Understanding the Role of Informal Arts Participation

in Community Development

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A Master's Project

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Master of Science Degree in Arts Management

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<u>EDUCATION</u>

University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
Master of Science in Arts Management, Community Arts Concentration
Anticipated Graduation, June 2013

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
Bachelor of Arts in Music, Art History Minor
Graduated, June 2008

<u>EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE</u>

Oregon Folklife Network, Eugene, Oregon
Program Support Specialist & Graduate Research Fellow (January 2012 - present)
- Coordinated outreach for the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (TAAP)
- Designed informational leaflet and formatted artist application for TAAP
- Assisted artists with technical support
- Researched folk and traditional artists for public programs
- Conducted community outreach to cultural organizations for strategic partnerships
- Updated and maintained OFN website
- Promoted OFN programs, arts events, and operational partners through social media
- Produced monthly newsletter using MailChimp
- Provided administrative support for programs, projects, and daily operations

Know Your City (*formerly the Dill Pickle Club*), Portland, Oregon
Programming Intern (June 2012 - August 2012)
- Developed series of themed, educational walking tours about Portland's history/culture
- Coordinated development of, and co-wrote, all promotional materials for tours
- Identified and collaborated with community leaders to conceptualize public tours

Center for Community Arts and Cultural Policy- University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon
Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Study Assistant (October 2011 - December 2011)
- Recruited and coordinated volunteers for national Arts & Economic Prosperity study
- Researched and coordinated surveying sites (arts and cultural organizations)
- Collected and batched surveys to be mailed to Americans for the Arts processing

Wind Fine Art Gallery & School of the Arts, Dayton, Ohio
Gallery & School Administrator (September 2008 - March 2011)
Wind Fine Art Gallery
- Hosted exhibitions and public events featuring internationally renowned artists
- Wrote press releases for local media outlets
- Coordinated air travel and hospitality arrangements for visiting artists
- Prepared invitations and marketing materials for exhibitions and receptions
- Maintained guest and associate contact databases using Microsoft Excel
- Used QuickBooks software to create invoices and manage accounts receivable
- Updated and organized inventory catalogue including over 300 pieces of artwork
School of the Arts
- Managed *'School of the Arts'* scheduling, teacher selection, and supply list distribution
- Processed student registration for The Wind Fine Art Gallery *'School of the Arts'*

- Planned courses and programs based on public interest and student age
- Created promotional materials to advertise school and courses
- Served as liaison between teachers and students' parents/guardians

Ohio State University Urban Arts Space, Columbus, Ohio
Student Assistant (March 2008 - August 2008)
- Configured presentation space for performing arts events
- Created arts education and informational materials
- Marketed and promoted programming, events, and artists receptions
- Provided information about exhibits and greeted patrons

Ohio State University Office of Fees and Deposits, Columbus, Ohio
Student Assistant (November 2004 - July 2008)
- Provided information for students and guardians regarding financial accounts
- Entered data, filed documents, sorted mail
- Used university software to maintain and post tuition payments to student accounts
- Coordinated with the offices of Financial Aid, Accounts Receivable, and Loan Services

The Piano Works (The Artbreak), Logan, Ohio
Administrative Assistant (2003 - 2004)
- Assisted musicians during local music festival [Washboard Music Festival, Logan, Ohio]
- Created exhibits and displayed artwork in small gallery for local artists (The Artbreak)
- Scheduled piano lessons and piano tuning appointments
- Formatted and produced advertisements for local newspaper listings

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

We Care Arts, Kettering, Ohio
Volunteer (February 2010 - August 2011)
- Used fundraising software to retrieve donor and volunteer data
- Called participating local businesses about donations for annual fundraising auction
- Researched donor/associate information to update contact database
- Categorized donations for annual fundraising auction
- Helped frame and display artwork by clients

Bethany Village (Assisted Living Community), Dayton, Ohio
Volunteer (October 2009 - August 2011)
- Participated in weekly poker games with residents
- Visited/greeted residents with family pet

CAPA (Columbus Association for the Performing Arts), Columbus, Ohio
Volunteer (June 2007 - January 2008)
- Ushered patrons to seats during theatre, ballet, and concert performances
- Directed guests through historical theaters in downtown Columbus
- Prepared programs for nightly shows

SPECIAL SKILLS

Program Development	Adobe Creative Suite	Microsoft Office	Social Media
Community Outreach	Administrative Support	Event Coordination	Artist Relations

ABSTRACT

This research project examines how community member participation in informal arts activities contributes to the community in which the activities are held. A central concept includes analyzing informal arts participation that occurs in group settings through a community development lens. Though there are few published works on the informal arts sector, Dr. Alaka Wali's research on informal arts participation in urban Chicago, Illinois neighborhoods and other previous ethnographic research studies on the sector have inspired some of the research design. Key findings suggest that informal arts participation builds social capital, breaks down social barriers, and contributes to community identity. Through participant observation, key informant interviews, document analysis/comparison of small case studies created through observation of informal arts groups located in the city of Eugene, Oregon, the role of informal arts practices in community development is explored.

Keywords: Informal Arts, Community Development, Social Capital, Social Barriers, Community Identity

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Informal arts participation has historically been excluded or overlooked when measuring

participation in the arts (Nichols, 2010; Peters & Cherbo, 1998; Stern, Seifert, & Zamman, 2005;

Wali et al. 2001; Wallis, 2012). While most arts participation surveys ask about involvement

with conventional non-profit or commercial arts venues (such as museums or performing arts

centers), a large portion of public participation in the *unincorporated* or informal arts—that

include arts activity outside of the non-profit and private sectors such as knitting groups, church

choirs, and drum circles—have been missing in such reports (Wali, Marcheschi, Severson, &

Longoni, 2001). The informal arts encompass such diverse experiences as acting in community

theater, writing poetry at the local library, or painting portraits in a home studio. These popular

creative activities fall outside traditional non-profit and commercial arts experiences (Wali,

Severson, & Longoni, 2002, p. viii). For the purposes of this study, informal arts participation is

defined as arts activities or practices being created or performed in an informal capacity within a

group of three or more people; informal arts groups do not have any professional association to

the art being created or performed, do not have a non-profit or 501(c)(3) status, and are not

connected to a formal educational institution.

In recent decades, a broader spectrum of arts activities has been embraced when

collecting participation data for arts and cultural policy considerations. In 1997, the National

Endowment for the Arts (NEA) included questions about personal—or avocation-based—

participation in the arts in its national Survey on Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) (NEA,

December 1998). The NEA advanced its surveying of informal arts participation with its 2008

Survey on Public Participation in the Arts by incorporating more questions to help measure

informal arts participation; this also helped gain a better depiction of public arts participation as a whole. Bonnie Nichols states:

> Since 1982 the [NEA] survey has inquired about attendance at arts and craft fairs and trips made to parks or historical sites for 'historic or design purposes.' And in 2008, Americans were asked if they had attended outdoor arts festivals and live arts performances at schools or places of worship. The data thus allows researchers to capture arts activities that might not occur in concert halls, museums, or theater buildings.
> (Nichols, 2010, p. 1)

Although the inclusion of these questions in the NEA Survey on Public Participation in the Arts has helped integrate understanding informal arts participation into the larger arts participation landscape, more qualitative research must be conducted to fully gauge the level and impact of informal arts participation, and how it contributes to the wider picture of arts participation wholly.

Using more inclusive arts participation surveys is one way a better understanding of informal arts participation can be created. A better understanding of general informal arts practices helps situate the role of informal arts groups in community development, identity, and cohesion. The limited research on the informal arts sector that has been published aids the understanding of the sector's position in arts participation as a whole; it also assists in the examination of its role in and contributions to communities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

The framework and design of this research project draws heavily on the limited amount of scholarly research surrounding the role and impact of informal arts practices in communities. An overarching theme to my research is to create a better understanding of the informal arts

sector within a community development context. With this central theme, I intended to explore

three individual outcomes of informal arts participation on the community level: (a) how

informal arts participation builds social capital, (b) how informal arts participation breaks social

barriers, and (c) how informal arts participation contributes to community identity (see Appendix

A). Figure 1 exemplifies this conceptual framework visually.
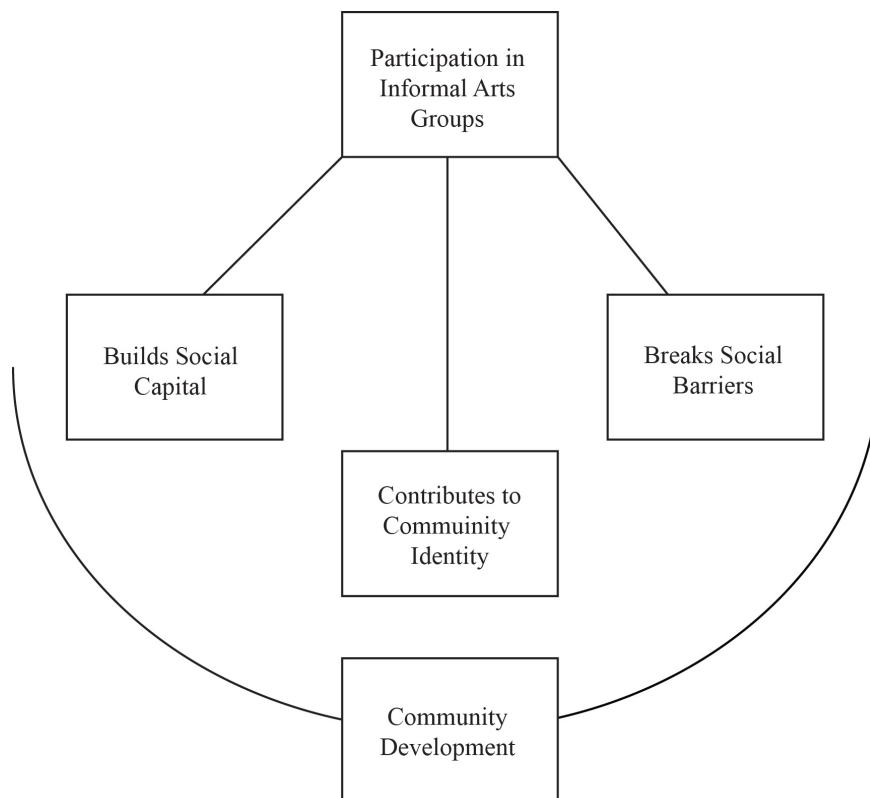
Figure 1. Overarching conceptual framework. This figure illustrates the key concept areas

explored in this research project.

An article published in 1998 by authors Monnie Peters and Joni Cherbo, *The Missing

Sector: The Unincorporated Arts* explained that the "unincorporated" or "informal" arts

participation in America have not been accurately measured, nor recognized as valid arts

participation (Peters & Cherbo, 1998). The authors commend the National Endowment for the

Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SSPA) for including some informal arts

practices in their data collection, but suggest that other types of research methodologies, in addition to traditional surveys, should be conducted to more accurately measure the extent of public participation across the full spectrum of arts practices.

Peters and Cherbo's "call to action" concludes with the following recommendation that in order for cultural policies to more accurately reflect the scope of participation in arts practices:

> We need to count (as accurately as we can) what goes on in all three sectors of the arts: the not-for-profit, the commercial, and the unincorporated. Within the unincorporated sector, we need to include all activities, all art forms and types, all structures (organizations, groups, individuals), and all levels (hobbyist to professional). The issue is less a need for a different kind of inquiry than a resolve to do the difficult course. The need for practicality must not continue to exclude individuals and little groups. (Peters & Cherbo, 1998, p. 127)

Though written in 1998, Peters and Cherbo identify questions that are still relevant to examining informal arts participation; these questions include how to create accurate terminology and how to include considerations for the unincorporated sector in cultural policies. However, since the publication of Peters and Cherbo's article, more research on the topic has been conducted. Understanding the role of the "unincorporated" or "informal" sector in the larger scheme of arts participation is where inquiry for this research project begins. Investigation of how informal arts practices are situated within the broader spectrum of arts participation, as well as their place in communities, comprises the overarching schematic of this research.

In addition to examination of general public participation in informal arts, another major concept in this study surrounds the notion of *how* informal arts participation contributes to community identity. In *More than a Hobby: Adult Participation in the Informal Arts* (2001)*, four

areas of informal arts participation that need further examination are listed as: 1) the role of informal arts in individual and community life, 2) the educational role of informal arts, 3) ways informal arts contribute to the health of communities, and 4) links between informal arts, formal arts institutions, and professional artists (Wali, Marcheschi, Severson, & Longoni, 2001, pp. 213-215). This publication provides an introduction and overview of the definition of "informal arts," and serves as a preliminary proposal for a larger ethnographic study conducted in the greater Chicago area in 2002. Exploring (a) the role of informal arts in individual and community life, and (b) the ways informal arts contribute to the health of communities, from Wali's study have inspired my inquiry of informal arts' role in communities.

To capture a broad spectrum of informal arts participation for their case study selections, Dr. Wali and her team used criteria such as location, art form, diversity of participants, and level of informality (2001). They employed an ethnographic approach to gather qualitative data from each study site. Methods chosen to examine these examples include observation and participation in the various activities to gain an overall sense of informal arts process, interviewing participants in order to study how theses activities fit into their lives, and collecting data to measure the social capital exercised by these activities (Wali, et al. p. 217). More qualitative research needs to be performed on the importance and legitimization of informal arts practices in regards to both policy-making and community development. This master's project intends to identify how informal arts participation impacts or contributes to community development.

Two other major concepts to be explored in this research project are also inspired by Dr. Alaka Wali's research on informal arts practices. The discovery that informal arts participation can break social barriers and build social capital/capacity is employed as a guide for exploring

informal arts groups in my study. *Informal Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity and Other Cultural Benefits in Unexpected Places* (2002), an extensive study conducted by Dr. Wali and her team of ethnographers, explores three areas of inquiry: 1) the extent to which informal arts participation leads people to interact across social barriers such as ethnicity/race, class, gender and age; 2) the types of skills and inclinations that participants acquire or develop in the course of art-making that could be useful for building community capacity; and 3) the processes through which links are established between the informal and formal sectors of arts production, and any gains arising from the ensuing interactions (Wali, et al. 2002). These three areas of inquiry directly relate to my search for evidence of informal arts participation building social capital and breaking social barriers.

Over a period of two years, the researchers examined twelve different cases of informal arts participation in the greater Chicago area using ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, open-ended and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys (Wali, et al. 2002). Major findings from the study were contained in informal arts benefits and products. The first area exhibited how participation in informal arts activities had the ability to break down common social boundaries; the second area described its ability to build civic, social, and individual capacities; and the third demonstrates how the informal arts sector strengthens the formal arts sector in a two-way continuum (2002).

Dr. Wali and her team conclude the study with five recommendations for arts policy considerations: 1) make informal arts more visible, 2) integrate arts practices in community development, 3) build more effective arts advocacy coalitions on principles of cultural democracy, 4) collect missing data on Social Impact of the Arts (a national survey that measured informal arts participation, but leaves some gaps in qualitative and ethnographic data

measurement), and 5) remove barriers to informal participation and enhance access (2002, pp. 232-234).

With an overarching framework that intends to situate the informal arts sector within the broader realm of arts participation and community development, this research project explores the following three areas: (a) how informal arts participation builds social capital, (b) how informal arts participation breaks social barriers, and (c) how informal arts practices contribute to community identity.

Purpose Statement. This research project utilized ethnographic and phenomenological inquiry in order to better understand the role of informal arts participation in the development of communities in the city of Eugene, Oregon. Informal arts participation at the community level is defined as arts activities or practices being created or performed in an informal capacity with a group of three or more people; informal arts groups do not have any professional association to the art being created or performed, do not have a non-profit or 501(c)(3) status, and are not connected to a formal educational institution. Examples of informal arts groups include church choirs, knitting circles, and garage bands.

By performing research on informal arts practices at a community level, I hope to contribute to the small, but growing, body of knowledge regarding the informal arts sector. Much more ethnographic and qualitative research must be performed to better understand the role of the informal arts sector, and how participation in informal arts activities fits in the overall picture of arts participation. I hope to better understand the value of informal arts participation in communities, as well as what social and communal benefits are produced in informal arts groups.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological paradigm for this study is considered within a social constructivist view, using both an ethnographic and phenomenological approach to qualitative data collection. While I align myself as a researcher with a social constructivist worldview, I acknowledge that I hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work; individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things; that meanings are varied and multiple (Cresswell, 2009, p. 8). My role as a researcher relies heavily on the context of the participants' views, and my ability to interpret the participants' views of the situational circumstances being studied (Cresswell, 2009). I acknowledge the need to control my own biases from my own experiences, particularly in participant observation. Negotiating my inherent predispositions when observing participants is something I have continually tracked and managed throughout the data collection and research process by reflecting on my field notes.

Research Questions. I am interested in exploring the role of informal arts participation in the development of communities. With this main area of inquiry, I investigated the social and intrinsic benefits informal arts activities provide. From a community development perspective, I considered the following questions:

- What is the role of informal arts participation in community development?
  - How does participation in informal arts activities build social capital?
  - How does participation in informal arts activities break social barriers?
  - How does informal arts participation contribute to community identity?

Definitions. For the purposes of this study, concept areas—that are used across several academic disciplines in addition to the arts—are defined. Some of the following definitions are

specifically drawn from existing literature on the arts or informal arts, while others are my own developed definitions from a variety of literature influences.

Informal Arts: "The informal arts encompass such diverse experiences as acting in community theater, singing in a church choir, writing poetry at the local library, or painting portraits in a home studio. These popular creative activities fall outside traditional non-profit and commercial arts experiences" (Wali, Severson, & Longoni, 2002, p. viii).

Community Development: The process of members of a shared geographic location creating cohesion and growth through social networks and communal interactions; the advancement in achieving collective goals within a community.

Community Identity: The way in which members of a community identify the community as a whole, including aspects of shared aesthetics, values, beliefs, or other qualities that contributes to mutual community representation.

Social Barriers (interchangeable with *Social Boundaries*): "Diversity in age, gender, race/ethnicity and occupational status, or other boundaries that through historical processes have often been used to sustain structures of inequality" (Wali, et al., 2002, p. x).

Social Capital: "Refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2010, p. 19).

Researcher limitations and biases. Limitations of this study include difficulty in identifying informal arts groups, the willingness of informal arts group participants to participate in my study, and coordinating several different group meeting times and schedules over a three month period. Since informal arts groups are not professionals, nor have a non-profit status, they

do not often have websites or other public advertisements/announcements of their groups or

meeting times. The last limitation was my ability to observe each informal arts group a sufficient

number of times during the four-month research investigation period. I was only able to schedule

three observations with each group for this research project.

