it was present throughout the interviews. The level of emotional strain that comes along with growth and resolution is a frightening topic for most people, and must be even more difficult for teenagers.

Work ethic

A second strand of motivation for creating works of art was the satisfaction of a well-created work of art.

> "people [in the art class] that cared about the product that they [make]… I think that goes from different areas, too… not just like art, but you want to deliver something well, made and well done, or like well spoken. So the desire to succeed first off… so the lazy people, that gets all of them out."

An aspect of this work ethic was the dedication that encouraged students to work through mistakes. Kristi identified her mother (an art teacher) as the source of this perspective:

> "When I was little my mom used to always tell me an artist wasn't just someone who can artistically provide a thing or something, it is someone who can take a mistake and make it into something beautiful through that. And so, I feel like that

if they – the people I'm thinking of in my class – if they mess up, they just quit

right then, and… I… I don't personally consider that like an artist, but they would

probably consider themselves an artist. But I can think of other people that can

just kind of do it, and like they'll do something, and gracefully like fix it, like one

of my friends who…what were we even doing? You know like the pencils that are

watercolors…? We were doing that, and… something happened, she got like a

dot… just like a big dot in the middle of her picture. She made it into this pretty

thing and I was like… I dunno… that's more artistic than just dropping it…"

Lillian, too spoke about this distinction, and may have had the same source. When asked to

consider her art teachers in younger grades, she noted that:

"…they always mention that there's not a wrong or right way to do art, anything

can be art, because it's really in the eye of the person who made it. And you can't

necessarily mess up, you can always turn your mess up into something else,

something greater, and I… I don't know, those were good life lessons at the same

time…"

The positioning of the arts in a place beyond criticism, outside of objective standards encourages

an attitude of self-defined criteria and persistence. Working through problems and struggles are

challenges that many students face. But is this any different than difficult math problems? The

difficulty of structuring a sonnet? What is the mode of thought that must be worked with and

through in order to solve problems?

"I've always felt artistic, but I don't know if I would call myself an artist." For Maggie, being an artist is all about divergent thinking:

> "I feel like when I approach something, I don't think of it as like 'there's only one way to go towards this…' you can come at it different ways. I love to be creative with things, and I don't know… I'm not… I'm not artistic in… draw[ing] something that looks exactly like a photograph would but… I feel like I'm artistic because I think of things differently, and add creativity to average stuff."

Using materials in novel ways, or approaching a task without functional fixedness was the trait she associated with artistry. "I feel like what an artist does… they… hmmm… I feel like they take like a common thing, and do it in a very uncommon way." This approach, just as she had taken candy wrappers to make a cross, utilized the mundane, and elevated the materials themselves to an artistic level. Taylor, too, identified the way that the media was incidental to the process that was involved in creation:

> "…A lot of people, if they're really good at writing, the love writing, they'll go to advanced English… and a lot of the school does that, and it's similar to art in some ways, because they can do the same thing with… in different media, in different ways. Since there are so many people that do love writing in the school, they may not ever touch a camera, or a pencil for the sake of drawing, but they'll love getting into poetry, they'll carry around a notebook everywhere. So, sometimes it overlaps, because they see the similarities, and what they like to do,

and sometimes it doesn't, but it's… I think it's still art, and it's still good for everybody to see that people are into this, and it's okay to be into it."

Notebook or canvas, word processor or paintbrush, the act had an assumed similarity in the mode of creative thought at the genesis of artistic production. For Lillian that divergent mode of thinking was personally beneficial, if still related to interactions with others. Artistic people were inherently teachers, sharing knowledge with others. Artistic modes of thought were as individual and independent as the people who exhibited the traits,

"I think being an artistic teenager means having a purpose. You know? I feel like everyone can be artistic… in different ways. People like to use that word as a synonym for different, or weird, but… now? I'd rather talk to someone very passionate about painting or, about photography, versus somebody who plays video games at their house with their guy friends… I don't know, I just… I think I used to be the opposite, but now… they're just more interesting, they have more to talk about… they probably know something I don't know, and so we can share… I can learn something new, they can learn something new… And I don't know, I think being an artistic teen is a good thing, and hopefully you can carry out your artisticness in college, through… just having a hobby, or through your degree, or through your life, really… it's a good start for being a good person when you grow up."

Integral to the artistic mode of thought was a positive perception of the entire person. The artist was better off for having this mode of thought. For Taylor, this included a sense of self.

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"I think now, people my age are figuring out what art is. Because a lot of people think that it's just… you know, a picture, or it's just a painting, that's just what it is, it's a category. And I don't think it is, I think that you can see art everywhere, in… as I said, I think that my definition of art would be creative expression, through creation, and… you're doing something and you're making something, even if exists only for a day, maybe you're making an outfit, maybe you're trying new things, and you're trying to make new things, either for other people to see, or just for you to see… and I think it helps everyone's process along to see what you're doing, to see what they're doing, and… even if they're doing a different thing, even if they're painting, and you're making things out of bottle caps, you're doing something [that] other people haven't done, but it's still inspiring to see someone doing well…"

The artist serves as an inspiration for others, encouraging personal development and growth through creative acts (whatever form they might take). However, these were not the only outcomes associated with the creation of works of art. The comment that Taylor made, "either for other people to see, or just for you…" leads us to a very important dynamic that has run throughout this project. The role of the other, the audience, the reader, the viewer, in the arts. Just as friendships are developed through a sense of shared understanding, and groups are channeled through shared experiences and activities, the things that are created by teenagers are shared with others. To do so is frightening.

