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Cultural Encounters at Green Door Theater's After-School Program: Looking Inside the "Black Box" of Everyday Participation

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Cultural Encounters at Green Door Theater's After-School Program: Looking Inside the "Black

Box" of Everyday Participation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Scarlett Frederike Eisenhauer

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Cultural Encounters at Green Door Theater's After-School Program: Looking Inside the "Black Box" of Everyday Participation

by

Scarlett Frederike Eisenhauer

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Thomas S. Weisner, Chair

This dissertation examines youths' experiences at a theater after-school program (ASP) using data collected through a mixed methods research protocol. The lens through which participatory frameworks at Green Door Theater's ASP are examined over a range of levels from individuals and their psychophysiology, youth and teachers actively co-constructing the ecocultural context, to understanding the program in relation to school more broadly. Data were collected during the 2015-2016 academic school year. Adding to the growing body of process oriented ASP research, the dissertation engages with the microprocesses that occur as part of youths' learning and developmental contexts, rather than strictly focusing on an outcome analysis. Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical and literature that is relevant to the dissertation.

Chapter 2 characterizes the methodology, study participants and field site to give the broad context of the research project. It also includes a theoretical discussion of Green Door Theater's (GDT) program in relation to the concept of "cultural competencies" and "cross roads." Chapters 3 and 4 present electrodermal activity as part of an ethnographic research protocol in order to triangulate data regarding subjective experience. The method is applied to understanding how, and in what myriad ways, well-being may come to fruition at GDT. Chapter 5 examines the multi-modal co-construction of space as a possible mechanism for supporting components of "quality" programs. Since attendance at ASPs does not necessitate positive outcomes or experiences, it is important to not only understand what components help create quality programming, but also in what ways those components are created through practice. In Chapter 6, I present the concept of the micro temporal arc as a possible lesson planning tool to capture and sustain engagement in the program over time. This chapter is intended to be oriented towards those designing ASPs in a more practical way. In order to understand how the program relates to the youths' time at schools, Chapter 7 compares two contexts through a statistical analysis of questionnaire responses and qualitative ethnographic data. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of some concluding thoughts, including some room for program improvement and future research.

The dissertation of Scarlett Frederike Eisenhauer is approved.

Marjorie Harness Goodwin

Harold Clark Barrett

Marjorie E. Orellana

Thomas S. Weisner, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

This dissertation is dedicated to youth. To their present and future selves.

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Acronyms and Symbols

ASP(s): After-school program(s)

EDA: Electrodermal activity

GDT: Green Door Theater

MTA: Micro temporal arc

[ ]: Text appearing within in this was added for clarification in quoted text

(( )): Text appearing within are actions or descriptors associated with quoted text

Acknowledgements

This is the part of the dissertation where the struggle for the right words supersedes the struggle to find the elusively brilliant "golden thread" for an article. My experience as a doctoral student has been one surrounded by many helping hands without whom the journey would have been tremendously arduous. While filled with potholes at times, my own Ph.D. journey can now be reviewed by me in a positive light because of the people who were involved. As I myself present, we are contextually and socially driven "individuals." My dissertation is chock full of those relationships.

No dissertation (at least no part of mine) was completed without curiosity, interest, commitment, and focus. I must, inevitably, thank my parents for instilling me with these attributes and supporting the now nearly 31 year process of continual learning. To this day they show genuine interest in my pursuits and offer critical conversations. Through my brother I had a wonderful sibling mentor who may also have contributed to my determination to push through the rough spots. I consider myself lucky to have had such a deep and enduring support system. To all the rest of my family, blood and otherwise, I send thanks for making me feel part of a far-reaching community. Through them I have known a constant "sense of belonging."

My induction into the anthropological discipline really began with Analiese Richard at the University of the Pacific. Agreeing to be my advisor for a self-designed B.A., she guided me through the world of social sciences, including sociology, psychology, and education, and, importantly, brought me close to the rich world of Anthropology. I consider her my first guide and inspiration for where my education and research has ultimately brought me. It was through

her suggested readings and constant leadership that I ultimately found my way to UCLA and Thomas Weisner.

During my unfolding dissertation, I have been fortunate to study under Thomas Weisner, Candy Goodwin, Clark Barrett, and Marjorie Orellana who comprised a committee constantly receptive to my requests. Candy always showed great enthusiasm for my ideas while pushing me to critically analyze and develop them all while meticulously looking over data. More than once Clark, with great patience, met to discuss statistical analysis. It is also through my course with him and his biological approach to understanding human phenomena that I found a true appreciation for possible sub-field integrations. More than once Marjorie Orellana's devotion to not only the documentation of children's lives and circumstances, but also to the empowerment and validation of their experiences has inspired my own thoughts and musings. Finally, Tom's continual guidance proved invaluable with constant attention to the practical and orderly to the fantastical world of research. He grounded me and kept me focused when I needed to be.