As a researcher with a controlled amount of time to collect data, my investigation on

informal arts participation was limited to groups practicing within the geographic location of

Eugene, Oregon. I limited the number of groups studied to three diverse informal arts group

types (or disciplines). Since this research is limited to the city of Eugene's informal arts

landscape, findings from this study cannot be generalized to the informal arts landscapes of other

cities that are situated in different contexts.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project investigates the role and impact of informal arts in community

development, as well as how informal arts participation contributes to community identity, builds

social capital, and breaks social barriers. As this research project is heavily focused on

exploratory methods, no specific outcomes or predictions are made; rather, the informal arts

groups are investigated through a community development lens that looks for evidence of the

arts activities building social capital, breaking social barriers, and contributing to community

identity. Data collection is triangulated between participant observation, semi-structured

interviews with key informants, and a document analysis of small case studies created for each

informal arts group from information collected during the participant observation.

Participant observation is used as the main research method for this study. Three

sites/groups were selected to observe participants engaged in informal arts activities. Criteria

such as group demographic information and informal art discipline were considered for site

selection to ensure a broad range of Eugene's informal art landscape was covered; other criteria used includes size of group, location, and meeting times.

      After three informal arts sites/groups were selected, I created a rubric to code data collected and observed from attending the activities. My participant observation was candid, and all individual group participants had prior knowledge of my research purpose and goals. Verbal consent to observe each group was obtained from every group member. Observation techniques were semi-structured, using a rubric to code data collected, but also allowed for unforeseen findings to be tracked. Detailed field notes were taken during all site visits. All research participants were adults over the age of eighteen.[1]

      After gaining a rapport with the participants through my own participation in the activities, I purposefully selected key informants—one from each site—to interview. Criteria for choosing key informants include ensuring a diverse range of age, gender, and race/ethnicity representation as much as possible. Individual community participants in the informal arts activities were interviewed to gain a more intimate depiction of the social benefits of informal arts participation. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; handwritten notes were also taken during interviews.

      With statistical and fundamental data collected about each group from the participant observations, I created a chart for document analysis. This chart (see Appendix D-III) allowed each selected informal arts group site to be compared and contrasted as three small case studies. The chart, which provides basic information for each case study created, supported the document analysis and critical examination of the role of informal arts groups in the city of Eugene.

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[1] Pseudonyms are used for named participants in each informal arts group who were not interviewed.

Research timeline. Starting in January of 2013, I conducted a search of eligible informal arts groups located in the city of Eugene through word of mouth, online searches, and local public resources such as newspapers and community bulletin boards. During the month of February, I sent recruitment letters to potential sites and solidified my group selection. Once the three informal arts groups are selected, I observed group meetings during the months of February, March, and April. Frequency of and duration of meetings were determined by the existing meeting structure and schedule for each group.

After attending one meeting of each selected informal arts group, I began observing participants to select one interviewee from each group. To ensure I had a wide variety of demographics represented as key informants, I selected individuals for interviews after I observed each group.

Throughout the observation process occurring through the months of February, March, and April, I continuously added collected data to the small case study data collection sheets for each site. After the participant observation had ceased, I analyzed the case studies for differences and similarities across the different groups/sites.

The completion of this research adds to the growing body of knowledge and research about informal arts practices in the greater scope of all arts participation. It helps give some shape to the informal arts landscape in Eugene, Oregon, and provides an example of how ethnographic research can be conducted to map informal arts participation. Outcomes from this study also contribute to the understanding of the influence of informal arts groups and practices on community development, and the benefits that participation in the informal arts provides for community members.

Research validity. All data collected during this research process is stored on a password-protected, privately owned computer. Data and information, including audio recordings and field notes, will be destroyed up to one year after the research project has been completed and presented publicly (up to May 2014). Data will be securely stored for up to one year in the event further research analysis is to be conducted, or research findings are to be presented in academic contexts.

Techniques used to validate my research findings include keeping a reflective journal detailing my experiences as a researcher throughout the data collection process, member checks, and peer review. Reflecting on the research process through journaling has allowed me to track progress and validate my findings and understandings of collected data. Allowing participants to review information included in the study pertinent to them individually has also validated data representation. Peer reviews of the final research document from fellow Arts and Administration graduate students is the last way the research will be validated.

Besides monitoring my own biases, no ethical issues surfaced during the research process. All personal information relevant and not relevant to the study remains confidential; no risks for the study participants, nor me as the researcher, were expected. Permission to include any collected data from the observations and interviews was required before including any private information in the study; explicit permission was agreed upon through signed consent forms (see Appendix F).

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 reviews published literature relevant to the study of the informal art sector and community development. Other minor areas of literature examined include resources concerning community identity, social capital, and social barriers/boundaries.

Chapter 3 of this research project presents the data collected from each of the three informal group sites. Information is organized by group, and follows the narrative of my participant observations and interviews.

Chapter 4 analyzes my main research question: What is the role of informal arts participation in community development? Three sub-questions, (a) How does participation in informal arts activities build social capital?, (b) How does participation in informal arts activities break social barriers?, and (c) How does informal arts participation contribute to community identity? are also analyzed across the three informal arts groups. Exploratory and unpredicted findings are discussed.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications and final thoughts of this research project. It concludes with my reflections on how the three informal arts groups impact their community. The contributions that informal arts participation provides the city of Eugene are considered and assessed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As explained in the introduction, this research project does not directly make any assertions about specific outcomes of the informal arts participation observed other than, in some way, the informal arts groups create social capital, break down social barriers, and contribute to community identity. This chapter examines concept areas central to the research project (social capital, social barriers, community identity, and community development), and presents them within an informal arts participation context. An additional key concept surrounds examples and suggestions of research methodology for examining informal arts participation. The purpose of this literature review is to give background information on the main focus areas explored in this study, as well as examine proposed and employed methods and models for researching the informal arts sector.

INFORMAL ARTS OVERVIEW

Informal arts practices and participation, a very obvious category of arts participation, has not been heavily studied in the field of arts administration. In 1998, authors Monnie Peters and Joni Cherbo claimed that the "unincorporated" or "informal" arts participation in America have not been accurately measured or legitimized. They are hesitant to identify a proper name for these types of arts participation and use the term "unincorporated arts." Peters and Cherbo compare the importance of the informal art sector to that of folk or traditional arts practices; they explain that "unincorporated" or informal arts practices are often overlooked, as are folk and traditional arts, because of the difficulty in tracking and locating informal arts practices (1998). Peters and Cherbo's article, *The Missing Sector: The Unincorporated Arts* (1998) creates one of the first claims explaining that the current understanding of the arts participation landscape is missing information on the informal arts sector.

Because of the difficult nature in locating and tracking informal arts practices, it is imperative that the informal arts sector be assessed through research methods other than arts participation surveys. Peters and Cherbo commend the National Endowment for the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) for starting to include informal arts practices in their data collection. However, they suggest that other types of research methodologies, in addition to traditional surveys, should be conducted to more accurately measure the extent of public participation across the full spectrum of arts practices (1998). Ethnographic research methods, such as participant observation and interviews, are necessary to more wholly gauge the informal arts sector and its place within the large arts participation landscape.

The call-to-action for more research on the informal arts sector concludes with recommendations for cultural policies to more accurately reflect the scope of participation in arts practices. According to Peters and Cherbo (1998), all types of arts participation—in all of its manifestations, from hobbyist to professional—need to be gauged among the three arts sectors (non-profit, commercial, and informal). They express the need to utilize research methods that are able to capture arts activities that occur in small groups or individually within informal contexts.

As one of the earliest examples of the discussion of informal arts practices, Peters and Cherbo examine questions that are still relevant to investigating informal arts participation (such as legitimizing terminology and the need to include considerations for the unincorporated sector in cultural policies). However, some ethnographic research studies on informal arts have occurred since the publication of their article, which have contributed to an improved understanding of the sector. These studies have provided examples for researching informal arts participation.

Models and methods for informal arts research. Anthropologist Dr. Alaka Wali has

conducted some of the most extensive research of informal art practices (2001; 2002). Her

publications outline the importance of the informal arts to communities and society as a whole.

While other published material on informal arts defines and describes the benefits and potential

social capital informal arts participation creates, as well as the importance of considering

informal arts practices when creating arts and cultural policy, Wali and her research team have

produced an exemplary model for ethnographically studying the informal arts sector in

communities (2002).

It is argued that a better understanding of the role informal arts participation plays in

communities would lead to more informed decisions in arts and cultural policy (Wali, Longoni,

Marcheschi, & Severson, 2001, p. 213). In *More than a Hobby: Adult Participation in the*

Informal Arts (Wali et al., 2001), four areas of informal arts participation are identified. These

four areas include 1) the role of informal arts in individual and community life, 2) the

educational role of informal arts, 3) ways informal arts contribute to the health of communities,

and 4) links between informal arts, formal arts institutions, and professional artists (Wali et al.,

pp. 213-215). In the aforementioned preliminary report for ethnographic study on informal arts

practices in the greater Chicago area, the authors aimed to address three questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the acquisition of social skills through participation in

informal arts activities and the bridging of geographic or societal boundaries by the

participants? What is the nature of any such relationship?

2. In what ways do the informal arts provide unique opportunities for the development of

individual and social skills and competencies, and how are these linked to participation in

other forms of social and civic activity? How does participation in the informal arts

sphere contribute to lifelong learning strategies? Do informal arts activities themselves

provide grass-roots venues for people to enter democratic debate on issues of common

concern and social and political importance?

3. What are the connections between the informal and formal parts of the arts sector as

well as with informal arts activities in the sphere of non-arts based institutions? What are

the benefits conferred to the various institutions or individuals as a result of these

connections? (2001, p. 217)

Generating a model for further research on the informal arts sector, Wali and her team

capture a broad spectrum of informal arts participation for their case studies by employing an

ethnographic approach: "Methods chosen to examine these examples include observation and

participation in the various activities to gain an overall sense of informal arts process,

interviewing participants in order to study how these activities fit into their lives, and collecting

data to measure the social capital exercised by these activities" (Wali, et al., 2001, p. 217).

 The questions and findings explored in this article create a framework for which areas of

informal arts need to be researched and how that research should be performed. Released before

Dr. Wali and her team finished their extensive research on the topic, this publication reveals

groundbreaking observations that bring attention to the "informal" or "unincorporated" arts

sector for further research.

Dr. Alaka Wali's ethnographic study of informal arts participation in Chicago, Illinois

provides one of the most comprehensive models for conducting informal arts research in

localized setting. Wali and her team of ethnographers explored three areas of inquiry in *Informal

Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity and Other Cultural Benefits in Unexpected Places* (2002): 1)

the extent to which informal arts participation leads people to interact across social barriers such

as ethnicity/race, class, gender and age; 2) the types of skills and inclinations that participants

acquire or develop in the course of art-making that could be useful for building community

capacity; and 3) the processes through which links are established between the informal and

formal sectors of arts production, and any gains arising from the ensuing interactions (Wali,

Severson, & Longoni, 2002, p. 11). Over a period of two years, the researchers examined twelve

different cases of informal arts participation in the greater Chicago area using ethnographic

techniques such as participant-observation, open-ended and semi-structured interviews, focus

groups, and surveys (Wali, et al. 2002).

Wali identified three major areas of informal arts benefits and products. The first area

exhibited how participation in informal arts activities had the ability to break down common

social boundaries; the second area described its ability to build civic, social, and individual

capacities; and the third demonstrated how the informal arts sector strengthens the formal arts

sector in a two-way continuum (2002). These concept areas have helped inspire the conceptual

framework of my larger study of informal arts participation in Eugene, Oregon.

Other practitioners have suggested alternative means to gauging the seemingly

"invisible" sector of the informal arts, including measurements outside of traditional surveying

research methods should be considered. For example, a study produced for the Social Impact of

the Arts titled *Gauging the Informal Arts Sector: Metropolitan Philadelphia 2004* (2005), by

Mark Stern, Susan Seifert, and Mehreen Zaman, highlights an alternative strategy for measuring

informal arts. In order to discover the informal arts practices in the metropolitan Philadelphia

area, the researchers started with professional artists in their search to gauge the informal arts

sector. They used a representative sample of professional artists to ask what proportion of their

professional arts activities takes place in either the for-profit, non-profit, or informal sectors (2005).

The researchers acknowledged that this method of research cannot measure the informal arts sector in its entirety (Stern, Seifert, and Zaman, 2005). Presenting the pitfalls of this research strategy, the authors explain:

> Many forms of informal cultural engagement involve 'amateur' rather than 'professional' artists, so the two portraits of the informal sector—participant- and artist-based—would not necessarily match. And, it is nearly impossible to generate a representative sample of artists, because they have had no list of all artists (in the language of sampling, no sampling frame) with which to work. (Stern, et al., 2005, p. 4)

The approach that this study takes to gauging the sector effectively describes *where* informal arts practices reside. By asking professional artists to designate within which sector (the for-profit, non-profit, and informal) their arts practices occur, another method of assessing the informal arts sector is provided. However, since informal arts participation is not limited to only professional artists, this method leaves a large portion of the informal arts sector out of the picture. Informal arts participation by amateur artists or community members is not considered when using this model of research.

An additional approach to measuring the informal arts sector is by using folklorists and folkloric research methodology. In the 2012 blog post "Let Your Folk Flag Fly: Folklore Research and the Informal Arts" (Wallis, 2012), Crystal Wallis suggests that while barriers exist in the traditional surveying methods of measuring and assessing arts participation, fieldwork provides a better evaluation of the informal arts sector as a whole (Wallis, 2012). Informal arts often reside "under the radar" due to the informal nature of meetings, undetermined number of

participants, and inconsistent participation—this produces a visibility barrier. An additional

barrier manifests itself in the notion that the aesthetic or artistic quality presented in informal arts

practices may not fit with the traditional sense of "excellence." The visibility and artistic

"quality" barriers contribute to the unsuitability of using traditional arts participation

measurement tools in the informal arts sector.

With both structured and unstructured fieldwork, some of these barriers can be overcome.

Using an example of folkloric research, Wallis explains the methods for researching folk and

tradition arts practices. She suggests in her blog post that this method would be useful in the

informal arts sector, as both the informal arts sector and folk/traditional arts sector have

congruous qualities:

> Folklorists first locate practitioners of traditions and ask them about their involvement, in
>
> a method known as fieldwork. Some of this fieldwork is structured—that is, a folklorist
>
> will start with a list of persons of interest and gradually grow that list by ending each
>
> interview with "Who[m] else should I talk to?" Unstructured fieldwork, by contrast,
>
> involves exploring an area through any means possible: attending festivals and talking to
>
> people, perusing community bulletin boards, and shuffling through the stacks of business
>
> cards at gas stations and talking to the attendants. The first result of such investigation is
>
> a list of arts practitioners, making that which was previously invisible, visible.
>
> The second step in this process is to articulate why this tradition is practiced (the artistic
>
> process). What motivates the artist? Through interviews, folklorists get the answer to this
>
> question in the practitioner's own words. This is extremely important because it ensures
>
> authenticity of the study. (Wallis, 2012)

Although labor intensive, this type of ethnographic, folkloric research can help address problems in using surveying methods to gain a better understanding of the informal arts sector. It provides a model for overcoming the visibility and "quality" barriers present in the informal arts sector.

One other method for gauging the informal arts sector focuses on mapping the geographic location of informal arts activities and participation. A 2006 study led by Dr. D. Garth Taylor for the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) focused on the geographic mapping of informal arts participation. Using Dr. Alaka Wali's research on the informal arts in Chicago, as well as the Cultural Policy Center at University of Chicago's study on participation in formal arts activities in Chicago (Taylor, 2006), MCIC took an approach to understanding Chicago's cultural participation through a mapping project.

> MCIC researchers reasoned that to accurately study the benefits of informal arts participation across the City of Chicago, it must be measured by locating those venues with the broadest appeal to the broadest and most diverse audiences. Therefore, [they] set out to create an updateable database of those informal arts venues with as much information on participation as possible. (Taylor, 2006, p. 2)

As presented in the MCIC study, mapping the geographic locations of informal arts activities within a localized region is yet another way to measure the informal arts sector. In addition to contributing to the visibility of informal arts venues, cultural mapping information coupled with data concerning neighborhood/community population compositions has the potential to benefit efforts in audience diversification in the formal arts sector; therefore, contributing to community development and creating the opportunity to use informal arts participation information in cultural policies. Dr. D. Garth Taylor suggests:

Research on formal arts and culture audiences suggests they are much more homogenous than the regional population. Collaborations, cross promotion, and networking with informal arts organizations will help these institutions understand what diverse populations are looking for as they make decisions about where to participate in arts and cultural activities. (Taylor, 2006, p. 5)

Information about informal arts practices can aid the understanding of arts participation as a whole, and gives further reason to strive for a better understanding of informal arts participation.

The aforementioned models for gauging the informal arts sector have influenced the structure of how this research project was designed. These examples have provided evidence of the need for informal arts research that includes ethnographic methods. Aiding in the effort to make the informal arts sector's visibility more apparent, this research project contributes to qualitative data that helps measure the informal arts sector.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Increasingly important in the community arts field is the use of the arts in the planning of communities and urban development. With more information about the informal arts sector, informal arts activities can be used as a tool in community development. This section of the literature review gives a background on research that supports the use of arts, and specifically informal arts practices, in community development; it also includes suggested methodology for this research.

In addition to assisting in the planning of communities, fostering the informal arts practices that are already occurring within a specific neighborhood or community can also improve community development efforts (Chapple & Jackson, 2010; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Taylor, 2008). Integrating the arts into community development efforts help improve local

economies (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Supporting a community's structural and social health with community arts practices promotes successful community development.

Community planning. Looking at more *informal* venues and cultural activities promotes constructive community development while fostering cultural values (Chapple & Jackson, 2010). In their article *Commentary: Arts, Neighborhoods, and Social Practices: Towards an Integrated Epistemology of Community Arts* (2010), Chapple and Jackson assert that "this work is showing how smaller arts venues and cultural activities based in low-income neighborhoods—including a host of non-arts amenities that allow for cultural participation and creative expression, such as community centers, churches, and parks—can serve as catalysts for gradual change while benefiting the existing community" (p. 481).

In *Cultural Clusters: The Implications of Cultural Assets Agglomeration for Neighborhood Revitalization*, Stern and Seifert (2010) suggest that community cultural development be fostered in a more organic nature, cultivating existing cultural resources rather than planning to create new ones. They explain that cultural clusters that evolve organically from the many decisions of cultural producers and participants differ from cultural districts that are the usual focus of urban planners (Stern & Seifert, 2010, p. 263). This method of community development using existing cultural assets—usually those that are "under the radar" or those that are not easily recognized as "big-ticket" cultural institutions—is proposed as more beneficial to communities. Using informal arts practices and venues to foster cultural clusters in community development is yet another reason for understanding the informal arts sector through further research.