The fear of sharing art

"…you'd look over and the person would have like an amazing picture, and you're like, 'oh, well… that's really good,' but they just can't see it for yourself which is hard." – Kristi

When asked about sharing works of art with others, many of the students expressed a hesitation. There was a tentativeness that included uncertainty about the venue, worries about being perceived as too proud, or failing to meet expectations. When works were shared, they were done so in a manner that was uncritical. Safe spaces for sharing art were instrumental in developing feelings of self-efficacy, and in the growth of the whole person.

The limited venues when showing works of art was frustrating for some of the participants, including Maggie, particularly when compared to other clubs and school activities.

"…in my high school, we don't really have much opportunity to show off art. And to express our artistic skill to the whole school. I mean… football players, every Friday night, they get to show off their skill, same with any other sport. But the artists don't really get to do that. So, it's more of an underground type of thing. And you [have to] be in the crowd to know the thing…"

The concept of limited locations is reminiscent of what Natalie said about the art rooms, "I don't personally even know where the art room is, and I'm a senior, that's an issue." While *The Page* offers a public, published way to share poetry, and theatre and show choir have performances, the visual arts, at least at this school, seemingly had little in the way of avenues for students to share and display works of art (particularly non-class assigned projects). There were some teachers that were identified as supportive, but no particular venues for the visual arts.

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Without obvious venues for the students to share, they often felt a bit uncomfortable presenting works without a justifiable reason. This was more noticeable in the distinction between close friends, and wider social crowds. Maggie stated that the underlying reason was a sense of humility:

> "I would be fine showing any of my classmates something that I did or whatever, but like, I don't want to… I would show like my inner group it, definitely, but I wouldn't want to show it off, because I don't want to see boastful. Because… unless someone like, inquires about it, then it's kind of *random*. Like, unless it comes up in conversation, or something like that. Now, if someone comes to my bedroom, I will show them all of my artwork! If someone comes over to my house, and I happen to be showing them around the house, and 'oh, this is my bedroom, by the way I did this little thing, and it was fun…' so… but, um… I don't know, it's like, you don't want to shove it at people, because it kind of takes away from it…"

Personal connections often came with intimate settings, the preexisting friendships created scenarios, in homes or otherwise, where art could be discussed. Natalie, who once had a weekly column, had misgivings about reading to friends,

> "I wouldn't say that the art that I've seen necessarily is per se shared. I think that when I see other people's art, it's normally their own, and I just happen to see them with it. Obviously, I don't go around, like, walking around with my journal all the time, reading people my stories."

Natalie laughs at the absurdity of unsolicited art sharing.

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"But, yeah, I don't know… So it's normally a personal… I just come upon it."

Conversations, a key feature of Kristi's interactions with peers, extended to discussions about art. Personal narratives became the entree to talking about art:

"you'll be telling [friends] a story, and 'oh… last year like…'

One of my friends who went to Haiti… and she loves painting stuff, and she'll be like 'oh yeah, like, I went to Haiti and I saw this really cute child who was doing this, do you want to see a picture that I drew of it?' so she'll show it that way, like conversational, almost like bringing the art into it… but then other people… they don't even say anything about doing art at all, and then you'll be in their house and be like 'Oh, you have all these pictures!' It's like… never knew!"

The manner in which social conditions afford individuals opportunities to share art, and to have access to works created by peers, is an important element of artistically minded social groups. Social groups lead to interactions in specific spaces that become safe to discuss shared interests. However, as we have seen, not all art is made with friendly intentions, or shared belief systems that are hallmarks of homophilic social crowds.

The difference between artist and audience, as seen in the example of the environment club installation in the fountain, create a tension. The questions that arise go beyond the object, or even the meaning, and aim directly at the artist. At times this can be a difference that leads to small misunderstandings. Natalie saw this dynamic in the revision process in language arts:

"I guess it really depends on the prompt, but if I'm prompted to write something it would not show the quality of my writing. And so, it's sort of the same thing, if

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you ask me to edit your paper, I can really only edit my own, because I know

what I'm trying to say."

Presumptions about what constitutes art presents a serious challenge to teenagers. If we expand

the framework of art to include both literary and visual forms, what Natalie has said highlights a

chasm between audience and creator. When sharing a work of art, particularly art that is made

with the emotional expressiveness the participants described, there is a very real concern that the

artist would be ostracized, cast out for not creating works of art that the social crowd is

expecting. Yet, paradoxically, the novel, inventive use of materials was precisely what made art

so interesting to these teenagers. Taylor recognized this fear in her classmates:

> "I think that kids joining theatre to explore it are just like athletes taking art
>
> classes. They realize that they want to do it, and they explore it, and they don't
>
> really feel ashamed of it. Now, some people do, some people are really
>
> embarrassed by it, and they don't – they won't – join it. That's sad, because
>
> they're not getting to do what they want to do, just because they're afraid. They're
>
> afraid because they feel like they won't fit into their mold. And they want to,
>
> because they think to survive in high school, they need to be one thing."