I have been lucky enough to not only have Thomas Weisner as my committee chair, but also be a part of his lab group through which I was able to meet and talk with wonderfully supportive and intelligent colleagues: Mindy Steinberg, Megan Heller, Bonnie Richard, and Katie Hale. Special thanks to Katie Hale for the meetings, skype calls, and repetitive read-throughs. I believe she, along with Tom, may know my own articles better than I do. It is truly a lucky soul who finds this kind of support in others.

To my initial cohort starting at UCLA and fellow TA's I give my thanks for providing a welcoming and warm environment. In particular, I would like to thank Claudia Huang who always pushed me to have more theoretical discussions in my own work and kept a cool and

his evening and weekend efforts), editing images, and listening to my thoughts, all while completing his own Ph.D. in geophysics. Daniel has made our home a pocket of warmth and calm and has truly made these years at UCLA as a Bruin richly rewarding.

In "The Little Prince," Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote: "A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral." I present here my own small cathedral with thanks to all the helpers who built alongside me.

Preface

This dissertation is in an article-based format.

VITA

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Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: After-School Programs

The Plot: Introducing the Dissertation

Figure 1.1: Inside looking out through Green Door Theater's open door

This dissertation is in large part about an open door. A large sliding door, to be exact, that remains open both theoretically and physically for almost anyone who wishes to cross its threshold including school fieldtrips, amateur performers, community members just peeking in, and homeless individuals for a cup of coffee… the list can go on. Importantly, the open door is part of Green Door Theater's (GDT) after-school program (ASP) which allows children and youth to enter the professional theater's space four days a week, thirty weeks a year for free. Students and their families who not only dip their toes into the GDT program, but stay over the course of years, are invited into a unique community or "tribe" as Addie, the co-founder and teaching artist for youth, described it.

Like GDT, other after-school programs (ASPs) are places in which youth can spend their time between school and time at home with family. ASPs have become, and are still, an increasingly relied upon resource for children and youth in the USA. Considered as one hoped-for solution to problems such as the education gap and positive development, they are seen both as remedial for at-risk youth and enriching to many. As schools have become increasingly pressured to produce high academic standards driven by a structured testing environment, after-school programs are seen as a way to provide the extra help, creative outlets, and alternative

learning environments that schools cannot. This belief has far reaching implications for what is

expected more broadly of ASPs by many, often competing, stake holders which includes

teachers, funders, various government departments (both local and federal), neighborhood

organizations, and the youth themselves. Given the various forms ASPs take – whether they are

academically oriented, arts or sports based, etc. – and the extensive parties have varying beliefs

regarding them, ASPs are contentious spaces.

ASPs are a cultural phenomenon tied to the increase in dual working households,

decreased tolerance for child self-care/play, and a belief in enriching children (Belle 1999;

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2002). Not only are they recognized

institutions in macro terms; they also form micro communities with their own goals, values,

behaviors and intentions in which individuals spend their time. They are of anthropological

interest as they have become an integral part of the learning and developmental experience for

many children and youth in the United States. In addition, ASPs are one option for child

"caretaking" during the after-school hours amongst others including, for example, unsupervised

self-care (Belle 1999) and sibling and older child caretaking (Maynard 2003; Weisner et al.

1977) which can be beneficial for learning and development. When one considers ASPs in light

of the broad topic of "caretaking" they become critical components for understanding how

children and youth grow up in certain societies (i.e., societies where ASPs are embedded as

institutions and contexts in which you spend their time). It also evokes the question of what role

these contexts can or do play in relation to others such has school.

Funding increases and the appearance of myriad programs has created tremendous

societal expectations for what after-school programs can do. Tuck[1], the co-founder of GDT's

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[1] All names appearing in the dissertation are pseudonyms.

after-school programming, has mentioned that funding applications put a tremendous (and in his view, perhaps excessive and unrealistic) emphasis on proof of outcomes; as Tuck ironically put it once (paraphrased): "Basically, we need to prove that kids who we brush up against in a hallway have their life course completely altered." While positive academic and social development and well-being *can* be an outcome of participation in ASPs, programming can play only one part in shaping youth trajectories. And beyond quantifiable academic and social outcomes, Babcock (2018, n.a.) asserts that "one of the most important roles played by after-school programs is to provide an enriching and safe place for kids in rural and urban settings to learn, to grow as leaders and to explore careers." In other words social and general "self" development are integral to ASPs as well. Outcome analyses are good for understanding what kinds of expectations can be met by ASPs, but do not describe well how exactly they come to fruition. Specifically, what happens at the micro, everyday level at ASPs that provides youth with something that is different than the home, school or peer groups and promotes a positive change over time?