While Chapple, Jackson (2010), Stern, and Seifert (2010) advocate the use of existing cultural spaces in community development, Dr. D. Garth Taylor argues in *Magnetizing*

Neighborhoods through Amateur Arts Performance, that community developers include spaces for amateur and semi-professional performance in order to "magnetize"— increase in the desirability, commitment, social integration, and quality of life in a community area— communities (Taylor, 2008). Community development, as a responsive and socially positive process for community residents, will ultimately benefit by taking the community's existing informal arts practices into consideration, as well as creating new spaces for those practices to occur.

Whereas Chapple and Jackson (2010) argue that the epistemologies of both community arts and urban planning can constructively help one another by borrowing each other's ideologies and methods, community developers should also increase their efforts in including community arts principles in urban planning. Chapple and Jackson explain that "the evolving [urban] planners' toolkit, including mapping, participatory methods, urban observation, and network analysis, has much to offer to the field of community arts. Yet until recently, planners have relied almost exclusively on an economic lens to understand the relationship between the arts and cities" (2010, p. 487). Community planners would benefit from using a more interdisciplinary epistemology, including community arts ideologies. Understanding the informal arts sector more fully through ethnographic research would provide a tool for community planners to use in arts-based community development.

Measuring economic benefits. In *Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning: A Review and Research Agenda* (2010), Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa promote new methods of measuring economic impact that the arts offers by using smaller scale analysis at the community level. Markusen and Gadwa state that:

[Researchers] can use quasi-experimental models to test the impact of cultural

investments and control for other developmental forces, especially in smaller towns. At

the neighborhood level, mixed qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to track

changes in a range of economic indicators and provide compelling causal evidence for

the role the cultural intervention played. (p. 383)

While economic impact surveys given in localized regions have previously attempted to gauge

the arts' contributions to local economies, a longer, longitudinal study may be able to more

accurately represent the economic impacts of community cultural development.

Visibility of informal arts practices and conclusions. The *Arts and Culture Indicators*

in Community Building Project (ACIP) conducted by Maria Rosario Jackson at the Urban

Institute sough to provide a better understanding of (1) the presence and role of arts and culture

in inner-city neighborhoods and community-building contexts and (2) the utility of existing data

collection practices among community-based as well as large mainstream arts and culture-related

organizations for the purposes of developing neighborhood indicators (Jackson, 1998).

While community developers considering the arts in their plans may look to formal arts

institutions as indicators of culture, informal venues and informal arts practices contribute to the

essence of the community. Jackson states that art and culture have meaning independently, but

they also have meaning as part of other things and processes such as the creation of collective

memory, the creation of shared identity, worship, the provision of a variety of social services,

economic development, cultural bridging, and so forth (1998). Fieldwork in local communities

will aid in the consideration of these factors when promoting, or fostering, community

development.

Jackson also explains how these informal arts and cultural activities contribute not only to the positive growth and development of a community, but also a shared community identity:

> To obtain a better sense of how the activities, events, or things in question are valued, one must understand the "indigenous venues of validation" by which meaning and value are ascribed. For example, when African drumming and dance are part of a youth services program, the drumming and dance, understood as both product and process, may be validated as a performance; as a mechanism by which youth develop a sense of ethnic pride and identity; and as a means by which family, friends, and neighbors are engaged in a civic and creative process. (1998, p. 203)

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

This section of the literature explores how arts activities contribute to the construction of community identity to give context to the concept of 'community identity' that is explored in this research project. When constructing the identity of a community or neighborhood, it is necessary to include and consider the current cultural aspects of that place. Using informal arts practices, or informal venues as incubators of arts activity, community identity can be formed and presented collaboratively by the community's residents. Informal arts activities that can bring together community members of all stations allow a communal identity to be created through shared culture.

Utilizing shared heritage, history, and culture. *Community, Identity, and Literature* presents one example of self-constructed, community cultural identity in the form of a library-based, community project in Southern Georgia (Yontz, 2004). Elaine Yontz explains, "the objectives of the project are to help community members and students recognize the relevance of their culture, gain a better sense of place, and develop a stronger self-identity by learning more

about their region through the works of Georgia-born writer, Janice Daugharty" (2004, p. 292).

In describing the project, Yontz says "the programs at the public libraries, which include

readings and book signings by the author [Janice Daugharty] and are sponsored by the Friends of

the Library, bring adult and youth library patrons into contact with a regional writer, university

faculty, and university students" (pp. 292-293). This example provides one instance of how a

diverse sampling of community members can come together to make meaning of their shared

community, therefore constructing their own community identity. Yontz concludes her article by

stating, "citizens in southern Georgia are cementing the self-identity and sense of rootedness that

is prerequisite to successful community building" (p. 293).

Another example of constructed community identity through informal arts participation is

exhibited in the New York Times' article, "Park Slope; An Exhibit's Novel Theme: The Artists

Own Hardhats" (2001). This example provides a portrait of community members using art as a

means of creating self-identity; construction workers as artists, or artists as construction workers.

The Brooklyn Arts Exchange provided an informal arts venue for these laborers to use their

creativity and express their occupational community.

Journalist Tara Bahrampour (2001) explains how the informal-formal arts continuum

exists among construction workers in the Park Slope neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY. A wood

floor installer refinishing a floor at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX) mentions to the director

that he also paints on the side; the director of BAX suggests he have a show there, but was timid

about showing his alone. Luckily his colleague, a carpenter, had previously had a show at the

exchange that exhibited his abstract sculpture made with construction materials. The author

explains how common this occurrence of informal/formal art was in the community (2001).

Over the years he'd noticed that many house painters, carpenters and others he met on jobs were artists on the side -- or the other way around. "There are a lot of people who are artists and do this kind of stuff in order to survive," Mr. Gargagliano [carpenter] said. "When Dan [Koubel, floor installer] called me up and said, 'I can't do it,' I said, 'Well, what if we had a group show?' " Mr. Koubel agreed, and they put out a call for workers with a flair for painting, sculpture, photography, stained glass or woodcarving. (Bahrampour, 2001)

The Brooklyn Art Exchange provided an informal arts venue for this community of construction workers.

An additional example of how communities use the current arts and culture activities to construct community identity is exemplified in a Chicago radiocast. Allison Cuddy (of the WBEZ 91.5 radio station) synthesized a radio interview with Dr. Alaka Wali and Michelle Lynne Geddes, Chicago Westside Music Festival producer, in her article "Bringing Art Back to the Community" on the station's website (www.wbez.org). In the radio interview, Wali explained (as cited in Cuddy, 2012) how Chicago is using informal arts practices to construct their cultural identity: "There's potential power in putting cultural planning in the hands of communities" With this power, community members are free to construct their own community identities using the culture already present. Cuddy suggests that the "exciting thing about up-by-your-bootstraps artistic production, according to Dr. Wali, is that it actually builds diversity. People cross neighborhood boundaries to experience these events. And within these informal ventures there can be more tolerance of difference, a kind of DIY-inspired willingness to accept people's contributions" (2012, para. 5).

Stern and Steifert's (2010) concept of "cultural clusters" also allows community members to determine their own identity rather than being subjected to planned "cultural districts." Fostering these natural clusters (which include existing cultural assets) allow the current culturally meaningful spaces and activities to contribute to collaborative community identity. Stern and Seifert offer the notion that creative expression is a product of cooperation as communities seek to develop multicultural institutions that bridge community differences (2010). They state, "other times, the high levels of cultural engagement may be a product of competition, as each group within a neighborhood seeks to create its own cultural identity" (Stern & Seifert, 2010, p. 268). Communities should be free to collaboratively or competitively determine their own identity through creative, culturally relevant means.

The examples of how communities use informal arts participation to construct their community identity provide a context in which community identity can be examined. This context was considered when conducting fieldwork and performing interviews. Subsequent concept areas, social capital and social barriers, are outlined in this literature review to provide context for the fieldwork as well.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL BARRIERS

Constructing community identity through collaborative measures allows social networks and place-based meaning-making to thrive. Social capital (positive social networks) is created and social boundaries or social barriers (such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic status) can be crossed in this collaboration. Informal arts participation provides a cultural platform for these processes to naturally occur.

Schuller, Barron, and Field (2010) offer three seminal perspectives of the term "social capital," in the book *Social Capital: A Review and Critique*. Putnam's definition of social capital

is described as: "features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (as cited by Schuller, Barron, & Field, 2010, p. 9). Putnam's civically minded view of social capital is often the most used in community arts principles and practices (2010). This definition of social capital has guided my exploration of social capital built within informal arts groups in Eugene, Oregon.

The casual nature of informal arts activities facilitates the building of social capital in groups, as well as in larger communities. In Bowling Alone: *The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam (2010) explains that opposed to the formal ways in which Americans connect with their communities, the informal social connections occur more frequently create investments in social capital (p. 93). Putnam characterizes some of the informal social connections between community members as getting together for drinks after work, gathering in a reading group at a bookstore, and participating in weekly poker games (2010). The informal social encounters that are created in informal arts groups, like the aforementioned informal activities, helps create social capital between members of shared communities.

In terms of measuring how informal arts practices allow the crossing of social boundaries, Colleen Conway and Thomas Hodgman (2008) explored intergenerational community choir performance using a phenomenological approach. This study explored an informal arts scenario that contributed to community development which breaks down generational barriers by asking the following questions: 1) what were the perceived positive outcomes of the Community Intergenerational Performance Project (CIPP)? and 2) what challenges did participants articulate regarding the collaborative performance project? (2008). The CIPP study showed that by combining a college choir with a choir comprised of seniors created: (a) a heightened performance experience, (b) better understanding of others, and (c) no

signs of age barriers. This example of qualitatively measuring the breaking of social barriers has steered my examination of informal arts participation in Eugene, Oregon.

Stefan Toepler (2003) addressed the issue of missing data from small, grassroots organizations (or informal groups) in measuring community cultural activity and therefore left out of policy considerations on a community level. Although these grassroots organization have little, clearly identifiable economic benefits, considering the social benefits they provide warrant their significance. Toepler states, "From an economic point of view, very small and informal organizations are of lesser importance. However, social capital and civil society arguments have focused renewed attention on informal, voluntaristic groups, many of which are likely small in scale and thus being missed in existing data sources" (p. 236).

In Toepler's case study examining Very Small Organizations (VSOs), he attempts to measure their economic impact against the impacts of larger non-profit organizations. While this method may help in legitimizing informal organizations to policymakers, he suggests that this measurement does not merit the intrinsic benefits and social capital built from participating in these very small organizations (2003). This case study demonstrates that while informal arts practices may need to demonstrate economic value to get policymakers' attentions, the larger benefits of informal arts lie within the social benefits that they produce.

This research project aims to conduct qualitative research that measure some of the social benefits—such as building social capital and breaking social barriers—that informal arts participation provides. Filling some gaps in research on informal arts, Eugene, Oregon is used as a case study in how ethnographic study of informal arts groups can be conducted on a small scale. Social benefits of informal arts groups are explored as a tool for producing better visibility and legitimization of the informal arts sector; subsequently, better visibility and a more

comprehensive understanding of the informal arts sector can be used to inform arts and culture policies.

CONCLUSIONS

While it is articulated that the informal arts are essential to communities, and contribute to a comprehensive look at the arts participation landscape, it takes slightly more effort in locating informal arts practices. Maribel Alvarez (2005) describes the difficulties in pinpointing informal arts practices in *There's Nothing Informal About It: Participatory Arts Within the Cultural Ecology of Silicon Valley*:

> Ubiquitous and at the same time paradoxically invisible, the informal arts thrive in both predictable and unsuspecting places all over… in folk communities, at social service agencies, and through commercial entities such as [a] restaurant, and craft stores… (pp. 55-56)

While informal arts practices are seemingly everywhere, and a large part of everyday life, ethnographic research takes much more time than merely surveying formal institutions for data; understanding the informal arts sector will benefit community development practices and the larger arts realm, but it must be done in small-scale, community-level case studies.

With the literature reviewed, it is evident that better visibility and increased legitimization of informal arts practices is crucial to examining arts participation wholly. Demonstrations in the building of social capital through informal arts activities are apparent, as well as the ability for them to break down social barriers. As many of the articles examined suggest, informal arts participation should be considered when creating arts and cultural policies because of their community and social development capabilities.

Ethnographic models for informal arts research outlined in this literature review, including Dr. Wali's research design in *Informal Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity and Other Cultural Benefits in Unexpected Places,* have inspired the methodology used in this research project on informal arts practices in Eugene, Oregon. The examples, methods, and concepts reviewed in this chapter have created a foundation for my investigation of the role of informal arts participation in community development.

Chapter 3: Informal Arts Groups in Eugene, Three Case Studies

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

Interviews, participant observation, and data analysis of three small case studies were conducted to obtain data about informal arts participation in Eugene. Interviews with key informants from each case study site provided information about participation at the personal level, researcher participant observation provided information at the group level, and data analysis of the three small case studies—created with data collected from the participant observation—provided information about overarching landscape at the community level. An interview, participant observation field notes, and small case study created the data sets for each of the three informal arts groups (see Appendix C). The process of data collection for this study comprised of visiting each of the informal arts group meetings or gatherings three times over a period of three months (February 2013-April 2013).

Selection criteria for informal arts groups included groups that were: (a) comprised of adults over the age of eighteen, (b) not a 501(c)3 organization, (c) not professional or for-profit groups, and (d) not associated with a formal educational institution. Groups were also selected by art form; all three groups participate in three different types of arts activities.

A letter of recruitment was sent to three informal arts groups (see Appendix E) before the research commenced. The recruitment letter gave information about the nature of the study to potential group participants. Once further correspondence or communication was attained with a representative of the informal arts group, the first observation was scheduled. After attending the first observation of each group, the remaining two observations were scheduled.

Participant observation. Each of the three informal arts groups was observed on three occasions during their regularly scheduled meeting times. During each observation, I took hand-

written field notes as my method of data collection. The first observation of each group was a *descriptive observation,* the second was a *focused observation*, and the third was a *selective observation*. Spradley (1980) describes the methods of these distinct types of observations as first getting a descriptive overview of the social situation and what goes on there during *descriptive observations*, second narrowing research observations for *focused observations*, and third narrowing the observations even further for *selective observations*.

At the ongoing participant observation stage of data collection, thorough field notes facilitated the use of indirect data collection that assisted the investigation of the research questions concerning social capital and social barriers. As explained by Zina O'Leary, it also allowed me as the researcher to 1) explore what people actually do, not just what they say they do, 2) take it in for myself, 3) collect both rich, in-depth qualitative data and standardized quantifiable data, and 4) collect non-verbal data as well as verbal data (O'Leary, 2010, p. 211). Getting a first-person view of the interactions between participants permitted the exploration of these areas as they happened.

After my second observation of each group, I asked a group member for a 20 to 30 minute interview. I selected members who were in attendance during both observations; I only asked group members who were not "leaders," "organizers," or "founders," of the groups. At the third observation, I gave business cards with my contact information to my main group contact person in the event any group participants had questions or general inquiry about my study. Interviewees were also given business cards.

My participation level differed with each group, depending on the nature of the activity and size of the group. All members of the groups observed were made aware of my presence and purpose for attending the meetings. The Chancel Choir observations consisted of *passive*

participation. In his book, *Participant Observation*, James Spradley (1980) states, "The

ethnographer engaged in passive participation is present at the scene of action, but does not

participate or interact with other people to any great extent" (Spradley, p. 59). Because of the

more prescribed rehearsals with the Chancel Choir, interactions with participants were limited to

the beginning and end of rehearsals (though participants interacted with each other between

songs). During one Chancel Choir rehearsal, I was asked if I wanted to sing with the alto part; I

declined to keep my participation level consistent with my previous observations. My

participation with the Crossroads Blues/Fusion Dance group was also passive; since I observed

both the lesson portion and open dance portion of the Crossroads meetings, I had little interaction

with participants during the lesson, but was asked to dance by group members during the open

dance. I also declined this participation.

While I tried to maintain a passive level of participation during the Tactile Expressions

meetings, it was difficult to do so in such an intimate setting. My participation level moved to

moderate participation during the quilting guild meetings. Spradley describes, "Moderate

participation occurs when the ethnographer seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider

an outsider, between participation and observation" (Spradley, p. 60). Members of Tactile

Expressions asked me explicit questions and directed conversation to me. With only four or five

members at each meeting, this created an environment where passive participation could have

annulled normal group interactions.

Interviews. The interviews took place at various locations in Eugene, depending on each

interviewee's preference. I used note-taking and audio recording to document information from

the interviews; interviews were later transcribed. Interview questions are included on the

interview research instrument (see Appendix D-I). In order to have a complete record of the

questions/answers and discussion from the interview, an audio recording took place. Transcribing the interviews was useful in identifying keys words and concepts used by the interviewees. Ascertaining the interviewee's tone during their answers and discussion through the audio recordings was also helpful in managing the data collected from the interviews. I intentionally did not conduct video recordings of interviews for fear of creating an uncomfortable atmosphere for the informants.

Interview questions aimed to collect information from personal perspectives on social aspects of the participation and to understand connections between the city of Eugene and the informal arts groups (see Appendix D-I).

At the time of the interviews, the interviewee received a consent form (see Appendix F). This form ensured the interviewee was aware of the purpose of the interview, and gave her/him the opportunity to agree or not agree to being included in the research. One signed copy of the consent form was given to each interviewee, and I, the researcher, retained one signed copy. Interviewees were given several options and levels of consent.

Document analysis. With the utilization of a rubric document (see Appendix D-II), the social interactions of the informal arts participation were noted. The rubric organized the data collected from each participant observation.

Document analysis was conducted for each of the three case study sites, which assisted in providing an overview (background and fundamental information of each informal arts group) of the informal arts participation at the community level. Table 1 is the data table (see also Appendix D-III) made from the information from each case study creating a visualization of the informal arts group participation across the case studies, and allowing document analysis to occur. The chart contains minimal, but essential information pertinent to my research questions.

The data table allows brief information from each of the case studies to be examined for common themes or differences. A more formal, yet brief, overview of each case study is written in conjunction to the data table once the data collection from interview and participant observation processes was concluded.

Table 1.

Data Analysis Tool. Comparison of basic data across three informal arts groups.

Type of Group/Art Form	Location	Size of Group	Meeting Space	Meeting Frequency	Meeting Times
Church Choir	First Christian Church, Downtown Eugene	Over 20 official members	Church Chapel	Weekly	Wednesdays 7:30pm - 8:30pm
Blues/Fusion Dance (Social Dance)	Just Breathe Studio, South Eugene	Over 450 casual members	Yoga Studio	Weekly	Thursdays 7:30pm - 11:30pm
Quilting Guild	Individual Homes, various locations in Eugene	8 members	Individual Homes	Monthly	Fourth Tuesday of each month 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Researcher biases and group member communications with researcher. During the fieldwork portion of this research project, I navigated several researcher biases. Specific examples of bias that occurred include feeling a sense of joy when participants in the Chancel Choir master a particularly difficult section in their vocal music, and also feeling a sense of excitement when participants in Crossroads conquer a difficult dance move.