Being one thing, a member of one blob, removes the individuality that was repeatedly identified

as being an artist. When creating a work of art, the artist is singled out, but the ever-present

audience of peers remains. They watch, and on some level they judge. The expectations of the

social crowds is mitigated through choosing the venues and works of art that protect the self

from any risk.

Assigned projects are essential to classroom education. They are also an artificial substitute for the organic process of creative thought. This changes the outcome of the work for Natalie,

> "When you write your stuff, do you pretty much keep that to yourself?"

> "Yeah, unless of course, in that specific instance it had to be like shared for an event or something like that."

> "Do you find a… a difference between those types of things, like the things you do for your own personal…?"

> "…And things that I share? Yeah, I do. Um… mainly because I feel that things I share normally had to be instigated – they were asked of me. Whereas things that are my own, I would say that they come from my own inspiration."

Class assignments protect the individual artist from accusations of braggadocio. That comes at the price of one of the hallmarks of artistic thought, the inspiration. The emotional, expressive nature of the artist is squelched by classroom assignments, but the potentially impotent work is at least shared.

A second mitigating circumstance that allows for sharing of works of art is an uncritical audience. Maggie and Kristi both used familial and peer bonds that were stable enough to withstand any criticism. While Kristi remarked on the way in which conflict was avoided through self-denial ("[friends say] 'Oh, that's cool…' even if like, they actually don't think it's cool."), she still shared works with her friends, and in particular for her mother, "I was just doing it [a drawing of her church], my Mom wanted me to do it for her." The confidence that her

friends would not call her out for technical craft was further reduced by the standards by which Kristi judges art: it's less about the content, and more about the ability to push through mistakes and fix whatever happens in order to create something beautiful. Maggie was even more clear about the response that she got from her mother, "I show my mom everything that I make, because I get to brag to her about what I made. She's always like 'oh, it looks so good!' But of course, she's my mom." Not only is bragging a non-issue for the relationship, the work itself is not judged by any particular criteria. Even if the work addressed social or political issues, art still provided a sense of cover for Maggie:

> "I feel like art is a way that you can talk about and express about controversial
> things without getting yelled at! You can talk about things that the rest of the
> world doesn't want to talk about in art, and maybe not quite as many people hear
> you or understand it, but those that do… it's impressive."

When works are shown to others, not only could it be "impressive" to the viewer, but it was also seen as beneficial for the artist. As Taylor put it,

> "it's all about your confidence, because you know, you could make something
> beautiful, and then be afraid to show it to anybody, and never do it again, but… if
> you do that, you're not going to get any better…"

Taylor also elaborated on the manner in which art shared the internal thinking of her peers. She brought up a class project in which each student took a photograph every day. The works were shared and discussed, and this is how she experienced the growth:

> "people have definitely gotten better [since] the first day, which I guess is the
> intent of the project. We take a photo every day, and, I think that it… it lets

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people discover their own style. They think about what they want to capture with the camera, and it's difficult, because we are supposed to stay at the school. There's not much we have to work with, and then you start to see people's pictures, and you think,

'that was taken here?'

'I've never seen that before.'

You know, people look at things, and you see things through their eyes, and you realize that we aren't all seeing the same things. It's really, really interesting to see certain kids that you wouldn't expect to do so well. Or see these really cool things that you haven't [seen]. You'll see a picture of a yellow flower, and say

'I have never seen that around campus, I don't know where you found this, but you have,'

It's nice to see people's personal style through the art, because maybe they're afraid to show it, you know, outwardly, to other people in school. And, they're quiet about it. But you put the picture up on the board for everybody to look at, and it's surprising"

The palpable sense of amazement and empathy through looking at the work of her peers suggests a role of art that provides a great amount of insight into the artist. In fact, it was evident the entire time I spoke with these six teenagers.

Art is self-projection

Throughout this process of immersing myself in these transcripts, reading and re-reading the words of the participants, learning about their perspectives, I found that crystal of understanding starting to take shape. Their words betrayed their personalities, exposing them all as artist in a sense. Each one of these students had a perspective on the arts that was strikingly similar to the manner in which they seemed to approach creativity.

For Hendrik, he identified the artist an independent, solitary figure, working on refining a craft. He described himself as being not particularly social. Art for Hendrik was apolitical, just as like his social crowd. In describing what he meant by "cool people" that he met in art class, he stated that "My definition of cool people is not, the, textbook definition…" When pressed, he defined them in a way that might not be all that different than some textbooks (see Danesi, 1994). Hendrik's definition:

> "I think of cool people as people who are fun to hang out with, nice to be around, don't have opinions that are much different than mine, they're intelligent, they think for themselves. People that are more fun to hang out with…"

Moving past the paradox having similar opinions while being an independent thinker (granted, independent thoughts can and do lead to parallel results), he made an interesting observation: "I don't sort of go on like a popular level of, like, you know, coolness, you know…like *those people*…" When pressed for a description of "those people," he responded that, "I really don't hang out with any of those people, so it's sort of hard to see." Understanding the rules and norms of various groups has long been identified as crucial aspects of crowd dynamics (see Sherif & Sherif, 1953). There is a clear indication that Hendrik knows that the

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group exists, denying that he follows *their* standards of cool. Exchanges like this underscore that these are real institutions in the eyes of the participants, even if they define themselves by difference.