While research has identified components of "quality" ASPs (e.g., supportive relationships. See "What About After-School Programs?" below for a broader discussion), relatively little is known about the processes or mechanisms that are the stepping stones or building blocks through which quality components are constructed, though the body of literature is growing. GDT is a crossroad for individual and cultural interactions as participation depends on individuals from outside the theater, coming together inside its walls. This dissertation addresses in situ processes occurring in the microcosm found at GDT from the perspectives of the youth, staff and others.

Outline of the Dissertation

Throughout this dissertation I emphasize the experience of youth through ethnographic accounts at GDT. This also includes a discussion of activities and programming at GDT that influence those experiences thereby providing a unique context in which meaningful participation can occur. The remainder of **Chapter 1, "Setting the Stage"** will explain the overarching theoretical orientations of the dissertation as well as the pertinent literature to contextualize the following chapters. In addition, due to the article based format of the dissertation, each remaining chapter will also have its own presentation of literature. In this way, literature and theory is presented throughout and Chapter 1 is intended to present the broader scope of the work.

In **Chapter 2 "Cast and Crew: Methods and Field Site,"** I introduce the participants, the field site, and methods utilized. The chapter will end with a theoretical consideration regarding GDT's positionality as "between": between youth as they are now and what they can become, between the community and the school, and between multiple different individuals. This chapter serves as a general overview of the research methodology overall. As each remaining chapter is framed as an article, particular methods and participants specifically used for the data will be presented there.

Chapter 3, "Electrodermal Activity and Ethnography," expands on the methods presented in chapter 2 by introducing the preliminary research I conducted at a different summer camp utilizing the physiological response electrodermal activity (EDA) during ongoing activities. The project, though separate from my work at GDT, was my stepping stone for developing the EDA methodology. The chapter explains the advantage of combining EDA and ethnography as used in the GDT study itself. It will introduce the measurement of EDA and how

it is successfully aligned with ongoing, in situ activities. The methodology is presented as one way of triangulating data to add more depth to analysis.

In **Chapter 4**, **"Individual Pathways towards Contextual Well-Being,"** I discuss pathways towards well-being at GDT by incorporating electrodermal activity (EDA) as presented in Chapter 3. The chapter suggests that EDA can help elaborate individual subjective experience in real time during routine activities. Also, while the staff (teaching artists) at GDT strive for high engagement participation and have normative program scripts/expectations for activities, youth traverse activities in various ways and can find different pathways towards well-being.

Understanding the learning process at GDT as social is critical to my work. In **Chapter 5**, **"Coming Together: Co-construction as a Mechanism for Quality After-School Program Ingredients,"** I explore multi-modal co-construction of space at GDT as a mechanism for producing quality components; namely teacher-youth relationships, opportunities for belonging and learning, and integration with youth's outside lives. A key finding is that Addie – the main teaching artist – and the youth are able to navigate GDT's space together through a give and take, and that the activities respond to flexible developments so that "y'all come together" (Aitana, youth participant at GDT). The implications are discussed for broader ASP applications.

In **Chapter 6,** entitled **"The Micro Temporal Arc,"** I present a technique for "shaping" daily programming to mirror and reflect what (Heath 2001; Larson 2000) theoretically describe as a "temporal arc" that occurs over the course of long term programming. The temporal arc emphasizes long term goal-oriented programming to encourage engagement at ASPs. While it is useful to understand programming over the course of the year, this chapter describes how the

temporal arc can be seen as operating in micro format on a daily basis, which is equally important to consider for youth ASP participation outcomes.

Finally, since ASPs are considered an environment markedly different from school, **Chapter 7**, **"Understanding Green Door Theater and School Contexts from the Youth Perspective,"** discusses the youth's perspectives regarding their own schools and GDT. Utilizing responses to a semantic differential questionnaire, this chapter presents statistical evidence that the program had a significant impact on the youths' personal feelings and evaluation of activities. However, by breaking down the total difference by question a more nuanced picture can be painted regarding what components, such as activities being perceived as challenging, are more or less differentiated between the two contexts.