I found that I was familiar with some of the art form-specific vocabulary exhibited in the groups, and not familiar with other terminology. Researchers with varying experiences with

formal or informal art disciplines will have different perspectives on collecting and analyzing

data collected in the field. I found that I was more familiar with the art form-specific terminology

in the Chancel Choir as a classically trained musician, and in Crossroads because of my

experience with other forms of partnered social dance. During the Tactile Expressions meetings,

I found that I was not familiar with some of the terminology used in the group, as I have had no

experience with quilting. However, because of the intimate setting of the Tactile Expressions

group meetings, I was able to openly ask members to explain quilting and fiber arts terminology

that I did not comprehend.

Communications with group participants during observations is also noteworthy. While

observing the Chancel Choir and Crossroads, I attempted not to make eye contact with group

members as to not be a distraction from their normal activities. With only a small number of

group members attending the Tactile Expressions meetings (eight or less), group members were

much more communicative with me and included me in group dialogue.

INTRODUCTION OF DATA PRESENTATION

The data is presented and organized by each group: the Chancel Choir, Crossroads, and

Tactile Expressions. An overview of fundamental group data is then given; this includes how

each group was discovered and other fundamental data. Edited descriptions of my field note

observations follow, organized by the first, second, and third observation. Summaries of

interviews are presented following the field notes.

GROUP 1: CHANCEL CHOIR, FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH TRADITIONAL CHOIR

The Chancel Choir is a traditional, four-part harmony choir organized within the First

Christian Church. The choir meets at the church's Grace Chapel every Wednesday night from

7:30pm to 8:30pm for rehearsal. Traditional sacred music comprises most of the songs

performed by the choir. There are approximately 20 active members of the Chancel Choir, with ages ranging from 30s to 80s. The First Christian Church is located in downtown Eugene.

I conducted three different observations during the Chancel Choir's regularly scheduled rehearsals; these observations occurred on February 13, February 20, and February 27 in the year of 2013. This group was selected because it is an informal arts group; the group does not perform professionally, is not a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and is not connected to a formal educational institution. It was also selected because it is comprised of three or more members.

I emailed the Chancel Choir Director to inquire about observing the choir's rehearsals. After describing the nature of my research project examining informal arts participation, I received an email from the Kelly (the director) about meeting times. She confirmed that everyone in the group was over the age of eighteen, and agreed to allow me observe the choir during their rehearsals. The first observation was scheduled for February 13, 2013.

Observation 1: February 13, 2013. I arrived at the Grace Chapel at 7:15pm; there were only a few people there at that time, but it served as a time for "fellowship" before the rehearsal. 13 participants were in attendance during this rehearsal; three men and ten women with perceived ages ranging from 40s to 80s.

The space was large, enough for approximately 60-seated people. They all faced the front of the room, where the Choir Director faced them. The pianist faced the group perpendicularly (facing me) on the right side of the room. All members were seated in the first two rows of chairs at the front of the room. Sopranos sat in the first row on the right, tenors in the second row on the right, altos in the first row on the left, and basses in the second row on the left. Women were not restricted to soprano or alto parts—some women sang tenor.

The rehearsal was relatively formal; it included a prearranged number of songs to practice. All participants remained seating in their chairs, with the exception of occasionally standing to acquire deeper breathing. Joking and chatting occurred between members (usually those sitting directly next to them). One member announced a text message they received from a missing choral member, describing the reason for his absence. Everyone had dressed in relatively casual, comfortable clothing for the rehearsal.

Although a formalized rehearsal schedule was planned, members were free to request specific sections to rehearse—sections with which they may have had trouble individually. Members also casually asked questions of the authoritative figure (choir director). While it was acknowledged she was leading the group, there were no barriers of communication (asking questions, asking for help, etc.) between choir members and the director.

Many positive interactions occurred during and between songs. Choir members encouraged each other to try difficult parts and provided positive praise on abilities. Everyone chatted, took notes, and asked questions of each other (pertaining to the music) during downtime. On questions pertaining to specific singing parts (i.e., soprano, alto, tenor, bass), choir members would ask a question to someone sitting directly next to them instead of the director. It was a collaborative process of helping each other achieve the musicality desired.

Though this informal arts activity did not exhibit much physical movement between members, and members usually talked with those directly next to them (because of seating arrangements) they each individually contributed to the larger, collective sound of the choir. A group effort resulted in the combined sound of many voices working together.

When "Pinky" entered the rehearsal with his wife, they both sat at the front of the room (where the director had been standing) and faced the choir members. The choir members had

prepared a celebration for him because he was 'retiring' from the choir. The choir director

thanked him for his many years of commitment to the Chancel Choir, and the choir members

began to sing, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Pinky gave a small speech, thanking his fellow

choral members for their friendship and help. He reminisced about previous rehearsals and

church performances, and expressed his hope for more people to join the choir. Kelly and others

helped cut and serve the cake. Members mixed and mingled while they enjoyed each other's

company and celebrated Pinky.

Observation 2: February 20, 2013. Twelve people attended the meeting—two men and

ten women appearing to be 30s to 70s in age range. I sat on the same (left) side (facing the group

perpendicularly) and the group is arranged in the same vocal parts again. Members I did not

recognize from last week were in attendance, and some from last week are gone. The group

talked about some arrests that were made after last week's rehearsals on the church grounds.

They think some people were doing drugs on the church property, and were arrested. They also

talked about encouraging the homeless and those less fortunate to join their religious community.

All participants are also members of the affiliated church's congregation (First Christian

Church). This informal arts group shares the same cultural community of the Disciples of Christ

Protestant church denomination. They sing for, and as members of, the Christian community. All

music lyrics are Christian in theme. Traditional hymns are sung in this particular choir, with a

small amount of contemporary songs included.

General discussion of sharing vocal parts (soprano/alto/tenor/bass) and filling in for

missing members occurred. They talked about the next Sunday's music program during the

church service. Members assisted each other with music, leaned over shoulders to peek at other's

music, and asked each other questions. Some members made jokes about misreading lyrics and notes. Jovial conversation occurred between songs and while other parts were rehearsing.

Again, not much physical interaction occurred between participants; this could have been a result of the nature of the art form (vocal music). The choir members took the art form seriously, and several members talked about practicing technically difficult music at home (outside of the normal rehearsal) in preparation for Sunday's performance. As in the first observation, they sometimes stood to practice the real-life scenario of singing during the church service.

The director promoted creativity in musicality while providing direction without having a very authoritative role. The group participants, from an outside perspective, seemed to be musically trained. A level of ability to read music appeared to be a requirement for participation in the choir.

The time of the year that this participant observation is occurred made attendance of rehearsals unstable. The poor weather prevented some members from getting to the church for practice, and a majority of members were over age 55. The group also briefly discussed some health issues they were having and some health ailments family members were experiencing as well.

Observation 3: February 27, 2013. Fourteen members were present at this rehearsal, four men and ten women with ages ranging from 40s to 70s. I recognized seven members (not including the director and pianist) as consistently attending the Chancel Choir rehearsals each time I observed. Many times, members explained why they would not be at rehearsal the following week (usually because of medical appointments).

Before starting the rehearsal, the participants talked about solidifying their parts for the songs. Discussion about special events and programs occurred, especially for the upcoming Palm Sunday. All of the participants were relatively skilled at singing. Although varying levels of talent were present, this traditional choir seemed to be slightly more prestigious than other music groups within the church.

A light-hearted mood was always present; joking occurred between different adult age groups, and no age barriers were present. Joking also occurred across gender lines, no gender barriers were present. Playfulness also occurred between the leadership of the group (director and pianist) and the general members. No authoritative barriers between the leadership and other members were present. Aside from providing direction in musicality while conducting the songs, the choir director did not have an authoritative role. From my three observations, there did not seem to be a specific order to seating; choir members always sat with people sharing their same vocal part, but in no hierarchical order within the groupings.

The group attempted a difficult song, much different than any of the other songs sang in the choir (that I had observed). Some people refrained from singing when it was too difficult to follow along. Many participants tested their singing abilities during the first trial of the song.

During my last observation, one male bass singer explained to the whole group the condition of his wife's foot/leg surgery, which had caused him to miss some rehearsals. He thanked everyone in the group for the greeting cards and all of the support the choir had shown him during his care for his wife's ailment. The whole group showed concern and wished the man's wife a speedy recovery.

Interview with Elizabeth (Liz) Dowdy: February 21, 2013. Because I stated in previous correspondence with Kelly, the Chancel Choir director, that I would be asking a choir

member for an interview on the day of the second observation, she asked the entire group at the

end of the rehearsal if anyone would be interested in letting me interview them; Liz agreed.[2]

Although I did not specifically select Liz, she provided a good representation of the group age

and gender demographic.

    Liz Dowdy is a 71 year-old, female soprano member of the Chancel Choir. She has a

Ph.D. in Education, and is a retired school administrator. I met her for our interview at 1:30pm

on a Thursday during her volunteer hours at the First Christian Church's administrative office. I

conducted the interview in a conference room located in the church's administrative space.

    When asked about why she participates in the Chancel Choir, Liz explained that she has

been singing in church choirs and other singing groups since the fifth grade. She described her

participating in choirs as "just a part of her life" (personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Noting her long experience as a singer, I asked about the formal training that seems required to

participate in this group, the ability reading music. Liz informed me that they have had a couple

of members who could not/do not read music. She described her previous involvement with the

First Christian Church's handbell choir and other vocal choirs throughout her life as her

additional informal arts group participation, but explained that she was currently not

participating in any other informal arts (or formal arts) groups.

    In terms of social experiences, Liz described some issues she has had with "authority"

figures in choirs early in her life, but said that there are no negative experiences to speak of in the

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[2] I learned that Liz Dowdy had earned her Ph.D. in Education, and remembers having a difficult

time getting people to participate in her research project. She wanted to, in a sense, pay it

forward by volunteering to participate in my study.

Chancel Choir. She described the beneficial social experiences her current participation in the Chancel Choir as such:

> If you need something, somebody's there. We're friends, we know each other; we aren't just a choir. And, I had knee replacement surgery not too long ago; there were several of them [who] came to visit me. Of course, [get well] cards and stuff like that. But as much as anything else, it was just a matter of knowing that if I needed to get to a physical therapy appointment, or a doctor's appointment, or something, and I just wasn't up to driving, there were half a dozen people I could call. (Liz Dowdy, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

While participating in the Chancel Choir, she has fun. She also described her feelings of lethargy about getting up and going to the rehearsal, but that she is always glad she went when she gets there (personal communication, February 21, 2013). In regard to the collective benefits of the group, the camaraderie that is produced from participation in the choir is one benefit. Liz also spoke to the personal relationships she has had with other members in the group; she described some of these relationships as romantic, and others as unwanted. However, on a scale of one to ten (ten being the most comfortable) her social comfort level while participating in the group is a nine, or nine-and-a-half (personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Liz's personal participation in the Chancel Choir provides a creative outlet; this outlet gives her the energy to contribute to other community volunteer activities (especially within the First Christian Church). She was unable to speak directly to how she thinks the choir contributes to Eugene's identity, but described an event where the Chancel Choir went to New York City, New York to sing. The group joined a group of singers from Sheldon High School (located in

Eugene, Oregon) for this performance. She said that the combination of choirs provided a cross-generational, and perhaps cross-cultural, experience for those involved.

Liz tries to recruit people to participate in the choir on a regular basis (personal communication, February 21, 2013) and stated that she prefers in-person, face-to-face communications when it comes to inviting participants to get involved with choirs—church choirs specifically. She described an incident where she had tried to get involved with a church choir in Oklahoma by replying to a "visitor card." She described that attempt as unsuccessful. After attending a different church in Oklahoma, she was personally invited to join the church's choir by someone sitting next to her.

GROUP 2: CROSSROADS, BLUES/FUSION DANCE GROUP

Crossroads is an informal blues dance group that performs partnered blues dance that occasionally fuses blues with other styles of partnered dance (e.g., swing dance). Blues, popular and other styles of music are played during group meetings. The group meets at Just Breathe Yoga studio in South Eugene every Thursday evening. An optional dance lesson occurs from 7:30pm to 8:30pm, and an open dance occurs from 8:30pm to 11:30pm. A five-dollar suggested entry fee helps pay for the studio rental fee for the evening (a participant can choose to attend both the lesson and open dance, just the lesson, or just the open dance for the same five-dollar entry fee). Crossroads also uses money collected to pay local disc jockeys for the open dance as well as guest instructors. The group is comprised of members ranging in age from 20s to 60s. Participation in this group is not necessarily consistent; some members attend on a weekly basis and some rarely attend. As explained by one of the group's organizers, Crossroads' Facebook followers roughly gauge its membership. The membership includes over 250 participants; however, anywhere from 40 to 60 members attend any given meeting.

I conducted three different observations during Crossroads' regularly scheduled meetings; these observations occurred on February 14, February 28, and March 7 in the year of 2013. This group was selected because it is an informal arts group; the group does not perform professionally, is not a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and is not connected to a formal educational institution. It was also selected because it is comprised of three or more members.

I learned of Eugene's blues dancing scene in the fall of 2011 when my colleague created a field-guide for on Blues Dance. After solidifying my topic on informal arts groups the following year, I approached said colleague about contacting someone involved with the blues dancing group. She sent an email introducing me to Heather, one of the organizers of Crossroads, on January 8, 2013. Once the introduction was made, I sent a recruitment letter and information about my study to Heather on February 4. She informed me of the format of weekly Thursday meetings at Just Breathe studio, and welcomed me to observe the group.

Observation 1: February 14, 2013. The space, normally used as a yoga studio, was well lit during the lesson. Latecomers to the lesson were not necessarily aware of my presence, or my role as a researcher in the room. 15 people attended the lesson, including instructors; there were seven men and eight women. A total of 27 people attend open dance (including most of the participants whom attended the lesson); there were 13 men and 14 women.

On the meeting of February 14th, I attended the lesson portion of the meeting (from 7:30 to 8:30pm). Two female co-leaders were instructing the group, teaching blues moves fused with moves from their swing background. During the lesson, the co-leaders instructed from within a circle of participants.

It was a casual setting, with many first-time attendees. The co-leaders intermingled within the group. At first there were un-prescribed movements, intended to get everyone to

loosen up. During the warm-up, there was an introduction to blues dance movement. The co-leaders explained that they have a background in swing dance, but the moves in that style are easily fused with blues. They also asked about the group's experience with blues dancing to gauge their comfort level with certain moves. Different levels of experience and skill were exhibited in the group.

Participants in the lesson chose whether they preferred to be a "lead" or a "follow." During this lesson most women chose to be follows, but some also chose to be leads. No men chose to be follows at this particular meeting.

The clothing of the participants was casual, but with no strict gender conformity. Many participants brought special "dance" shoes to use on the studio floor, while others went barefoot or in socked-feet. No special equipment, costume, or materials were required for participation.

Blues/fusion dance is a partnered dance, so physical interactions are very close and frequent. Although a partnered dance, this lesson began with solo movement. The style of dance is called "Blues Dance," but other music forms can be played to blues movement. Blues music was played exclusively during this particular lesson.

One or two people at the door collected a five-dollar suggested entry fee. A white dry-erase board provided information about the schedule for the evening, the night's co-leaders for the lesson, the guest disc jockey for the night, and other opportunities for blues dancing during the week in Eugene and throughout Oregon. (The fee-collection and announcements occurred at all three observations.)

The lesson concluded with the instructors explaining that after the lesson the "social dance" begins. They encouraged participants to ask strangers to dance. They also included information about how to ask others to dance—the social dance protocol for the evening. They

explained that it is also okay to politely decline a dance for any reason. They emphasized respect on the parts of both follows and leads, and declared the studio a "safe space" to make connections with others.

An organizer of the group (not one of the co-leaders of the evening) made some announcements about other blues dancing going on in the city of Eugene, as well as one larger event in Portland. She described an additional event at the "Gaslight" (a blues dance enthusiast's home where a space is set up for social dance) as a community event.

Observation 2: February 28, 2013. I arrived at the Crossroads meeting at 8:00pm for the second half of the lesson and stayed for a portion of the open dance Approximately one third of the participants during this lesson were repeat attendees from my last observation. 15 people were present for the lesson, seven men and eight women. 27 people were at the open dance portion of the meeting by 9:00pm, 13 men and 14 women.

A locally well-known instructor was the leader of the lesson, possibly resulting in the larger turnout for the lesson. He asked the class for their preferences during his teaching—what they were interested in learning and their preferred learning methods. A more formal instruction style was presented with this instructor; he prescribed combinations of steps for each move. As in the last observation, varying levels of skill were apparent in the group attendees.

Pairings (follows and leads) were changed throughout the lesson. In this particular lesson, there were nine male "leads" and two women "leads." The corresponding "follows" were all women. The "follow/lead" terminology is not gender-specific. The constant switching of partners produced significant intergenerational dancing.

Each partner gave consent to performing more intimate or difficult steps. Other social interactions were exchanged about learning the new steps/moves, and the constant level of

comfort between partners was gauged through verbal (and sometimes physical) communication. Some participants knew each other from previous lessons; however, some pairings were strangers and engaged in "normal" introduction protocol.

As the Open Dance began, the room became lowly lit with rope lights around the perimeter of the dance floor. During the social dance, some pairings danced in a very sensual style. Low-to-zero social barriers were present with some couplings. Some dancers seemed more at ease once the lesson has concluded. Movement of dancing partners occurred across the room; dancers moved all over the room and were not restricted to a small space. They used the entire space available.

Observation 3: March 7, 2013. I arrived for the second half of the lesson during this observation (at 8:00pm), and noticed for the first time that Altoid mints and Purell hand-sanitizer were available at the entrance of the room. These items were offered because of the close nature and constant physical contact between participants.

The instructor this week conducted the lesson in a manner much different from my previous observations. The instructor created a very formalized teaching atmosphere, and seemed much more of an "authority" than previous instructors. She asked the group to experiment with their bodies and movement in a silly manner, and asked participants to be comfortable with what their body was doing. All group members produced trials in different body movements. In addition to this instructor's formalized teaching method, she used specific dance terminology to describe demonstrated steps; "close embrace, "very close embrace," "standard embrace," and "lazy ballroom," were different positions between partners to describe their proximity.

It was encouraged to get feedback from partners during partnered dancing. I noticed there was much more talking between partners at this lesson. While practicing a recently taught step, the instructor visited each partnership and critiqued their performance of the step. In order to get group participants to loosen-up, the instructor had everyone play an informal game that required full-body contact with partners.