For Natalie, making art on her own was deeply personal, and not frequently shared. She explained that art by peers she had seen was not "per se shared," justifying the lack of sharing by noting that she kept her journal to herself. In that sense, when she spoke about the ways teenagers share art, she relied on her own habits and personality. When she needed to make something, she relied on the assistance of others. Just as she utilized the poetry and verse of other authors in her own writing, she entrusted art making to peers. When she had created forms of art, in her "band" or with IB, production was collaborative and communal.

Kristi's view of an artist was chill, relaxed, and social. When asked about what an artist would think about a subject, she responded "probably the same as me," a clear indication that she is projecting her own sensibilities to the role. The work she identified with was like her friends: non-confrontational and embracing. Her narratives about her friends were clearly important to her, as were the narratives that inspired works of art that they created together. Works of art that she liked were smooth and realistic, non-confrontational. She was focused on art as a work ethic, and as a clear means of communication. This clarity of ideas was evident in her description of politically charged topics, defining right and wrong in sharp contrast.

Maggie, scientific and practical made works that were decorative and emotional, but in the context of academics. She needed reasons for making art that were defendable as a process. She *used* art, applying it as a memory palace, taking notes, and class assignments. The artist in her mind used the same novelty of mnemonics to create, using materials in unusual ways to

remain memorable. She noted that her interest was in the human body, in the sciences, and described be an artist as genetic. Her pleasant personality and happiness, defining herself as a sweet person came up when she defined art teachers as being immeasurably happy. "You'll never find an art teacher that's angry at the world, or depressed on unhappy with their job." This assumption that art teacher, and by extension artists, were content in their placement underscores the concept of the desired self. Maggie herself admitted that the she wished that she could be an artist, but could not reconcile the insecurity of the career. She is artistic, but not an artist, if only because she cannot see it as a viable future. Those that can, in her mind, are genuinely sweet and contented, just as she is.

Lillian's circle of friends were politically charge rabble rousers. Her view of the artist was an instigator of change, pushing boundaries and social issues. Her own actions, becoming politically involved on her own campus, was imbued with the intent to change others. Being this agent of change required a distance from some of her previous peers. In stark contrast to Kristi, Lillian wants to upset others, push them towards understanding a perspective other than their own. In this sense, art was a tool for her. Art was a medium that addressed social change.

Taylor, sweet and empathetic sees the artist as she sees herself, learning to come to terms with her own individuality. The role of art is not about the product, but the journey, the growth that permeates adolescence. Judgment is forgone for her, and instead validation and acceptance are the rewards of creating art. The successful artist is a successful person, complete and well-rounded. They are empathetic and understanding, non-judgmental. Taylor's attitude and personality are all of these things as well. She hesitates to dismiss others as they are dealing with the process of becoming.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In the previous two chapters, I have shared what six participating teenagers told me about being artistic. Their insights into their *libenswelt*, their life world, are their own understandings of how they and their peers interact with one another. Some of these ideas are distant abstractions, code words and caricatures of people who are "basic," along with personal narratives about the creative actions they have taken. They have indicated the manner in which they share works of art, and how they are the audience for their creative peers. In this chapter, I offer a summation of the project, and the implications for much needed future research. There is a brief summary of how the students organized themselves socially, and how they described the artistic persona. These are discussed in terms of motivational, sociological, and pedagogical theories, including pragmatic suggestions for how this project may help educators in all venues (schools, museums, community resources) encourage development of young artists. These suggestions were not where I started at the onset of this project, so I have included a brief description of how this project changed, as well as limits to this study.

Social crowds

The driving question of this project was about how adolescents understood their artistic peers in the social environment. Based on their responses, I have thematically organized their thoughts along axes of physical locations, extracurricular activities, and the structure of social grouping (social hierarchy, fluidity, conflict). Literature about these aspects is available, and this project adds to each of these areas. Underscoring the entire project is an understanding the social

acceptance is of crucial importance for adolescents (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacDonald, 2010), and especially in their growth as learners (Brown, 2013; Jones, Alexander & Estell, 2010; Latchem, 2006). Much of this occurs in the physical location of the school (Borman, Cahill & Cotner, 2007), and the participants here agreed, citing classroom spaces, hallways, and the lunchroom. Classes connected the physical space with curriculum based divisions that became a channeling device for social bonding (Wentzel, 2009). Students in these classes became closely bound, as the International Baccalaureate (IB) students in this study recognized. Their bonds in the classroom were not always the same for out-of-school activities.