The Sociality of Learning and Development

This dissertation was written with the understanding that learning and development are social processes and theoretically engages psychological anthropology's concern with the interactions, influences, contrasts, etc., between individuals and group contexts. Consideration is given to within-group variation as youth and teachers from different backgrounds come together as a community at GDT. Individuals have both their biological and social histories that in turn encounter and interact with cultural contexts. Encounters are manifested physically through physiological responses as well as psychological through which each individual has a unique embodied experience as will be central to understanding the various pathways youth take in chapter 4.

Bock (2010) describes the term "embodied capital," which has two versions. The first, "growth-based embodied capital," accounts for physical attributes such as strength, body coordination, etc. The second, which is my focus, "experience-based embodied capital,"

comprises cognitive functioning and memory. While the human brain is physically built to create memories, it is the individual's experiences over time with the physical and social environment that gives the input to create the memories. It extrapolates how our "selective history" – that is the evolution of brain mechanisms – "has led to learning in childhood that is broadly patterned but highly responsive to children's environments" (Bock 2010: 30). Selective history refers to both genetic history that led to adaptations we see in humans, including our anatomy and brain, and social history when considering human culture, and behavioral flexibility in relation to our environment (Konner 1982). It is important to not think of biology vs. environment, but rather how the two function together, a concept that Vygotsky (1978) – known for his influences in education, particularly ideas about scaffolding – had also been an adamant supporter of. Konner (2010) has an eloquent way of picturing this: "The structures, by evolutionary design, invite culture in, and culture bathes them roughly or gently, but not dismissively. Mind is bathed in culture because biology makes it so, and biology does that with clear guidelines" (8). Culture is "a set of influences that have, within definable limits, great variety and power" (11). We must, then, move away from a Cartesian dualist perspective in which mind and body are considered to be separate and rather understand them as working together.

We are given here the image of a biological individual who is extremely receptive to physical and social environmental stimuli in great part through the brain's plasticity. Plasticity has been a central concern of American anthropology since its beginning with Franz Boas' (2008) thoughts. Countering universalist categorization of "facts" about childhood, Boas advocated for the understanding that our mental make-up, which is dependent on brain maturation, is heavily influenced by the social and geographical environment. The term plasticity

describes adaptive flexibility and the longer the maturation period, the more the developmental process is subjected to outside influences.

LeVine and Norman (2001) argue that cultural acquisition processes, namely learning and development, start in infancy and quite clearly negate Universalist views of development by emphasizing that the context heavily influences the process. Instead, children acquire implicit and explicit knowledge that reflects their ecocultural environment which has ecological and cultural components; this topic had been addressed long before as well, in early works such as Mead's "Coming of Age in Samoa" (1949). The theoretical "child" is removed from isolation, which is often the case in developmental psychology through works such as those by Bronfenbrenner (2005), which highlight proximal processes (interactions) in the microsystem (face-to-face settings) as impacting children.

Weisner (1998), amongst others such as Worthman (2010), Super and Harkness (2002) and Rogoff (2003; Rogoff et al. 2011), have devised theories emphasizing that development and learning are relevant to the specific context in which they occur. Weisner (1998) argues that development occurs through children's progressive participation in meaningful activities that are important to the surrounding community. Activities, with their goals, values and norms, are the stepping stones through which developmental pathways are traversed and realized. Routines shaped by activities are a central part of analysis throughout my dissertation, emphasizing that it is through actual practice and engagement that the after-school context becomes meaningful.

Weisner pushes the theory beyond development in the sense of skills or abilities, to individual psychological well-being which "is the engaged participation in the activities that are deemed desirable and valued in a cultural community and the psychological experiences that are produced by such engagement" (Weisner 2014, 90). Well-being is a "universal developmental

outcome" that is at the same time "explicitly embedded in the cultural community the child develops in," (Weisner 2002, 279). Importantly, development and well-being according to ecocultural theory hinge upon processual participation from an individual. The more sustainable a routine, the greater the chance of successful outcomes. In chapter 4, the ecocultural concept of well-being will be further explored. My findings suggest that routine activities can be experienced in various ways, but that well-being can come to fruition even when youth do not represent the "model student."

As we consider possible future trajectories for children and youth, it is important to keep a stringent eye on the social, cultural and environmental context, and how interactions in these specific contexts shape development. Instead of understanding learning and development through universal stages, more focus should be placed on the unique experiences that occur in various contexts.

What about After-School Programs?