Interview with Azoulas Yurashunas: March 4, 2013. Looking for a male group member of Crossroads to interview,[3] I asked Azoulas Yurashunas to participate in the study. He had attended both of my prior observations of Crossroads. Azoulas is a 26 year-old male participant in Crossroads and a homesteader by occupation. He explained that he has only been attending Crossroads for a few weeks now, but is now a devoted member. Azoulas and I met at Off the Waffle, a public restaurant, located in downtown Eugene at 11:30am, per his suggestion.

Azoulas stated that he participates in Crossroads "to develop connection with myself, and with other people, and to know more intimately how my own body moves. Because blues dancing is all about connection with the music…" (personal communication, March 4, 2013). He gave some background information on the blues dance style, and described blues dancing as an "emotional interpretation of the music" (personal communication, March 4, 2013). He further described the style as a "dance where the partners appear to be in love with one another. Because you're interpreting the emotional energy of the music and acting that out in the dance. And you can have the full range of emotions in blues dancing, from joy to sorrow, and, it's a very

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[3] A male participant was selected as an interviewee for Crossroads because of its seeming equal membership of males and females, as opposed to the predominantly female membership of the Chancel Choir and Tactile Expressions.

powerful thing. It's a healing experience, for me at least" (A. Yurashunas, personal communication, March 4, 2013).

When asked about his participation in other informal or formal arts activities, Azoulas stated that he is in the process of becoming a member of the Association for Renaissance Martial Arts (ARMA). He also described an informal activity—a type of fencing—in which he participates with friends. At the time, he was trying to form an ARMA group in Eugene; the people interested in the informal sword activity meet at his residence, parks, or other spaces in downtown Eugene. Azoulas also participates in Toastmasters, an informal public speaking group; he intends to build confidence in himself and his interactions with others through this public speaking activity.

Participating in Crossroads is an overall positive experience for Azoulas. He described his experience as follows:

It's all positive. I mean, you're building connections with other people. In a small way, you're falling in love with everybody you dance with. Just by nature of how intimate it is, and you get to know a person on that level when you dance with them. And it's a beautiful thing, it's like you're falling a little bit a thousand times with different people. You might not even know their name, you might not even know the name of the person you're dancing with. But, it breaks all social barriers. All the walls come down. Sometimes I've had men ask me to dance; and, I do, because that's one of the best ways to learn, is to be a follow. (A. Yurashunas, personal communication, March 4, 2013)

Azoulas stated that he feels "free" when dancing at Crossroads group meetings. As he explained earlier, he also feels a full range of emotions. He is able to tap into his creativity while dancing,

and use improvisation to interpret the music and express himself (personal communication, March 4, 2013).

In terms of social benefits that the group produces, blues dance is considered a communal gathering activity. "I see it as a kind of commons, an arena, where people from the community come together" (A. Yurashunas, personal communication, March 4 2013). He described blues dance as a different experience for every participant, and stated that he can only speak for himself. The breaking of social barriers and communication that occurs while dancing in Crossroads is described by Azoulas: "I've mentioned it's where the social barriers come down and there's intergenerational communication. That's what it is, it's communication, but on a nonverbal level. You can talk with your dance partner, you can talk with people there—there's great conversation. But, in the dance itself, it's nonverbal communication with the people that you're dancing with" (personal communication, March 4, 2013). Overall, Azoulas said that he would rank himself as a seven on a social comfort scale from one to ten (ten being the highest comfort) when he is participating in Crossroads. Though, he does get nervous sometimes, or feels a pressure to perform well when dancing in the group.

Azoulas sees Crossroads as *the* blues dance group in Eugene; he was not aware of any other blues dance groups in the area. He assumed that people in the group identify the group as the Eugene blues dance community (personal communication, March 4, 2013). He stated that Crossroads is a single facet of what comprises 'Eugene culture,' when asked about how the group contributes to Eugene's identity (personal communication, March 4, 2013). Azoulas sees Crossroads as just one of many contributors to Eugene's identity.

He would encourage more people to participate in Crossroads, but especially encourage those whom are passionate about dance and seeking meaningful connections with others through

dance. He did not explicitly state *how* he would recruit participants, but did explain that the type of person he would recruit was someone whom is seeking more confidence in himself/herself. He thought that those with body image issues would benefit from participating in the group in order to become comfortable with their own bodies and build confidence.

GROUP 3: TACTILE EXPRESSIONS, ART QUILTING GUILD

Tactile Expression is an art quilting and fiber arts group that started in the mid 1990s. The group meets from 12:30pm to 2:30pm on the fourth Tuesday of every month, but this is flexible if there are scheduling conflicts with members. There are currently eight members of Tactile Expressions and all are women; in earlier years the membership approximately 20 people were members of the group. The art quilting group meets in members' private homes in Eugene. Some members live outside of Eugene; since it is centrally located for the current members, meetings occur Eugene. Eugene is also the city in which the group originates. Each meeting contains a "share and tell" segment, where the participants share their projects that are in-progress or completed, but no actual quilting happens during group meetings.

I conducted three different observations during Tactile Expressions' group meetings; these observations occurred on February 26, March 25, and April 30[4] in the year of 2013. This group was selected because it is an informal arts group; the group—as an entity—does not create commercial or for-profit artwork, is not a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and is not connected to a formal educational institution. It was also selected because it is comprised of three or more members.

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[4] April 30 is the fifth Tuesday in April 2013; the April 23 meeting was changed because of one group member's involvement with the Pioneer Quilt Show occurring April 23 through April 28.

On November 2nd, I met the curator and coordinator for the Sharing Space: Selected Work from Fiber Arts Groups in Benton County, Oregon exhibit at DIVA (Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts) in Eugene, Oregon. I attended the exhibition as part of a symposium sponsored by the Center for Community Art and Cultural Policy named "Community Connections and Cultural Practice." I explained to the curator that I was planning on conducting a study of informal arts groups in Eugene, much like the groups representing artwork at the aforementioned exhibit. She recommended two different quilting groups she knew in Eugene, one of which was Tactile Expression. Several months later I contacted the members of Tactile Expressions for preliminary recruitment of the study. I then heard from Luanne via email, and she invited me to the next meeting.

Observation 1: February 26, 2013. The women sat on comfy couches or chairs in a circular formation in the South Eugene home. Sheila (the homeowner) offered coffee and tea while we waited for others to show up. There was a discussion about how few people can make it to the February meeting and only four regular group members attended. I was included in the conversation, and many explanations of terms (or general topics) were directed toward me. Jill coordinates a monthly e-newsletter and took notes for the newsletter throughout the meeting.

Bethany and Sonja both knit (a different fiber art) during the meeting. I later learned that this group focuses on "art quilting" as opposed to "traditional quilting;" however, Sheila is skilled at both. The group members described how there are basically two camps in quilting groups; those who only do/prefer art quilting, and those who only do/prefer traditional quilting— it is rare for someone (like Sheila) to do both.

Jill (group founder) started the meeting by giving me a small background on the group. She handed me a sheet with the mission and other details about the group (see Appendix H). She

also gave me a copy of the January newsletter (see Appendix I). Bethany discussed her involvement with other fiber arts groups, and that those groups tended to primarily focus on business and shows. Sonja described different quilting groups that can focus on sales or creativity, but sees Tactile Expressions as an "incubator"—meaning the women can bounce ideas off of each other and support one another on their projects.

Sheila described the group as half business/half social (denoting half group agenda items and half socializing). They asked and shared details about their families and lives outside of the group. The order of the meeting proceeded with "business items," one of which was the most recent show at the Eugene Textile Center.

Bethany talked about their meeting places and that they used to meet in a free community space at the 5th Street Public Market, but moved it to rotating private homes once that was no longer available. They also used to meet at the Campbell Center, and Bethany said they can always meet at EPUD [Emerald People's Utility District]. They used to meet at night, but Jill felt safer driving in daylight, so meetings were moved to daytime.

Once the "share and tell" began, participants moved around the room. Sheila began by getting a pattern for a quilt for her recently married sister. She showed the room the pattern (a drawing on a large sheet of paper) and described the intended color pallet. Bethany went next and laid her quilt on the floor. She described her intention to quilt felted squares into a particular pattern. Everyone gave encouragement, advice, and proposed techniques to solve the problem problems that occurred during Bethany's quilting process. The group also discussed problems with sewing/quilting machines, places in town to get them repaired, and suggested types of thread for the machines.

Sonja showed two quilted bags she made from a pattern. She also shared her first start-to-finish piece she created since moving to Portland part-time—it was a quilted portrait of a photograph of two friends in New Orleans.

Jill went next, and showed a banner-looking piece that she described as a Coastal Native Tribe skirt. It had a large image of a Salmon, and it will be entered in an Audubon Society quilt show located in Dayton, Ohio. Jill brought the quilt/skirt/banner to the last meeting, but pointed out the added details in the now-finished product. Once Jill was finished sharing, Sheila helped Jill roll the quilt up and put it away.

The group was very open about successful and unsuccessful experiences with the art form and sharing advice/tips. They encouraged each other to go for difficult tasks/techniques, and promote confidence in each other. Bethany shared some quilted postcards that she made for a Yahoo group in which she is involved. Bethany also described a knitting club she attends, and shared the scarf she was wearing as an example of a project from the club. Sheila described how it is easy to get involved with so many groups, and hard to restrain yourself from delving into related creative fiber arts.

The group moved on to discussion about friends' and colleagues' shows in and around Eugene and asked if they were able to attend. They mentioned exhibitions at the Maude Kerns Art Center, as well as Eugene Tactile Center.

The discussion then moved into an analytical consideration of "appreciating" pieces of artwork versus "liking" a piece of artwork. Sonja described how she felt like sometimes at first glance, she might not "like" a piece, but then realizes she just may not "understand" it. They all critiqued some quilt shows they had all recently attended (separately) and discussed the "lens"

through which they critique artwork. Sonja explained that when she gets to know the history or background of the artist, it usually allows her to see the piece in a different way.

Issues of digitally displaying/reproducing/photographing the quilts were discussed. Some quilt shows will not accept submissions that look different than the application photo. Some quilters use Adobe Photoshop to enhance the look, but it is explained that sometimes it is needed to help the photo appear truer to its original form. Issues of hiring photographers versus photographing the quilts yourself surfaced. They explained that some features (such as shine/textures/etc.) do not always photograph well; those who are able to produce high-quality photos (with ability to hire excellent photographer or purchase a quality camera) usually get selected for prestigious quilting shows.

The last part of the meeting concluded with Sheila talking about fabric purchasing. She does not like fabric from large chain stores because it is of a lesser quality than the local stores. The women also discussed quality of fabric and discontinued patterns purchased at chain stores. The term "greige goods" is explained as "test" fabric (usually poor quality) when manufacturers are going through test-runs of fabric dyes. They all talked about their stashes of fabric, and how their personal styles have changed over time.

Observation 2: March 25, 2013. The meeting occurred around a dining room table at Alexandra's house, located in North Eugene. I was offered Matzo ball soup for Passover, as well as a beverage. When I joined the group, members were already discussing what the term "modern quilting" means.

Ramona starts the "share and tell." She had been missing the meetings since December because of her travels to California, Nevada, and New Mexico. She shared her many misfortunes that occurred to her mobile home along the way (including forgetting to put on her parking

brake, resulting in her mobile home running into a single tree in a parking lot), but looked back with humor. Despite her unfortunate story, she shared that she has been cast in a community-theatre musical, The Sound of Music, in Florence, Oregon.

Luanne talked about an illness she has been experiencing; she recently started doing research on treatments. One aspect of her treatment includes journaling, so she shared a journal she made. She learned how to bind the book and hand-dye fabric to use on the cover. Another member shared that Luanne has published books on fabric dyeing and created a technique for making fabric bowls and vases.

Sheila started her portion of the "share and tell" with the scarf she was working on during the meeting. She shared a new type of yarn she recently discovered, and described the types of scarves that can be created with it. In addition to her scarf projects, she was tasked with typing the catalogue for the Pioneer Quilt Show at the Lane County Historical Museum.

Sheila also shared a story of her niece playing a part in the school play, which led to discussion of arts education. The group talked about how they think arts education is crucial to informing other areas of education. They mentioned that youth arts, especially drama, help build confidence in public speaking skills. They also talked about the state of arts education in the Eugene and Corvallis school districts, which they described as dire.

Alexandra shared her experience attending a watercolor workshop. She described her struggle to use paper instead of fabric. Alexandra also shared two "call for artists" opportunities: one with the ISEA (International Society of Experimental Artists) and one local opportunity at ESAP (Eugene Storefront Art Project). She showed her piece from the previous grid-themed show. It was called 'Radiates;' the quilted piece is an abstract interpretation of a human torso-to-

neck figure connected to a three-dimensional machine with select cross-stitches—it represent incisions from radiation treatment.

Participants ended the meeting by deciding the group's next show theme, although a particular exhibit/venue/gallery had not been determined. The theme selected was "A Day at the Beach." After proposing ideas and brainstorming as a group, they decided to create one three-dimensional piece that represents a type of sea life (for example a jellyfish) and one two-dimensional piece that is open for interpretation.

At the end of the meeting Ramona shared her grid piece from the previous show. She explained that a guest art critic from Lane Community College told her the colors she chose for the particular piece did not fit the concept. The rest of the group rallied behind Ramona, encouraging her that the comment from the art critic was completely subjective. They all supported Ramona's decision to use the color scheme.

Observation 3: April 30, 2013. The group met at Alexandra's house again for my last observation. The group quickly got into "business" and clarified the goals of their next show. The women all shared ideas about art quilting possibilities under the challenge and theme requirements.

Bethany went first during the "share and tell," and shares a pair of felted boots she created. The group members are in amazement of her work and offer high praise. Ramona went next, showing her experimentation with fabric dyeing. Luanne, who is especially talented with fabric dyeing, offered suggestions to create the desired outcome using specific techniques and supplies. Luanne shared more of her hand-dyed fabric-bound books she has created. Alexandra showed some of her creations on paper using watercolor and a cheesecloth-like fiber. Jill shared old projects she found while cleaning out some of her home studio space. She presented the

group with a garment she made while taking a workshop in New Zealand. Jill also shared a small

art quilt piece she found that could be used as a start for her "Day at the Beach" contribution.

In addition to briefly talking about her involvement with the Pioneer Quilt Show, Sheila

talked about a Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA) conference she attended in New Mexico. She

shared pictures from prestigious art quilters, as well as artists creating works in different

mediums (such as glass art).

All of the group participants displayed genuine interest in what each member brought to

the group. They were inspired by the artwork presented in the group meeting and got ideas for

new creative endeavors from each other. They all offered support by sharing their areas of

expertise in quilting and other fiber arts-related work, and plan to meet outside of the regularly

scheduled meeting to create artwork.

Interview with Sheila Steers: April 3, 2013. I selected Sheila Steers as an interviewee

because she was one of two Tactile Expressions members who attended both meetings I

observed prior to the interview. Since the other member who attended both meetings was the

founder of Tactile Expressions, I chose to interview Sheila, as to avoid interviewing any informal

arts participants who could be considered a leader/founder in the group.

Sheila is a general member of Tactile Expressions; she is 69 years old and female. As a

profession, Sheila was a childcare provider, but is now retired. We met at the Oakway Shopping

Center Court, an open public space intended as a resting or eating area, at 2:30pm on April 3,

2013.

Sheila participates in Tactile Expressions because "it recognizes a non-traditional way of

using fabric in quilts" (personal communication, April 3, 2013). When she joined Tactile

Expressions, it was the only art quilting group in the area that acknowledged non-traditional

quilting. She thought that this group would provide an avenue for creatively exploring what kinds of artwork she could make with fabric. Summing up her reasons for participating, Sheila stated, "And I like the people in the group" (personal communication, April 4, 2013).

In addition to Tactile Expressions, Shelia has participated in Pioneer Quilters (a traditional quilting group) for 20 years and has occasionally been involved with Emerald Valley Quilters Guild. She belongs to a more formal organization, Studio Art Quilt Associates, which is an international group (personal communication, April 4, 2013). It was apparent that Sheila participates in several quilting groups in both informal and formal capacities.

The biggest reason Sheila participates in Tactile Expressions is for the support it provides. She has stayed with the group longer than she normally would because of that reason. She stated, "It gives you some support and positive reinforcement for being creative" (personal communication, April 4, 2013). Many people whom have left the group have either left for changes in career or moving. She explained that some people involved with the group just grew out of it. Sheila could only think of one instance where a group member left because she did not like Tactile Expressions or the interactions that occurred within it.

Though Sheila likes participating in the group, it can make her feel somewhat inadequate if she does not work as fast as other members. However, the positive reinforcement she receives when she shows works in progress contributes to her reasons for staying with the group. "For the most part opinions are constructive—they're not snarky, if you want to call it that. But they try to be positive about constructive stuff" (personal communication, April 4, 2013).

The biggest encouragement this group provides Sheila is deadlines to complete work. It also challenges her creatively when the group selects themes for their group exhibitions. She stated that as a whole, the group provides an opportunity to be inspired by other members' ideas,

techniques, and styles. It provides a way for art quilters to receive feedback on their work and share what they have created.

Her social comfort level in the group is occasionally determined by whether or not she has work to show. She stated that her comfort level is at an eight (out of ten) for most meetings (personal communication, April 4, 2013). She attributes Tactile Expressions as something that has given her more confidence in talking about her artwork.

Sheila sees Tactile Expressions as a group that has brought art quilting to the greater Eugene community. They have exhibited in the Springfield Museum, Washington Abbey, and Jacobs Gallery in the Hult Center. She thinks Tactile Expressions has promoted the art form of "art quilting" in the community. Sheila explained that she thinks the group has given the public an opportunity to see what kind of artwork can be created with art quilting.

When asked about how Tactile Expressions contributes to Eugene's identity, Sheila stated that she thinks individual group members have contributed to the identity of Eugene; however, because some members live outside of the city of Eugene, the group itself may not directly contribute to Eugene's identity. She sees Tactile Expressions more as "Eugene-oriented."

She would encourage others to participate because the group does not jury on skill level. She described the group as welcoming of all skill levels and as a place where art quilters can evolve their talents. Yet, she did emphasize that personalities of new group members must fit with those currently in the group (personal communication, April 4, 2013). The group has previously recruited members by word-of-mouth. Tactile Expressions has a protocol for inviting new members that includes three visits to the group. After the potential new member has visited

three times, the group then conducts a blind vote via email to decide whether or not they would

like the potential member to officially join the group.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

This research was conducted in order to better understand how informal art participation contributes to community development in the city of Eugene, Oregon. The original fieldwork performed through an ethnographic lens helps situate the role of informal arts groups in communities; the following findings examine what community and social benefits informal arts groups produce.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 4 explores and analyzes the research findings from participant observations, interviews, and case study analysis. Data analysis was organized across the three main topic areas in the study's conceptual framework: (a) the building of social capital, (b) the breaking of social barriers, and (c) community identity. Findings from the data collection and analysis inform my main research question: What is the role of informal arts participation in community development? Unexpected discoveries that emerged from the ethnographically based research in informal arts groups are introduced across the topic areas.