Activities outside of the classroom are remarkably important locations that facilitate growth and learning, as well as behavior patterns (Poulin & Denault, 2013; Vandell, et al., 2005). This is particularly strong in a growing field of free-choice learning environments (Bamberger & Tal, 2006; Dierking & Falk, 2003; Falk, 2005). However, in much of the research, attributes of the domain itself is not fully explored (see Brown, 2013 for a discussion about the difficulty of defining activity across research projects. Even the sound conceptual model provided there fails to address salient aspects of the domain). While some work has been done regarding the arts and identity formation (Latchem, 2006), much more is available about identity in generalized terms (see *Journal of Adolescence* 35, 2012). What has been proposed is that teenagers assume provisional identities, and are in a dynamic battle to define themselves to others (Stone & Brown, 1999). The goal of this research is to offer descriptions of the attributes that define those provisional identities related to art.

Artistic acts

Artistic students were often associated with more visible crowds of students. Theatre students were frequently described as the "artists" because of their expressiveness. However, visual artists and poets were not as expressive, and in many cases were independent, private, intellectuals. The differences between media were secondary to an underlying assumption that being artistic was a mindset, a manner of thinking (Hetland et al. 2007; 2008). There were three distinct themes that I identified: a cathartic release for the artist, a demonstration of craftsmanship and work ethic, and divergent thinking often ascribed to creativity (Kim, 2006; Sternberg, 2010). The combination of these places the arts in a more dynamic role than other disciplines (Buehl & Alexander, 2009).

The art domain itself brings a series of stereotypes and traits, each of which must be negotiated as teenagers determine their provisional self. These attributes must have a strong pull for students to embrace the artistic moniker (Berger & Rodkin, 2011), as being perceived as "normal" or "average" is an ideal state for high school students (Stone & Brown, 1999). The aspects of artistic behavior identified in this project included those that "stick out," who are "attention seekers." These labels were shared by students that saw such attributes as desirable. The popular cheerleader participant described artists as "chill," and not controversial, while the politico described art as the harbinger of revolution.

Materials available to artists were classified as the standard items that students work with (markers, journals), classical media (painting, drawing), and non-traditional items used in novel fashion (candy wrappers, trash). The use of these materials was related to the purposes of creation. For Kristi, painting was a fun, relaxing experience, which included friends nearby to

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converse with. The topics of conversation were related to the narratives shared in the works of art. She also completed projects for her mother, as did Maggie. Objects made for others had a less personal feel for the students, but they were enjoyable because they were requested (offering a potential source of blame in case of failure, see Dweck & Master, 2009). Requested and assigned works of art were shared with others willingly. Personal works that included deeper meanings came with feelings of doubt under the guise of not wanting to be boastful. Works that were about technical craft, and therefore to be judged by a set standard, were shared. I am suggesting that this is because the work shares very little of the provisional identity. If the work is technically well crafted, then any rejection of the work can be interpreted by the artist a rejection of the technique (not themselves). If the work is a personal expression of inner thoughts, the critique is of the individual. Class projects were an acceptable method of sharing works of art, reiterating that assigned projects allow for a strawman of sorts; the project is to blame for the work of art, rather than the artist.

Shared works of art also run the risk of placing the artist in the role of a braggart. The discrepancy between artists and audiences is a continuation of differences in understanding the role of art. For those that art was a personal expression, sharing a work of art was self-indulgent. For those like Hendrik that saw the work as a demonstration of skill, it was assumed that others would admire the work of their peers. A third perspective was from Taylor, who was more focused on the concept of judgement than the actual work. For her, anyone working on art was on the right track to self-awareness and identity formation, and any judgment would be premature. Judgment comes from a shared intelligibility (Gergen, 1994), which if seen as too fluid or uncertain can lead to lowered values of the subject (Buehl & Alexander, 2009). The

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students in this project all maintained a positive view of art as a discipline, but their descriptions of artists and the artistic process open up areas for further discovery.

The qualitative process

The original questions of this project were about the nature of being artistic for today's youth. When I first began, I wanted to discover the role that cultural institutions have played in the lives of adolescents. For these participants, the role was limited. I have left shadows of the original intent of the project throughout the writing, but cannot offer much in the way of information about museums for these teens. While some had attended and been involved in museum programing (even under my guidance), the social interactions of adolescence far outweighed extracurricular programs. I was able to answer the essential questions of the research. The students provided numerous examples of artistic acts, and the manner in which artists of all kind interact with one another, and the social landscape as a whole. They also hinted at new directions in research that are possible for other researchers. I offer here some of the insights that I had along the way that were not completely realized, but merit further exploration.

This process of making memos is outlined here to better explain my eventual conclusions (Charmaz, 2014), as well as to suggest other directions this project could have gone (and future researchers may want to pursue). From the start, open coding digitally allowed for me to include lengthy descriptions and notes about meaning, purpose, and context of the transcription. My original axial codes included categories that were later placed into broader themes. Discussions about feminism ended up being more salient in the theme of political conflicts between participants, which then folded into conflict between social groups. The deeper connection is between the disconnect between an idea and the various intelligibilities of that idea (feminism

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and art are parallel in this sense, for this paper. "Art" is one thing, being artistic personally is different). To understand the participants with as much depth and sensitivity as possible, after open coding, I began to organize the most apparent details. The early thinking on the codes revolved around museums, and then the meaning of art, which led me to explore philosophical stances related to art itself. This was not particularly productive, as the texts in the field of aesthetics were too distant from the experience of the participants (see Bourdieu, 1993; Trend, 1992). While these topics are germane to developing curriculum for art education, they are more appropriate for educational philosophy.