Several trends emerged by examining each group within the focus areas of social capital, social barriers, community identity, and community development. Concern for group member well-being, support of creativity, risk taking, comfortable settings, and networking contributed to the social capital built in each group. Social barriers that were crossed within the groups include gender, generational, and authority. In addition to these three social barriers, a general acceptance across difference was also observed in the groups. While it was largely difficult to gauge how group members view their informal arts participation within the greater community, each group's individual activity can be articulated with ease. Communal group goals, recruitment, and participant support of other informal arts activities outside of the studied groups

also contributed to community identity. Finally, the role of informal arts participation is manifested in support for the local economy, the activation of community spaces, and group member participation in other informal arts group in the community. Examples and testimony form group participants are provided to illustrate these trends in informal arts participation that occurs in Eugene-based groups.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Findings from observations and interviews revealed that group members (in the three particular informal arts groups examined in this study) participate for several different reasons. Some of these reasons include: to develop positive social connections with other group participants, to take part in a creative, social activity, and to feel a sense of belonging within a creative, cohesive community.

General facets of social capital such as sharing personal stories, interacting jovially with other group members, and showing genuine interest in the lives of other participants occurred in the Chancel Choir, Crossroads Blues/Fusion Dance, and Tactile Expressions group meetings. One particular anecdote came as a story told by Ramona of Tactile Expressions. Attending the March meeting after being away on vacation for several months, she shared the adventures, perils, misfortunes, and humorous life-lessons she experienced while travelling the American Southwest in a 36-foot motorhome. While Ramona shared her experiences, the group shared laughs and additional supportive anecdotes. Positive, compassionate interactions illustrate the authentic interpersonal connections present in the groups.

A celebratory example of sharing cheerful interactions happened when the Chancel Choir celebrated their eldest member, "Pinky," retiring from the group. His retirement was celebrated with cake, testimonies of fond memories singing with him, and a round of "For He's a Jolly-

Good Fellow." This celebration is just one way in which social capital is built and maintained among the informal arts groups.

Well-being. One specific example of building social capital in the informal arts groups was genuine investment in the well being of fellow group members—this was especially ostensive in the Chancel Choir and Tactile Expressions groups. During my interview with Liz Dowdy of the Chancel Choir, she explained that when she was recovering from her knee surgery, she knew she could count on any of her fellow choir members to give her a ride to her physical therapy appointments or help her in any way she needed. She stated, "If you need something, somebody's there. We're friends, we know each other; we aren't just a choir." (E. Dowdy, personal communication, February 21, 2013).

Another example of well-being support was revealed in the informal arts groups during the "share and tell" portion of the Tactile Expressions. Luanne talked about her struggle with fibromyalgia; all of her group members offer support and extend sympathy in her treatment. As journaling was recommended as being helpful with her treatment, Luanne shared a journal with a fabric cover she created as one of her creative textile projects. Sheila Steers of Tactile Expressions remarked about her group: "it gives you some support and positive reinforcement for being creative. And then once you're in the group for a long time, you also have [those] supportive people who start knowing if you're sick, or not feeling well; you get the emotional support" (S. Steers, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Creative support. In addition to interest in well-being, another type of support also proved to be present in the group meetings: creative support. Amongst all three groups, support in performing or creating art forms was given and received across group members. Dancers were clearly exhibited trying new dance moves with the aid and support of their dance partners and

fellow coupled dancers in Crossroads. Members of the Chancel Choir tested their singing

abilities by attempting to sing the "split" parts within their vocal sections (soprano, alto, tenor,

and bass).

At the conclusion of the March Textile Expressions meeting, Ramona shared one of her

"grid" art quilts that she took to another quilting group. She said that the other group had a guest

artist critique the quilts; the critic disapproved of Ramona's color choice. The members of

Tactile Expressions assured Ramona that the critic's opinion was subjective and supported her

decision in color choice for the grid quilt. Ramona seemed reassured of her work after this

interaction where the other group participants offered words of support and encouragement.

Sheila Steers of Textile Expressions explained how her group supports her creativity: "It gives

me positive deadlines to complete work. The themes that we choose sometimes become a

challenge so it encourages me to be more creative or look at something differently. And then,

because we try and have a venue for the work, it also means that we get our work exhibited"

(personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Risk-taking. Encouragement to take creative risks in each group's respective art form

also evidenced participant support in creativity. During the Chancel Choir member observations,

members were often viewed helping each other with difficult sections in the music. They talked

quietly to those sharing the same vocal parts (divided by soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), and

offered words of encouragement to each other. This collaborative process allowed the vocalists

to achieve the level of musicality they desired.

The women of Tactile Expressions also demonstrated risk-taking in their creative projects

by sharing their personal failures and successes with specific projects. Bethany talked about how

she proceeded with one technique in making an art quilt, but then needed to scrap the project and

start over with another method. All group members offered her advice when she explained how she was struggling to achieve a desired outcome with her quilt. The ability for Bethany to be comfortable in sharing her perceived failure with the group, and being receptive to positive feedback from her fellow group members, demonstrated creative risk-taking.

One last example of risk-taking took shape in the form of risking rejection. At the conclusion of each Crossroads Blues/Fusion dance lesson—and before the start of the open dance—group organizers encouraged participants to ask strangers to dance. Promoting interactions with those with which one may not normally interact provided a safe space for risk-taking. While asking different people to dance, it also allowed risks in dance style or moves to be tested with new partnerships. This form of risk-taking allows social capital to be built between individuals participating in Crossroads, and occurs across gender and age barriers.

Relaxed, light-hearted mood. When examining the social capital created between members of each group, it is necessary to comment on the *mood* or atmosphere of each group environment. All three groups' meetings were conducted in relaxed settings. All interviewees ranked their personal social comfort level on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest) between 7 and 9.5. Causal, fun, and comfortable interactions create an environment conducive to maintaining strong social capital within the informal arts groups. The informal setting provides a safe foundation upon which positive social interactions can occur.

Networks. Within the informal arts groups, social networks are formed. These networks promote creativity and positive social interactions amongst group participants. With the Crossroads dance group having the largest amount of members (although all members do not attend every week), attendees of the group meetings get to know one another and begin to build friendly relationships while participating in dance. With over 250 members (gauged from the

Crossroads Facebook group and organizer Heather), members build social capital within the group. When dancing with new and old partners, the dance instructors encourage participants to give feedback on their partners' performances. This dialogue between individuals helps create the positive social networks that allow group members to grow creatively in their art form.

During Liz Dowdy's interview (of the Chancel Choir), she told a story about the importance of face-to-face connections in informal arts groups. When Liz moved to a new city and began attending a new church, she wrote on a 'visitor card' that she was interested in participating in the church choir; she said she never heard from anyone in the church about getting involved. When trying a new church in the same city, she said she happened to sit next to the pastor's wife and expressed to her that she was interested in participating in the church choir. The pastor's wife was receptive and produced an immediate invitation to participate in the choir (personal communication, February 21, 2013). This face-to-face interaction was important in cultivating the social capital in the church choir setting.

Putnam (2010) argues that the informal social connections facilitated through casual gatherings ultimately foster social capital within communities. The face-to-face interactions present in all of the observed informal arts groups could not be produced remotely; these gathering opportunities as means of participating in a creative activity in an informal setting is what allows the social capital to be built.

The social capital expressed and built in these three informal arts groups manifested itself within the genuine interest in group members' well-being, creative support and encouragement, risk-taking, a jovial, light-hearted atmosphere, and the creation of interpersonal networks. After the participant observations and interviews were conducted, it was apparent that social capital was built and maintained through these channels in all three groups.

BREAKING SOCIAL BARRIERS

Varying means of social barrier breaking was exhibited in each informal arts group. Participants of the Chancel Choir, Crossroads, and Tactile Expressions groups crossed gender, generational, and authoritative boundaries—leading to the conclusion that informal arts groups provide an arena for social barriers to be broken. Relaxed social interactions occurred across the groups with ease. Tension between group members did not occur during any point in any of the group observations.

Gender. I witnessed two examples of crossing gender barriers and gender roles in the Chancel Choir and Crossroads. Little evidence of breaking social barriers across gender was exhibited in Tactile Expression, as the group was comprised of only women.

Acknowledging my own bias in considering soprano/alto vocal parts traditionally sung by women choral members and alto/bass parts sung by men, the Chancel Choir crossed these gendered boundaries. Women sang the tenor parts in the choir alongside men; there were no gender assignments associated with parts. In Crossroads, women and men did not necessarily follow the traditional "follow/lead" gender roles associated with dance partners. Men and women were free to choose if they preferred to be a "follow" or "lead." Many same-sex dance partnerships occurred. These two examples crossing traditional gender boundaries offer evidence of the crossing of gender roles—and gender barriers—within the informal arts groups.

In addition to breaking traditional gender roles in the choir and blues dance group, communication barriers between male and female group participants were also not observed.

Generational. Each of the informal arts groups had varying ranges of age represented in the participant demographics. The largest intergenerational interactions occurred in Crossroads, where observations showed participants in age ranges from 20s to 60s. Azoulas Yurashunas, a

newer member of Crossroads, offered commentary on the breaking of social barriers in the blues

dance group, including generational barriers: "I've mentioned it's where the social barriers come

down and there's intergenerational communication. That's what it is, it's communication, but on

a nonverbal level. You can talk with your dance partner, you can talk with people there—there's

great conversation. But, in the dance itself, it's nonverbal communication with the people that

you're dancing with. And, there's old, there's young, [people] of all walks of life, and they all

come together in the commons of blues dancing; where you wouldn't normally even associate or

talk with those people in any other situation, or day-to-day situations." (A. Yurashunas, personal

communication, March 4, 2013). As illustrated by the Community Intergenerational Performance

Project (2008) in the literature review, and by participants of Crossroads, informal arts contexts

facilitate a space where generational barriers are crossed.

While all groups were comprised of adults, the large age range of participants did not

prevent any of the groups from accomplishing their creative goals during participation. No age

barriers were present. As group members participate in the arts activity, generation gaps do not

affect the social or creative aspects of participation in any negative way.

Authority. There were no perceived barriers between the leaders of each group and

general members. Participation in an arts activity that is held in an informal setting allows the

barriers between "authorities" in the group and other members to be nonexistent. Because of the

groups' informal nature, the roles of "leaders" and "general members" were blurred. In the

Chancel Choir, the general vocal members were able to freely ask the choir director or pianist

questions about the music and freely interact socially (even jokingly) with the two as well. In

Crossroads, instructors or co-instructors led only a portion of the group meeting (during the

optional lesson). Members of the blues dance group also freely interacted and danced with the

instructors, and no authoritative barriers were present. The only observed leader of Tactile

Expressions was the founder; this position did not play a significant authoritative role other than

taking notes for an electronic newsletter. The causal, informal setting in which these arts

activities take place creates a conducive environment in which any types of authoritative barriers

are removed. All participants are on the same level, and work together to achieve a common,

creative goal.

Physical positioning of participants in all groups also presented another way in which

authoritative barriers were crossed. While the director of the Chancel Choir remained in the front

of the room facing the vocalists (in order to conduct musical direction), the leaders of the other

two groups were not physically situated in an authoritative position. The instructors of the blues

dance lesson mingled with participants, and group members often formed a circle. The members

of Tactile Expressions were always positioned in a circle, with all members at the same level of

authority.

Although Chancel Choir members sat near those with whom they shared vocal parts,

there was no perceived order to the seating—everyone was seen as an equal, and level of musical

skill or ability did not factor into seating.

Skill, talent, ability, or experience did not factor into the physical positioning, or

perceptions of authority, in any of the groups. This allowed all members to be on the same level,

and participate in the group with ease.

Physical barriers were also demonstrated as very low in Crossroads because of the

extreme closeness between partners and frequent changing of partners. The sensual nature of the

blues-style dance puts participants in a position where social barriers are extremely low.

Although varying levels of intimacy were expressed between coupled partners, the informal art form fostered the breaking of social barriers through physical closeness.

Acceptance across difference. Acceptance of differences between group members is an important outcome from participation in informal arts activities. Group involvement in a shared creative activity allowed social differences to have no affect on group participation. Sharing and celebrating social differences allows the groups to strengthen and grow.

One particular example of this celebration of differences was the sharing and consumption of matzo ball soup and meringue cookies during a Tactile Expressions meeting that occurred during Passover. Although most of the quilting group's members were not Jewish, they all celebrated one member's cultural community with food.

An additional example of acceptance across differences was Liz Dowdy's explanation of a social situation with one of her fellow choir members. Liz talked about the struggles of one Chancel Choir member whom is affect by mental illness: "When she first came to join us she was *really…* anything could set her off. She'd be angry, upset with people, et cetera, et cetera. And, she's not that way with us anymore. Now I don't know if that's because she's just generally improved or she's comfortable in that group now so it's easier for her or what. But I know that [another choir member] and I have both been noticing she's *so much* easier to get along with." I asked Liz if she thought that her improvement could be attributed to the participation in the group, she replied "Participating in the group, and just knowing she's accepted." (E. Dowdy, personal communication, February 21, 2013).

The informal arts setting creates an environment where people from all different backgrounds, ages, gender identities, and cultures can participate in a group setting without inhibitions. The common goal of creating or performing an art form puts all participants on the

same level; this equality amongst group members breaks any social barriers that may exist within their normal day-to-day activities.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Examination of how these three informal arts groups fit within the identity of Eugene, Oregon proved difficult through participant observations and interviews. Observations revealed community cohesion within the group, but did not provide a glimpse of how each group was positioned within the greater citywide community. Questions pertaining specifically to how each informal arts group contributed to Eugene's identity during interviews left interviewees with little to say. I learned that I should have used different language to pose these questions, as "community identity" can be a phrase that is discipline-specific.

Response to 'community identity.' Interviewees did not know how to respond to my inquiry of "community identity" during interviews. They were able to articulate how they saw group identity, but not necessarily the identity of the group within the community of Eugene. Azoulas Yurashunas sees Crossroads, as well as all other informal groups in Eugene, as only one contributing aspect of Eugene's identity. He says "I see Eugene culture as this glorious multi-colored gem, and, there are so many different groups, different mini communities within the larger community, and each one is a facet." (A. Yurashunas, personal communication, March 4, 2013). As mentioned earlier, gauging each group's contribution to Eugene's identity proved problematic. Though examples by Yontz (2004), Bahrampour (2001), and Cuddy (2012), as illustrated in the literature review, evidenced communities constructing their identity through arts activities, these examples were from outsider perspectives. Informal arts group members' personal perspectives, as members of the community, did not necessarily match conclusions of arts activities significantly contributing to the community's identity. However, Shelia Steers of

Tactile Expressions was able to communicate what kind service she thought her art-quilting group provided for the community: "We've had several exhibits over in the Springfield Museum. We've had some in Washington Abbey. We had one at the Jacobs Gallery at the Hult Center. So, it's brought something for the public to come and see. When the Pioneer Quilters had their show a couple of years ago, we [Tactile Expressions] had an exhibit in their show. So, you know, we're out there in the arts scene. There are now two other art quilt groups that started after ours because they saw that there was some place for them. And so they've been exhibiting, too. So I think we kind of helped get the concept of an "art quilt instead of just a "traditional quilt" out there for the public to go and see." (S. Steers, personal communication, April 3, 3013). While it was difficult to have group members speak to how they thought their respective groups contributed to Eugene's identity, each group's individual identity could be articulated with ease. Through observations and interviews, each informal arts group's identity can be recognized with descriptions that follow.

Chancel Choir. One major contribution to the Chancel Choir's identity, proven through observations, was its spiritual devotion. All members of this group are included in the cultural community of the Disciples of Christ Protestant denomination. The songs sung within the informal arts group contain lyrics with Christian themes. Most of the songs rehearsed are traditional hymns, but contemporary Christian songs are also included. Members of the group are focused on inclusiveness, and invite others to join their church and church choir. As a religious, service-oriented element based in Christianity, the group also has a genuine compassion for the community of Eugene—especially it's most vulnerable citizens. This informal arts group can be described as a Christian choral group that performs traditional sacred music.

Crossroads. Although Crossroads has a large following, there are several devoted members attending group meetings each week. Approximately one third of the participants attending the meetings during my observations were in attendance at all three meetings. Azoulas Yurashunas explained, "if there are other blues dance groups in Eugene, I'm not aware of them" (personal communication, March 4, 2013). Crossroads represents a fluid group of people with varying levels of dance experience whom congregate to learn—or merely participate in—the blues/fusion dance style in an informal, social setting.

Tactile Expressions. Tactile Expressions is an "art quilting" group, as opposed to a "traditional quilting" group. This informal arts group serves mostly as a support group for members to share techniques, tips, and their own creative projects. Group meetings serve as a space to exchange ideas, offer constructive critique, and encourage motivation in artistic endeavors. The group also serves its members as a social gathering a casual, comfortable environment.

Communal group goals. Viewing each group as its own community, one shared characteristic these informal arts groups have in common are mutual group goals. The Chancel Choir met each week with the goal of performing a well-sung selection of songs for the following Sunday church service. Crossroads participants attended the optional lesson to improve their technical skills, and the open dance to socialize and build community. Tactile Expressions shared information pertaining to their art quilts, such as the best places to have quilting equipment repaired or where to purchase quality fabric. The quilting group also creates a common goal by setting a theme for a proposed exhibit, and contributing a piece (or pieces) to the show. A common characteristic of voluntary participation in each informal arts group is the

intention of achieving common goals in collaboration with other group members, although these goals vary from group to group.

Recruitment. Although recruitment is not seen as a necessary component of participation in these informal arts groups, I investigated this concept across the groups. During the celebration of Pinky's retirement from the Chancel Choir, he expressed that he will miss singing with the group and hopes more people will join. Liz Dowdy, also of the Chancel Choir, explained that face-to-face interactions would be the best method of recruitment for the choir (personal communication, February 21, 2013). Crossroads' recruitment is done mostly through word-of-mouth, and it has a high success rate with this technique. Sheila Steers described the recruitment process of Tactile Expressions "So far we've done it mainly by word-of-mouth, somebody knows of somebody and they're invited to come and visit" (personal communication, April 4, 2013). She explained that they have not been actively recruiting, but as the art quilting group membership continues to decrease, they may have to think about recruiting other art quilters.

While recruitment within the informal arts groups was not an essential element of participation in the groups, the overall sustainability of each group depends on it. Especially in the case of Tactile Expressions, as group members age, move, or are no longer able to participate, the group could be at risk of dissolving.

Support of other informal arts groups. One unexpected finding that occurred across the three groups was participant support of other similar informal arts groups. At the conclusion of each lesson during the Crossroads meetings, one of the group organizers would announce other opportunities to participate in blues dance activities throughout the week. Most of the announced activities were gatherings at private homes in Eugene, and some extended to larger

events held in Corvallis or Portland. This support for the art form, as opposed to competition

between events, is a common characteristic of informal arts groups.

In addition to supporting informal arts events throughout Eugene, informal arts group

participants also support those whom practice the same art form (outside of group) and exhibits

that showcase the same art form. This form of support was evidenced in Tactile Expressions

when group members discussed a fellow art quilter's work on display at the Maude Kerns Art

Center. They also shared information about another show happening at the Eugene Tactile

Center, encouraging members to see the exhibit. One of the group members of Tactile

Expressions also participates in the Pioneer Quilt Show at the Lane County Historical Museum;

she promoted the upcoming show and other members were happy to support it.

Liz Dowdy of the Chancel Choir expressed during her interview that she was not

currently participating in any choirs or arts groups outside of the Chancel Choir, but did reveal

that she was once a member of church's handbell choir (personal communication, February 21,

2013). Through discussion with her, I gathered that it was a common practice among Chancel

Choir members to participate in one or more other music groups offered at the First Christian

Church. While this type of support for other similar informal arts participation occurs within the

same (church) community, the support does exist.

Although it is still unclear what role these three informal arts groups play in contributing

to the identity of Eugene, it is clear that they play a significant part in what is considered

"Eugene culture." Informal arts groups provide accessible outlets for creative arts participation,

and allow creative hubs to thrive throughout Eugene. Without these opportunities to participate

in arts activities in an informal group setting, Eugene's identity may not have the substantial

emphasis of being a place that fosters creativity and the arts—an element of its current identity.

ROLE OF INFORMAL ARTS PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The building of social capital, breaking of social barriers, and the formation of cohesive community identity expressed in these three informal arts groups contribute to Eugene's community development. Those three areas help develop a sense of connectivity between community members, inside and outside of informal arts groups. While participants in these arts activities may be able to identify themselves as a community within their art form, they play a significant role in the greater community of Eugene.

Participation in Other Informal Arts Groups. Many members of all three observed informal arts groups participate in other community activities; some of these activities are related to the informal art form, and some are not. Crossroads organizers sponsored a free event open to all dancers, dance organizers, and dance instructors called "How to Grow Your Dance Scene." This event was held to empower other dancers in Eugene to create their own dance groups within the community.

Azoulas Yurashunas of Crossroads described how he participates in informal arts groups that are not traditionally considered part of the "art" world. He participates in a martial arts group informally, as well as Toastmasters, a public speaking group (personal communication, March 4, 2013). His participation in these other groups further emphasizes the aptness of people participating in informal arts groups to participate in other community activities.

Several members of Tactile Expressions communicated their involvement with other informal arts groups. Sheila talked about how easy it is to get involved with many groups that relate to fiber arts—fabric dyeing groups, traditional quilting groups, and other art quilt groups— and that sometimes it is hard to restrain involvement to a manageable level. Bethany shared her involvement with many other fiber arts groups during one meeting. Sonja described the quilting

group as an "incubator;" the group helps promote creativity, allows members to exchange ideas, and gives the opportunity to support endeavors outside of the group—either with other informal quilting groups or for professional growth (personal communication, February 26, 2013). However, in addition to involvement with other fiber arts groups, members of Tactile Expressions also participate in informal arts outside of the quilting medium. Carole shared her experiences in a watercolor group and Ramona declared that she was cast in a community theatre production of The Sound of Music (personal communication, March 25, 2013). The members of Tactile Expressions are clearly active members in several informal arts groups throughout the community. This connectivity of social networks contributes to Eugene's community development through informal arts participation.

Community Spaces. When examining informal arts groups' role in community development, it is necessary to note *where* in the community these activities occur (see Appendix D-III). The three groups observed in this study held meetings in very diverse settings: private homes, a yoga studio, and a church. These diverse spaces contribute to the community-wide arts scene in which all arts activities (both informal and formal) are a part.

Bethany explained the history of Tactile Expressions' meeting spaces; she said they once met at a free space at the 5th Street Public Market, but shifted to meeting at private homes of the members once that space was no longer offered (personal communication, February 26, 2013). They also used to rent a room a the Campbell Center (a public building managed by the City of Eugene, but decided not to continue paying the rental fees. Bethany also described an available free meeting space provided by EPUD (Emerald People's Utility District) that they could use if they were not able to meet at members' homes.

As explained in Chapter 3, Crossroads uses the five-dollar entry fee to cover costs of renting their meeting space. The use of the Just Breathe Studio, a yoga studio, helps repurpose the space as a multiuse community space. The location in South Eugene is also easily accessed by public transit. This studio serves as an accessible meeting space for not just blues dance, but for other community-connected activities as well—making it a hub for community involvement.

The Grace Chapel, the part of the First Christian Church where the Chancel Choir meets, also serves a variety of uses. These uses are for the church's other related activities, including religious ceremonies. The church grounds, located in the heart of downtown Eugene, also serve as a public space for homeless or low-income Eugene residents to seek social services. As Liz Dowdy explained in her interview, they serve a free breakfast as a community service (personal communication, February 21, 2013). The informal arts practices and social services that occur at the church activate the space as a community space.

Informal arts practices also activate other spaces, not just their meeting spaces, throughout the community. As highlighted by Taylor (2008), community developers should include spaces for amateur and informal arts in order to "magnetize" communities. During Carole's turn for "share and tell" in a Tactile Expressions, she voiced the 'call for women artists' opportunity with the Eugene Storefront Art Project (ESAP) (personal communication, March 25, 2013). The sharing of community opportunities to display their informal art forms (in this example, empty storefronts) helps contribute to community development in places other than group meeting spaces.

Support of the local economy. Stimulating the local economy is yet another way in which informal arts participation supports community development. The Crossroads group charges a five-dollar suggested entry fee and uses this money to pay a local business to rent the

studio space. Other money collected from the fees goes toward paying local guest instructors for the lesson portion of the meeting and a disc jockey for the open dance portion of the evening. This informal arts group supports the formal arts sector by providing monetary compensation to professional artists (dance instructors and disc jockeys). The money collected from informal arts participants stays within the community, therefore aiding the community economically.

Another major way in which informal arts groups support their local economies is by purchasing supplies from local businesses. During one Tactile Expressions meeting, the women discuss which local stores have the best fabric selection and quality for their quilting projects; they also discussed the problems with purchasing fabric from larger chain stores. In addition to purchasing fabric, the women of Tactile Expressions also shared their favorite local businesses for sewing machine or other technical equipment repair. This group supports the local economy by utilizing local businesses to supply their fabric and repair needs.

While there was no clear evidence of the Chancel Choir monetarily contributing the to local businesses, the strong impact that both Crossroads and Tactile Expressions makes on Eugene's local economy is obvious. Furthermore, the groups not only support the local economy, but also help support artists and arts-related businesses—aiding the continuum of informal/formal arts participation. Sheila Steers of Tactile Expressions noted in her interview that she read in the latest survey of a quilting magazine that the quilting industry is a 3.5 billion dollar industry (personal communication, April 4, 2013). In terms of community development, the informal arts sector plays a role in contributing to the local economy in which the informal arts participation occurs.

CONCLUSIONS

Through participant observation, interviews, and analysis of small case studies, several social benefits were exhibited in informal arts group participation. These benefits within the realms of building social capital, breaking social barriers, and contributing to community identity are all encompassed within productive community development.

Evidence of creating social capital through caring for the well-being of other group members, providing creative support and allowing constructive risk-taking in a casual, comfortable environment facilitated positive social networks between group members. Group members were also able to cross social boundaries such as gender, age, authority, and other general differences within the informal environments. Though the informal arts group participants interviewed were able to articulate their respective group identity, they were largely unable to explain how their group identity fit into a shared community identity within Eugene.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

This study was conducted to create a better understanding of participation in informal arts activities in the city of Eugene, Oregon. After conducting exploratory research on informal arts practices at a community level, I was able to examine how three different informal arts groups created social capital, broke social barriers, and contributed to community identity. With these three topic areas assessed, an overarching framework revealed how informal arts groups play a role in community development. With the findings explained in Chapter 4, the inherent and qualitative values of the three Eugene case studies were assessed. It is implicit that the three informal arts groups studied in this research project produce communal social benefits that aid in the cohesion of Eugene as a community.

As the final considerations and conclusions of the study, this chapter examines researcher limitations and researcher biases in the field. Closing analysis on overarching findings is included—these are findings that were not necessarily expected in the research inquiry, but are inherently important aspects of studying informal arts groups ethnographically. The chapter also provides outside confirming evidence of similar informal situations that produced similar findings to this research. Lastly, implications for similar studies and final remarks are made.

Limitations and recommendations for further study. The largest limitation of this research project was the timeframe in which it was completed. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the informal arts participation in Eugene, Oregon, more than three case studies would need to be observed over a time period longer than six months. While I cannot determine how many groups would need to be examined and for how long, a more extensive ethnographic study on informal arts groups in Eugene would need to occur to paint a

more thorough portrait of the social benefits and contributions that community informal arts participation provides.

As a method of demonstrating and exhibiting the informal arts sector, creating an informal arts mapping project would illustrate informal arts participation in Eugene, Oregon. Using cultural mapping techniques, better visibility of the informal arts activities that occur in the community of Eugene could be produced through an informal arts map.

FINAL ANALYSIS

The following findings are additional discoveries that occurred outside of the topic areas of social capital, social barriers, and contributions community identity. The issues of (a) access to informal arts activities and (b) measures of excellence in artwork and performance exhibited in the groups are explored. These two topic areas were not necessarily examined through the study's research questions, but are important aspects of informal arts participation as exhibited through this project.

Access. One perceived issue of access to participating in the Chancel Choir was the ability to read music. Through my observations, it appeared that every member was trained in reading music and interpreted the sheet music by using their voices as instruments. It was not until my interview with Liz Dowdy that I learned that at least one member did not know how to read music. While it seems to be the participant's advantage if s/he can read music, it is not a necessary skill or requirement of participation in the Chancel Choir.

Excluding the monetary cost of five dollars, access Crossroads Blues/Fusion dance group is very high. The location of the Just Breathe Studio where the meetings take place is on a public transit line, allowing easy transportation access. Although some participants choose to wear dance-specific shoes, many participants dance in bare feet, suggesting no special costume

requirement. Crossroads encourages dancers of all skill and ability level to participate, permitting a dance experience that is accessible to a large audience.

Tactile Expressions had the lowest perceived level of access out of the three groups. Special sewing equipment is required to participate in this art form; fabric, thread, and other supplies are also necessary to create quilts. While the social part of participating in the group has low barriers, the monetary commitment to this specific art form through the purchasing of equipment and supplies creates a lower level of access than the Chancel Choir and Crossroads.

From a community development perspective, accessibility to this type of arts participation is important to ensure that all community members are able to participate in informal arts activities. Community activities that invite a diverse population through eliminating or lowering access barriers increase the chances of creating a cohesive, cooperative community.

Formalized art forms and excellence. Vocal music, and especially traditional sacred vocal music, is mostly considered a *fine* or formal art form. Although the art form is formalized, the setting and conditions in which the Chancel Choir meets and rehearses creates informal arts participation. While different levels of musical ability were observed, the choir as a whole exhibited excellence within the art form of vocal music.

In addition to sacred vocal music, partnered dance can also be considered a formal art form. However, like the Chancel Choir, Crossroads takes a *fine* art form and places it in a comfortable, casual setting. This setting creates the circumstances under which the informal arts participation can take place. During the lesson portion of the Crossroads blues dance meetings, participants have the option of honing their dance abilities through the direction of dance instructors. Although the lessons are casual in nature, this training method can also be considered *formal*.

Dancers demonstrated a significant range of skill during Crossroads meetings. While prior experience with blues dance is not requisite to participating in the informal arts group, the excellence exhibited by several experienced dancers is another testament to the quality of artwork presented in informal arts settings.

While quilting is mostly considered a *craft* art form in America, I found the way in which the members of Tactile Expressions discuss their techniques to be very sophisticated. The group took time to critique their artwork in an analytical manner and offered constructive criticism to other members. This informal art quilting group discussed issues of authenticity in using longarm quilting machines, choice of media, and art versus traditional quilting methods. When critiquing a recent quilt show at the Maude Kerns Art Center, they discussed the artist's intent and cultural background. This complex, analytical discussion displayed an excellence in the way Tactile Expressions' group members exchange information about their art form.

It is important to note that informal arts participation does not necessarily produce mediocre or low quality art or performance. The artwork and performances exhibited in the three informal arts groups studied was that of excellence. Informal arts environments provide casual, comfortable settings in which artists can explore their creativity and hone their skills.

CONFIRMING EVIDENCE

Considering the findings from Chapter 4, the question whether or not these findings of social benefits occur outside of informal arts participation comes into play. In his article concerning participatory culture in the 21st century media education, James Paul Gee (as cited in Jenkins) describes informal learning environments as "affinity spaces."

Affinity spaces offer powerful opportunities for learning, Gee argues, because they are

sustained by common endeavors that bridge differences in age, class, race, gender, and

educational level, and because people can participate in various ways according to their

skills and interests, because they depend on peer-to-peer teaching with each participant

constantly motivated to acquire new knowledge or refine their existing skills, and

because they allow each participant to feel like an expert while tapping the expertise of

others. (Jenkins, 2006, p. 9)

In Oldenburg's *The Great Good Place*, he describes informal, public environments as

"third places." These third places can be described similarly as the spaces in which the three

informal arts groups studied in the research project take place. Oldenburg explains:

Third places exist on neutral ground and serve tot level their guests to a condition of

social equality. …Third places are taken for granted and most have a low profile. …The

character of a third place is determined most of all by its regular clientele and is marked

by a playful mood, which contrasts with people's more serious involvement in other

spheres. Though a radically different kind of setting from home, the third place is

remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that extends.

(Oldenburg, 1999, p. 42)

The same social benefits that are created through informal arts participation are evident in similar

informal learning and participatory environments, as explained in the two aforementioned

examples.

CLOSING REMARKS

Because those who participate in the informal arts activities observed commit a

significant amount of time to their group, it can be assumed that each participant associates value

with their participation in the group. For some like Sheila Steers, it provides a creative outlet for

personal growth in addition to a social experience. Sheila Steers explains why she continues to

participate in the Tactile Expressions: "it recognizes a non-traditional way of using fabric in quilts. And so its just another outlet that I started with making traditional quilts, and just started kind of sticking my own thing in. And when Jill started the art quilting group, it was the only one in this area that recognized that people who quilt could do something other than just flowers… And I like the people in the group" (personal communication, April 3, 2013).

The substantial support systems created within the Chancel Choir, Crossroads, and Tactile Expressions allowed opportunities for creative growth in group members' respective art forms. The informal arts groups also provided safe venues for experimental exploration. The strong social networks that were present were facilitated by the casual, comfortable settings in which the informal arts activities took place.

With evidence of these three informal arts groups building social capital and breaking social barriers through communal participation in an informal art form, they contribute to Eugene's community development through providing creative opportunities for civic engagement. Creating social capital through caring for the well-being of other group members, providing creative support and allowing constructive risk-taking in a casual, comfortable environment facilitated the building of strong, positive social networks. This informal environment also allowed group members to cross social boundaries such as gender, age, authority, and other general differences.

The informal arts group participants interviewed in this research project were able to articulate their group identity, but had difficulty explaining how their group identity fit into the identity of Eugene. Although they may not be able to wholly see the impact of their group in the greater community of Eugene, each informal arts group contributes to Eugene's identity as a creative, arts-centered, community-involved city.

The community support produced through these informal arts groups provides overwhelming assistance to Eugene's community development. Supporting the local economy, activating community spaces, and participating in multiple informal (and formal) arts groups in Eugene helps promote a cohesive community. Through creative activities that occur in informal, casual settings, these groups strengthen the community of Eugene. Liz Dowdy's answer to my question about how her participation in the Chancel Choir relates to the rest of Eugene elucidates the power of informal arts participation in aiding community development from a civic perspective:

> I think that being in that group gives me an outlet, and it does some other folks too, for a particular kind of energy, and meets a need that I've been meeting by singing for years. And, therefore helps me have the energy to do the other things that I do that have an affect in the community. We serve a breakfast for homeless/low income every Sunday morning, and I've been involved in that from the very beginning. …But I think that being in this choir, just helps me have more energy—it takes care of *me* so that I can do for others. And I probably think it does that for some other people. I couldn't tell you any stories [of other participants' experiences], but that's what it does for me. (E. Dowdy, personal communication, February 21, 2013)

Recognizing and utilizing existing informal arts participation as an asset would be an effortless way to aid community development. With testimony like Liz's, and evidence that those whom participate in informal arts groups tend to have high community involvement, informal arts group participation makes an important positive impact on communities.