Social interaction became a large part of the interpretive process for me, and better understanding how the students interacted with one another based on the work of Kinney (1999) and Brown (2013; Brown & Dietz, 2009; Brown, Mory, & Kinney, 1995). The role of caricature they have described is essential for the development of social identities. The caricature of artists is the essence of the research question here. However, the sociological literature also leads to discussions that begin to veer away from that question. Hierarchical order of social groups, the locations of such interactions, and the nature of rules within each group are all topics that could have been expounded upon. I hope that in the future, they are.

Early on, one of the goals was to determine the attributes of people who were associated with the arts in museum settings. As a museum professional, there are debates and discussions about the role of museums in large cultural dialogue regarding meaning. Colonial and imperialistic overtones are frequent in museum literature (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Karp & Lavine, 1991). While I wanted to hear these issues come up in conversations with the participants, they did not. This is still an interesting finding, as the lack of discussion about politically charged issues surrounding appropriated cultures suggests two things to me. First,

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teenagers are not aware of such dialogue, and the topic is not addressed within art history contexts in the high school curriculum (possibly due to the focus on creative expression and art production rather than interpretation and critique). Second, any political discussions could be associated with conflict that all but one of the participants seemed reluctant to address. Although some teenagers are politically savvy and interested in these discussion (i.e. "punks" in Kinney, 1999), they are not a large desirable crowd for most adolescents.

Implications for future research

Much of the work in identity theories have rightly prioritized race, ethnicity, and gender (Murdock, 2009). When applied to domain learning identity is conceptualized in terms of the student's current status (math learners are learners, rather than actual mathematicians (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Turner & Meyer, 2009)). Other research has been attentive to writing, and to intelligence in general (Dweck & Master, 2009). In the present case, being an artist was not a distant abstraction, but a plausible, obtainable role in the present. The students here have offered a very clear indication of the stereotype threat of being artistic: being dismissed as a poseur, or "basic." While not remotely as weighty as the challenge of negative stereotypes related to race, gender, or sexuality, understanding the relationship between students and specific educational domains remains valid for further research. While there has been work on self-identity in terms of domains (see Anderman & Anderman, 1998), the theoretical positioning has focused on differences between domains, rather than the socially constructed definitions within the subject.

Motivational theories are certainly applicable to the themes identified by the participants, and attribution and achievement goal theorists may find new avenues of investigation based on the words of these six teenagers. Achievement goal theory relies on definitions of the standards

within a given domain. In the arts there is a perpetual redefinition of the field, as artists debate and discuss the very nature of the task. In the classroom, there are artifacts from previous definitions of art found in the arts curriculum. Students themselves can define and redefine art because of the continuation of the creative expression movement in art education that prioritizes novelty and innovation. Self-theories regarding ability and education are well established, and many use variations on the difference between performance and mastery (Maehr & Zusho, 2009). When applied to the arts, there is a tension between performance (i.e. dance) and the mastery of a task that requires an audience (quite literally a performance) (Andrzejewski, Wilson, & Henry, 2013). The participants in this project described personally satisfying works of art were as not always shared (Natalie's journaling), shared with an uncritical audience (Maggie's family members), or shared with expectations of mastery despite potential disagreement between artist and audience (Hendrik was assured the reverence of others, but Taylor noted that details and shading did not make a drawing "art"). The arts in terms of the achievement goal binary of mastery and performance goals are a rich area for theoretical reconciliation.

The theoretical implications of this work include the expanded role of academic domain content in the development of a social identity, particularly the more personally attributed subjects in the arts. Art as a topic does more than demonstrate divergent thinking skills, it offers a chance to witness very clear demonstrations of deeply personal held beliefs about the self and others. While the complexity of art is a problem as far as ease of organization (there are many facets defining the construct), that complexity may offer insight into otherwise unobtainable data. The insights should be valuable for further descriptions of domain knowledge in social interaction, and domain differences in motivation (particularly attribution and self-worth

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theories). For more practical applications, there are some logistical research issues that this project has taught me.

The original intent of a networked recruitment model, a "snowball" (Noy, 2008) relied on students identifying others, and a network of interlocutors growing organically. This did not happen. One of my suggestions for a practical methodological outcome of this project is to consider the population and ability of adolescence to follow-through on the networked recruitment model. Participants that I spoke with were excited and willing to share their experiences. There were other potential interviewees that did not follow up with me, or were difficult to schedule. Sharing recruitment materials with friends was a difficult task that I was disappointed to see fail. In addition, the recruitment model was lacking in much diversity. Because the recruitment was focused on high school students involved in the arts, I did not have any dialogue with students adversarial to the arts. While I do not find this to be damaging to the findings about the description of artists (the participants here still identified negative traits of artistic teenagers), those that despise art and artists would add to the depth of knowledge.

Further research based on this project might also want to expand the breadth of the data. While I focused on interviews to begin this exploration, there are physical artifacts that could be collected and analyzed. Late in the process (during the coding), I was able to see a copy of *The Page*, the poetry publication. These documents, along with works of art created by participants could be used to further investigate the meanings and relationships between artist, art object, and social interaction facilitated by art making. The inability to maintain anonymity would be significantly impeded in such a case, but the resulting depth could be quite rewarding.

A further investigational approach could include interviews with teachers, and classroom observations to pair taught aspects of artistry (craft, expressiveness, personalities of artists) with the resultant attitudes of students. One of the memos that I wrote as I contemplated interview strategies included discussion about how teachers used examples of artists. This did not pan out, as the participants seldom mentioned specific artists, and when they did the biographies were vague (aside from informal discussions with peers). The relationship between the formally taught nature of being an artist, and the socially verified attitude and behaviors of artistic peers remains a topic to be illuminated.

More pragmatic recommendations are aimed at educators in and out of school environments. For classroom teachers, use of language to define what is and is not "art" requires careful consideration. While there may be a drawing of sorts on a project in a non-arts domain, it may not meet the working definitions of Art as defined by art teachers or the students. However, artistic projects that are treated as having actual academic merit does provide a path for very deep understanding (Sullivan, 2010). According to these participants, assigned art projects were acceptably shared with their peers. Pushing students towards making works of art that fully embraces the personal meaning along with technical quality creates a much stronger educational outcome than simple illustrations. The personalized nature of art projects in non-arts classes also prevents the feeling of a "ringer" that bothered Hendrik. Collaborative work by artists opens up a very different set of standards and interactions that may be conflict with the goals and objectives of a lesson (Campana, 2011).

The social groups and labels attached to crowds within a school are a bit more difficult for school administrators to address. Participants in this study did offer some suggestions and implications that relate to the social organization. First, required arts classes connect student

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from disperse social groups, but they also limit access to the arts. By having a required class, there is little depth that is able to be taught and discussed. The role of the photography class for these students was a bit of a joke for those that had not had much in the way of advanced art education. For those that were actively involved and interested in the arts, the same class was an amazing experience of growth in their artistic skill, and in self-awareness and worth. Rethinking and negotiating the outcomes of class requirements should continue to be an investigated subject.

The physical location of arts classrooms and school sanctioned exhibitions and shows is of great importance, particularly for adolescence. Students here demonstrated the previously researched importance of physical locations as related to social interactions (Borman, Cahill & Cotner, 2007). For schools, this extends to creating and facilitating visible spaces for students to share work, even anonymously. I would add that providing spaces for students to discuss and react to those works would be beneficial. In the example of the environment club's filling of the fountain with trash, conversations were already occurring, but through minimal support the dialogue could have been more productive. When the students discussed feminism, it was noted that some teachers allowed these conversation to happen with little input, but allowing students the space to engage one another in these important talks. Peer created art should be thought of in the context of the social interaction, as well as the finished product (Joo & York, 2011).

Finally, for those outside of the school, community support for young artists was greatly appreciated by these participants. Coffee houses were instrumental for allowing young artists to gain a sense of acceptance into a larger artistic community. Just as in Vienna at the *fin de siècle*, these locations bring together a wide range of students in a comfortable location in productive interactions (Watson, 2001). Community locations that can serve as a venue for young artists to share work (visually, musically, literary), can work as an informal channel for young artists. The

same precaution and awareness for shared art in the school is found here, as well. The work cannot stand alone, but conversations and dialogue about the meaning and purpose of the creative outlet help create a shared intelligibility. That intelligibility supports the shared knowledge of a social group.

Limitations

Of course, this is all far from an ideal project. There are limitations to the utility of this work that I must acknowledge. Given that this is qualitative research, and I am the instrument that effectively measures the meaning and implications of the participants, there are limitations to the amount of reading and connections that I can make. I have put forth my due diligence, hunting down sources, reading references, and spending time immersing myself in the transcripts and developing a crystalized sense of what these students experienced. There are still bodies of research that I have not read, or not read thoroughly enough to apply to this project. This limitation in many ways is an ideal strength for qualitative work, as the personality of the researcher, my personality, brings a certain liveliness to the work that is less often found in positivist work. The interviews themselves, the questions I asked, and the order and manner in which I asked them is another limitation inherent to the nature of this work. There are lines of questioning that I was unable to pursue because the time was short, and the constructs still being crystalized.

The participants, too, are a strength, and a potential limitation of this study. While they were a tremendous source of knowledge, and so gracious in sharing their experiences, there may be vastly different experiences from others. Each potential participant brings a wealth of information to an interview, some become cases studies in and of themselves. The lack of a

singular critical case from these six students could be misconstrued as a limitation. The short time I spend with each student is certainly a limitation. Six hours of interview transcripts, as long and deep as that may be, is still less than ten, or twenty hours of interviews. Since this was a very exploratory project, I feel confident in the data corpus, and I hope that the ideas and constructs can be refined to pursue much longer interviews, with more participants, with more focus on the relationship between the domain and constituent social groups.

There are limitations to how much I can offer in these pages. In order to protect the confidentiality of the students, I cannot allow the audio to be released. This limits how a reader interprets the emotional weight of certain words, and the fullness of the conversation, including my questions and prompts. The words themselves take on new meanings and new contexts when they are changed from utterance to text, and again when reorganized for structural consistency (Ricoeur, 1973). These changes can be detrimental to the work at hand. To prevent this limitation from becoming insurmountable, I have offered as much as I can in the way of extended quotes, descriptions and summaries of the conversations, and an honest presentation of how the project unfolded.