Informal arts activities are valuable assets in community cultural development, as well as understanding the comprehensive landscape of arts participation in America. The social and

intrinsic benefits demonstrated in the three groups observed for this study demonstrate the importance of acknowledging and legitimizing this type of arts participation. Community arts facilitators can enhance community development by utilizing informal arts groups and activities to build social capital, break social barriers, and create a cohesive community identity. While informal arts participation tends to be less visible than more formalized arts activities, this research project provides an example of how ethnographic research can be conducted in order to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the informal arts sector.
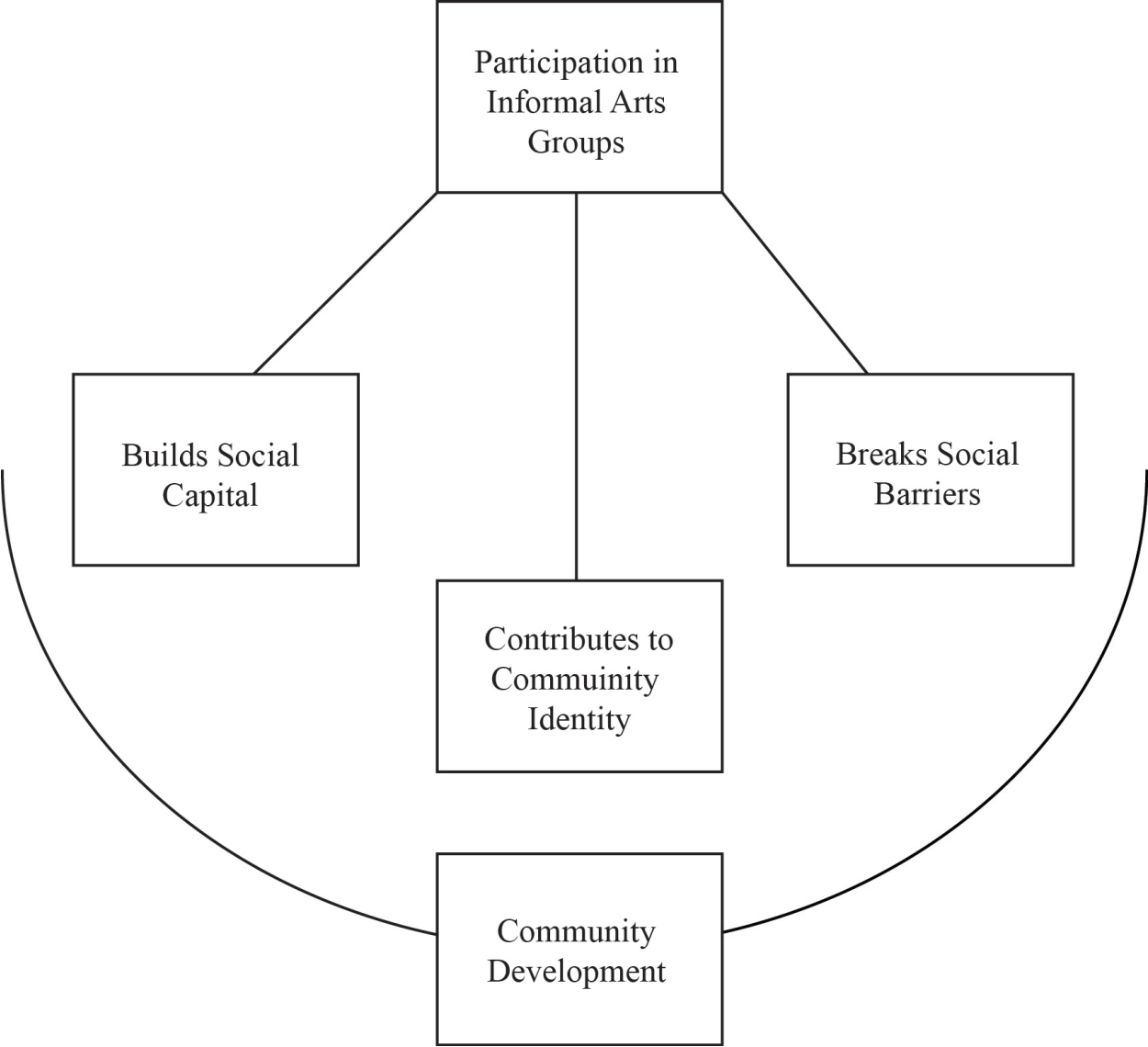
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APPENDIX A: Conceptual Framework

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Participation in│
                    │  Informal Arts  │
                    │     Groups      │
                    └─────────────────┘

  ┌──────────────┐                      ┌──────────────┐
  │ Builds Social│                      │ Breaks Social│
  │   Capital    │                      │   Barriers   │
  └──────────────┘                      └──────────────┘

                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Contributes to │
                    │   Commuinity    │
                    │    Identity     │
                    └─────────────────┘

                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Community    │
                    │   Development   │
                    └─────────────────┘
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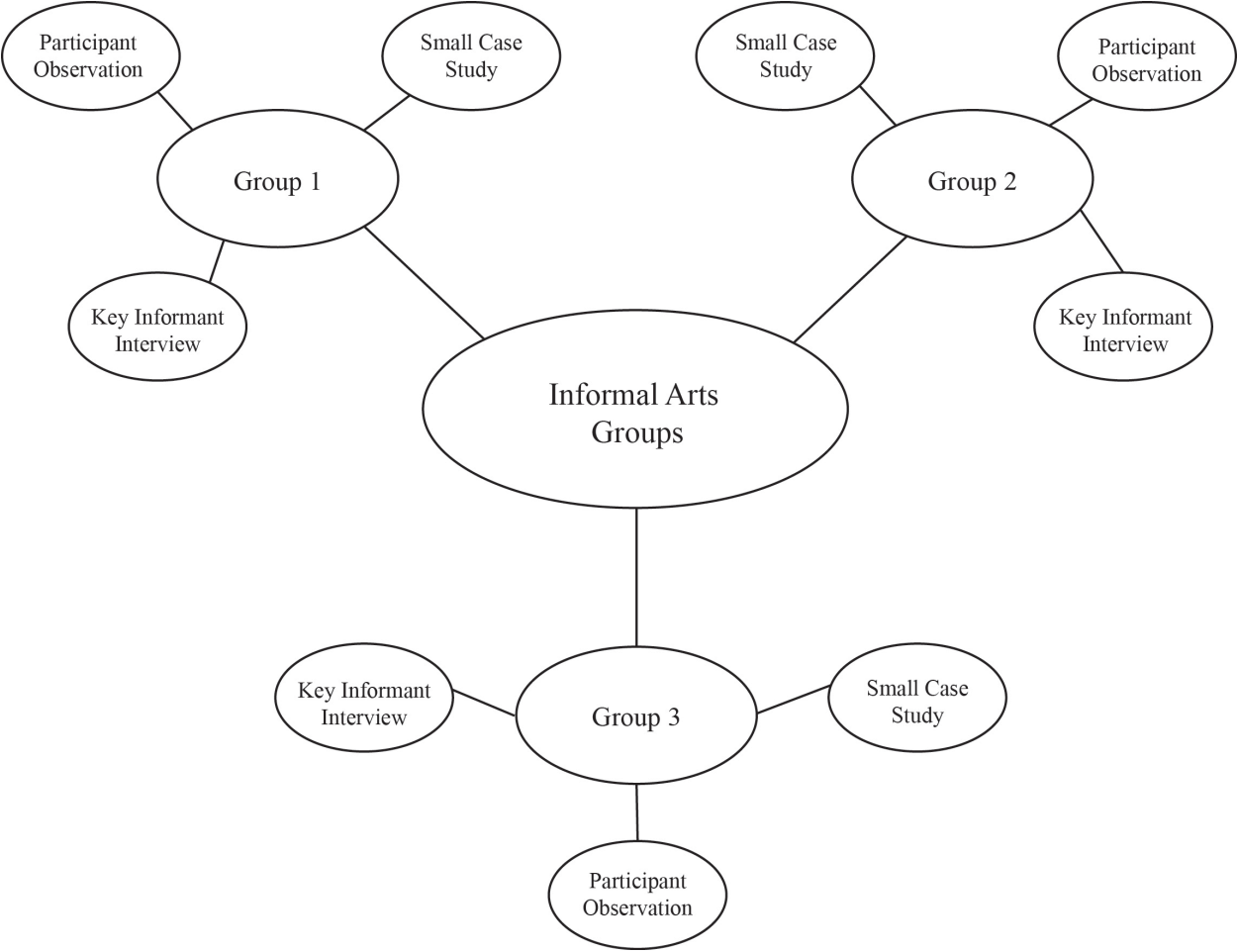**APPENDIX B: Data Collection Timeline**

January 7, 2013:   Commence search for three informal arts groups to participate in study

January 14, 2013:   Send recruitment letters to selected groups/sites

January 21, 2013:   Schedule initial meetings with groups; prepare consent forms

January 28, 2013:   Continue meetings with all groups; continue field note data collection

February 4, 2013:   Identify key informants for interviews; schedule interviews

February 11, 2013:   Continue meetings with all groups; continue data field note collection

February 18, 2013:   Begin mapping/coding collected data into three small case studies

February 25, 2013:   Summarize with selective transcription

March 4, 2013:   Continue meetings with all groups; continue data field note collection

March 11, 2013:   Start data analysis from three small case studies

April 30, 2013:   End meetings with all groups

May 17, 2013:   Validate findings through member checks and peer review

APPENDIX C: Data Collection Schematic

APPENDIX D: Data Collection Instruments

(I) Interview Tool

Case Study: Group ID:

_____

Interview Location: Date: Time:

Interviewee Details:

Consent: _____ Oral   _____ Written   _____ Audio Recording   _____ OK to Quote

Notes on Interview Context:

Key Points:

Coding	Information	Notes

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

1) Why do you participate in [the informal arts group]?
2) Do you participate in any other arts activities (like this one or more formalized activities)?
   a. If so, what kinds of arts activities? Where do they take place?
3) Will you talk about any beneficial social experiences you have had while participating in this group? Any negative?
4) How do you feel when participating in this group?
5) Are there any personal/collective benefits you think participation in this activity provides?
6) Can you describe your (social) comfort level while participating in this group? [Rate on scale: 1-10]
7) What do you think of this group in relation to Eugene as a community?
   a. Does it play a role in contributing to Eugene's identity?
8) Would you encourage other people to participate?
   a. How would you recruit participants?

APPENDIX D: Data Collection Instruments

(II) Participant Observation Tool

Case Study: Group ID:

_____

Activity Location: Date: Time:

Group Details:

_____

Coding	Observation	Notes

APPENDIX D: Data Collection Instruments

(III) Data Analysis Tool

Document Type: Case Study Comparison

Details: The following chart includes metadata about the three informal arts groups observed in

this study.

1) First Christian Church Chancel Choir

2) Crossroads Blues/Fusion Dance Group

3) Tactile Expressions Quilting Guild

Type of Group/Art Form	Location	Size of Group	Meeting Space	Meeting Frequency	Meeting Times
Church Choir	First Christian Church, Downtown Eugene	Over 20 official members	Church Chapel	Weekly	Wednesdays 7:30pm - 8:30pm
Blues/Fusion Dance (Social Dance)	Just Breathe Studio, South Eugene	Over 450 casual members	Yoga Studio	Weekly	Thursdays 7:30pm - 11:30pm
Quilting Guild	Individual Homes, various locations in Eugene	8 members	Individual Homes	Monthly	Fourth Tuesday of each month 12:30pm - 2:30pm

APPENDIX E: Recruitment Letter

Date

Hilary Amnah
[Street Address]
[City, State Zip]

Dear [Potential Interviewee]:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Understanding the Role of Informal Arts Participation in Community Development,* conducted by Hilary Amnah from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of informal arts participation in community development, as well as how informal arts participation contributes to community identity, breaks social barriers, and builds social capital.

This research project aims to find how community member participation in informal arts activities contributes to the community in which the activities are held. Central concepts include continuing investigation of previous research of informal arts participation in urban Chicago, Illinois neighborhoods. Key findings from the previous study suggest that informal arts participation builds social capital within groups and neighborhoods, breaks social barriers, and contributes to community development. Through participant observation, informant interviews, and document analysis of case studies on informal arts groups located in the city of Eugene, Oregon, I intend to explore the role of informal arts practices in community and neighborhood development and identity.

You (or your informal arts group) were selected to participate in this study because of your qualification of participation in the informal arts sector and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to cultural development in Eugene. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and potentially participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during winter/spring of 2013. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at group meeting place or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 740-974-XXXX or XXXXX@uoregon.edu or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-XXXX. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,
Hilary Amnah

APPENDIX F: Consent Form

Research Protocol Number: 12212012.032
**Understanding the Role of Informal Arts Participation
in Community Development**
Hilary Amnah, Principal Investigator
University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Understanding the Role of Informal Arts Participation in Community Development,* conducted by Hilary Amnah from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program The purpose of this study is to explore the role of informal arts participation in community development, as well as how informal arts participation contributes to community identity, breaks social barriers, and builds social capital.

This research project aims to find how community member participation in informal arts activities contributes to the community in which the activities are held. Central concepts include continuing investigation of previous research of informal arts participation in urban Chicago, Illinois neighborhoods. Key findings from the previous study suggest that informal arts participation builds social capital within groups and neighborhoods, breaks social barriers, and contributes to community development. Through participant observation, informant interviews, and document analysis of case studies on informal arts groups located in the city of Eugene, Oregon, I intend to explore the role of informal arts practices in community and neighborhood development and identity

You (or your informal arts group) were selected to participate in this study because of your qualification of participation in the informal arts sector and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to cultural development in Eugene. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and potentially participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during winter/spring of 2013. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at group meeting place or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. Your consent to participate in this interview, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to have your name used in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality. If you wish, a pseudonym may be used with all identifiable data that you provide. It may be advisable to obtain permission to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the cultural sector as a whole, especially in the city of Eugene. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 740-974-XXXX or XXXXX@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-XXXX. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, 541-346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

_____ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

_____ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

_____ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

_____ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

_____ I wish to maintain my confidentiality in this study through the use of a pseudonym.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,
Hilary Amnah

[Street Address]
[City, State Zip]

APPENDIX G: CITI Training

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 11/27/2012

Learner: Hilary Amnah (username: hilaryamnah)
Institution: University of Oregon
Contact Information Department: Arts and Administration
                                Email: amnah@uoregon.edu
Social/Behavioral Investigators:

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 11/09/12 (Ref # 9142273)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	11/08/12	no quiz
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	11/08/12	3/5 (60%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	11/08/12	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	11/08/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	11/08/12	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	11/08/12	4/5 (80%)
Elective Modules	Date Completed	Score
Research with Prisoners - SBR	11/09/12	4/4 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees	11/09/12	4/4 (100%)
Hot Topics	11/09/12	no quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

Return

APPENDIX H: Tactile Expressions; Mission and Fact Sheet

TACTILE EXPRESSIONS

MISSION STATEMENT: Our purpose is to support self-expression, originality, and creativity through shared knowledge and encouragement to explore new ideas and techniques in order to create innovative contemporary fabric art.
fiber

POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

Participation in Tactile Expressions by members and guests should be appropriate to the mission statement. The focus of TE is to foster artistic growth, not to provide a social forum for members. Implementing the mission can be accomplished by:

> sharing techniques and ideas from members and others;
>
> evaluating members' works-in-progress to offer constructive critiques based on art design principles;
>
> advising on technique and/or clarity of expression, if warranted and desired;
>
> displaying works or samples by artists demonstrating innovation in fabric art;
>
> exposure to contemporary work through exhibits and publications;
>
> showcasing the work of members and guests at meetings or other exhibitions.

MEETINGS: Tactile Expressions meets the second Wednesday of each month, *except December* or on another day which is mutually agreeable to the members.

DUES: Dues are payable at the September meeting. An updated roster, maintained by the newsletter editor, is provided to members in October, or as necessary.

FACILITATOR: Twice a year the group designates a meeting facilitator, who serves for five meetings: April-September or October-March. At the meetings, the facilitator maintains a balance between an atmosphere of spontaneity -- with the free exchange of input by members -- and a structured setting that provides adequate time for members to show their work and for conducting necessary business.

NEWSLETTER: A newsletter is circulated via e-mail to all members. The newsletter serves as a record of the proceedings of the meetings and as a forum for announcements and the sharing of information between meetings.

ANNUAL SHOW: Tactile Expressions is committed to holding a minimum of one themed show annually. Members are expected to participate in this exhibit by submitting appropriate work which has not been shown previously and by sharing in the responsibility for the production of the show. A member must belong to TE for a minimum of three months before becoming eligible for show participation. Other venues for showing work to the public are optional to each member.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership is limited to 20.

NEW MEMBERS: Any member can invite a guest(s) to meetings. Interested parties may ask to attend up to three meetings as a guest. If a guest expresses an interest in joining TE and there is an opening, a sponsoring member will explain the TE mission, give her/him a copy of the Mission and Policies & Procedures, and ask her/him to bring an examples of her/his work, a work-in-progress, sketches, or ideas of what she wants to accomplish as a member of TE. After attending three meetings, a prospective member will be voted on by secret ballot at a meeting. Voting options will be yes, no, or veto. A no vote indicates mild dissent; a veto indicates the prospective member will not be accepted. Membership in TE will be granted by an affirmative vote of ¾ of the votes cast. A vote by proxy is allowed. The sponsor will notify the prospective member of the results of the vote.

Updated November 2007

APPENDIX I: Tactile Expressions Sample Newsletter (January 2013)

Tactile Expressions Newsletter for January 22,, 2013

Subject: Tactile Expressions Newsletter for January 22,, 2013
From: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆
Date: 2/8/2013 20:30
To: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆
CC: ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆
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TACTILE EXPRESSIONS
January 22, 2013

Next Meeting: February 26 at ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ **'s home, 12:30 - 2:30. Guest: Hilary Amnah**

Newsy Stuff: ▆▆▆▆ made it to southern California, but had an accident with her rig. She's OK, and will be back in March.
▆▆▆▆ reports Alan is still undergoing examinations, is weakened at present from the heart attack. They are still in between the Corvallis home and their scheduled move to Portland. Her work was accepted into the upcoming Quilt National Exhibition. Congratulations, ▆▆▆▆! ▆▆ gave some books away, and by chance saw Shirley and Doug MacGregor in Newport. ▆▆▆▆ alerted us to some interesting workshops to be held at the Emerald Art Center. Contact her for schedules and more information.

In case you missed it, Mary Goodson's email is now - ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

* I▆▆▆ saw the fabric show at the Maude Kerns Art Center, and was especially impressed with the work of Janet Hiller and Sally Zehtung. Hope everyone who can gets to see it.

Business: ▆▆ collected all the quilts for the "Grid" theme show, to be installed at ETC, showing during February and March.

Questions concerning copyright laws were discussed, including questions of the meaning of iconic vs. appropriated definitions, how much you are commercializing, and more. SAQA.com can be used for further research.

* In case you didn't read it, ▆▆▆ sent us all an email that she probably won't be able to get to ▆▆▆▆ on the 26th. Also, in case you missed it, I'm, enclosing information she sent earlier about Hilary that you might find pertinent.
Hilary Amhah, Arts Management Master's Candidate. She is a Graduate Fellow, Oregon Folklife Network, U. of O.
Her email address is ▆▆▆@uoregon.edu - phone ▆▆▆▆▆▆. At our February meeting she will choose 1 or 2 members to be interviewed at a later date.

Share and Show:
▆▆▆▆: A work in progress involving (1) a silk tapestry dyed, printed, silk screened, discharged, stamped, beaded, and more. (2) A piece, incorporating loose grid lines, framed with narrow, then wide border of unique fabrics, (3) a beaded bag with a drawstring tassel we discovered one could almost wear as a muff, (4) a block print she carved on MDF (medium density fiberboard) printed on colored tissue paper, and more. Last, a book, The Crafter's Guide to Taking Great Photos by Heide Adnum. on the best techniques for showcasing your handmade creations for a variety of purposes.
▆▆▆ Almost completed, "Salmon Spawning", an abstract version of a Northwest Coast Indian apron, on light brown wool, fringed, in red, black, aqua, machine quilted, some hand stitching, on light brown wool.
▆▆▆: Her "Grid" piece of felt rectangles with "flights" of triangles in warm colors from her dyed ice fabrics, on ice dyed background fabric.
▆▆▆▆: Her almost completed "Grid" piece featuring a purple figure against a gold background, with some 3-D work and cross-hatches for grids throughout.