Conclusion

It is my hope that this shared creation spurs on more conversation and dialogue about the intersections of social crowds, art making, and the potential artists in their youth. This is a topic that demands our attention as the ideas and concepts of art become ever more present in daily life, and embraced by adolescents seeking for activities that are simultaneously safe and indicative of their individuality. As noted by some of the students, the ever expanding connectivity through the Internet and mobile devices is encouraging a growth in creative actions.

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Our role as educators and academics interested in the growth of teenagers should be one of support as they struggle to define themselves and others in terms of their creative production. The fear in sharing their works in social contexts is intimately connected with the understanding of the arts as a domain. Our emphasis on personal creative expression may inadvertently be encouraging timidity. This research describes that dynamic: the manner in which artistic caricatures intertwine with complicated social dynamics and the continual refinement of our constructed definition of Art.

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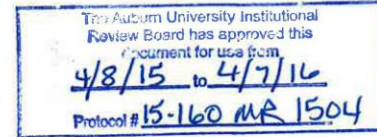
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AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
4/8/15 to 4/7/16
Protocol # 15-160 MR 1504

Recruitment flyer
Social crowds and art education

Share your stories about being an artist!

Dear ꞏꞏꞏ art student,

You are invited to be a part of a research project!

Being artistic can mean many different things to different people. I'm interested in talking with you about how *you* are an artist. I'd like to know how you define "artsy," and what that means to you. I'm also interested in what other teenagers think about artists and museums. You can help me by sharing your stories for about an hour.

What you share with me will be used for a research project about social crowds and art museums, and might help art teachers and museums teach teenagers about art.

If you're interested, share this letter with your parent/guardian(s), and have them contact Andrew Henley at andrew.henley@auburn.edu, or call (334) 844-8792 for more information.

Participation will be confidential. There are no rewards, compensation, or costs involved. This research project is being conducted by Andrew Henley, doctoral candidate in the College of Education, in the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department.

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072
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The only risk to your child would be their identification, and what they may or may not say about other students. To prevent this risk, transcriptions of the interviews will be made confidential through the use of pseudonyms.

The audio recordings will not be released, and will be deleted by December 1, 2016. All data will be secured in a locked office, on password protected computers.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance, or the Institutional Review Board at (334)-844-5966, or via e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu, or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

Having read the information provided, it is your decision whether you and your child want to participate. By signing below, you and your child indicate your willingness to participate.
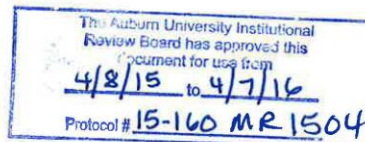
_____
Participant's signature

_____
Printed name

_____
Principal Investigator

J. Andrew Henley

_____
Parent/guardian's signature

_____
Printed name

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 4/8/15 to 4/7/16
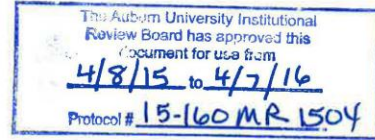Protocol # 15-160 MR 1504

You must bring this completed form to the interview.
A copy of this signed form will be provided to you.

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Parental permission and participant assent form

For the doctoral research study:
"Adolescents and museums: Social crowds and free-choice art education."

Please read this form carefully, and sign on the next page to participate in the research project.

Your child is invited to participate in a research project investigating the way in which youth understand what it means to be artistic. Your child is potential source of information for my doctoral dissertation, entitled "Adolescents and museums: Social crowds and free-choice art education."

Your child's participation would require an hour-long interview with the principal investigator, Andrew Henley, under the direction of Educational Psychology professors Jill Salisbury-Glennon and Carey Andrzejewski in the College of Education at Auburn University. Where the interview takes place is up to you and your child; the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art and a room at ⋮⋅◢ are both available. If your child feels more comfortable at a different public location (coffee shop, library), we can arrange to meet there.

Questions during the interview will be about social groups related to the arts and art museums. How your student and his or her peers view "artsy" students will also be asked.

The interview would be recorded, and later transcribed, along with 5-14 other interviews. The text of these interviews would be analyzed for themes, and compared to other research projects and theories about adolescent social groups and education. The project may help art educators in museums and schools better teach teenagers.

You, or the participant, have the ability to stop the interview at any time, without any repercussions. You may also withdraw completely from the study at any time, even after the interview. The participation in this project will have no bearing on future relationships with ⋮⋅⋯ City Schools, or teachers at ⋅HS, Auburn University, or the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. There are no rewards or compensation for participation, but there are also no costs involved, aside from the hour-long meeting.

Parent/guardian Initial_____ Date_____   Participant Initial_____ Date_____

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072
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Post-interview assent dialogue

To be verbally given to students at the end of the interview (see Jossellson, 2013: "...informed consent from an ethical point of view requires asking participants at the end *of the interview whether they still give their consent for you to use their material in the study." Page 117).*

"Thank you for sharing your experience with me. Now that we've wrapped up our conversation, do you still feel comfortable with me using what you've said in my project?"

"Is there anything you would like me to take 'off the record?'"