The United States is comprised of individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds, contexts, and families. Therefore, it is important to consider youth not as part of one monolithic culture, but rather as inhabiting various microsystems each with distinctive "pattern[s] of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations," (Bronfenbrenner 2005, 148). After-school programs are one of these contexts in which youth spend their time, participate and find meaning in their routine lives. Referred to as "third environments" (Heath 2001) vis-à-vis school and the home, they are broadly considered a positive and beneficial space in which youth spend their time.

After-school programs have been and currently are a growing context in which youth spend their time in the U.S. While having been around for a long time, more recent focus and funding has led to a breadth of after-school program expansions. For example, the "21st Century

Community Learning Centers" initiative provides over $1 billion federal funding annually for the "creation of community learning centers" (U.S. Department of Education 2017) reflecting a high level of public and political interest in ASPs. Despite funding availability it is not enough to stabilize funding for the plethora of available programs. Programs often face financial insecurities in the long run, and staff often have to navigate multiple funding sources to successfully keep programs running (Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn 2009). In addition, recent developments in the Trump administration have started to threaten this funding, though it has not yet been successfully cut (Babcock 2018). Cuts in federal funding would directly impact GDT, though it would not necessitate program closure according to Martha, one of the staff members at GDT. For example, it could make it harder to keep the program 100% free for its families. However, Martha elaborated, they already diversified GDT's funding sources as a reaction to the potential federal funding threat. Full consequences of the changes remain to be seen.

Despite potential changes, current beliefs about ASPs are, in general, positive and there is empirical evidence to support these claims (Eccles 2003; Gutiérrez 2002; Heath and McLaughlin 1994; Larson and Rumberger 1995; Larson and Verma 1999; Heath 2001). ASPs are considered particularly beneficial for low-income youth (Mahoney 2000) being cited as possibly "leveling the playing field" (Babcock 2018). The issue will be discussed more below in "Low-Income and Minority Children and Youth." However, ASPs are considered important contexts during transitional life-course periods for many youth (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2002). Adolescence is considered a transitional time period because there is an increased likelihood to be engaging in risky behavior, dropping out of school or losing interest in activities (Steinberg 2004).

Currently, nearly 25% of youth in California attend ASPs of vastly different foci and structures (Afterschool Alliance, 2016), reflecting a substantial potential impact on the youth population. In addition, ASPs are available during the time of day when youth actually engage in a higher percentage of juvenile crime and other risky behaviors including drugs, smoking and sexual activities (Bartko 2005), most of which occur between 2pm and 8pm (Weisman and Gottfredson 2001), and have been emphasized by the Afterschool Alliance national report with the headline "America after 3pm," (Afterschool Alliance 2014). At the very least, ASPs can be seen as creating "safe havens," or a "place to call home" (Hirsch 2005), that keep youth off the streets and under some supervision (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008).

Not only can ASPs curb risky behaviors, but they can also provide environments that foster active positive development both socially and academically. In other words, they can be enriching rather than just providing passive supervision. Routine participation in ASPs has been linked to better academic and social outcomes as compared to informal parental or unsupervised care (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008; Mahoney, Lord, and Carryl 2005; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2002; Posner and Vandell 1999). As a result of these claims regarding positive developmental influences it is now believed that ASPs can provide solutions for broader social issues regarding youth, including, for example, the potential to reduce the educational gap (Bryan 2005).

ASPs have the potential to promote positive development through the provision of learning environments that are markedly different from the home or school. However, there has been increased awareness that simply attending ASPs is not enough. "Quality" is an important ingredient. There are numerous components that have been cited for being part of the quality recipe. These include: physical and psychological safety, structure, positive relationships,

opportunities for belonging, positive social, focus on improvement that support efficacy, opportunities for learning and skill development, and the integration of outside contexts such as family (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2002). In chapter 5, I will add to our understanding of quality by examining how a successful co-construction of space between youth and the teacher can be a mechanism for producing quality components. Even if quality components are present at a given program, just being there may still not be enough – youth also need to be engaged.

Weiss, Little, and Bouffard (2005) present a "participation equation" in which enrollment, attendance, and active *engagement* play a role. Since many programs for youth operate on the basis of structured activities and voluntary participation, ASPs may be able to sustain youth's interest (Larson and Verma 1999) and increased engagement, as compared to school or leisure at home (Vandell et al. 2005). In a rich qualitative research project, Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois (2011) found that ASPs were more successful when youth found a "PARC unit" to participate in, which consist of four components: participation, the specific activity, relationships, and culture. By following case examples, the team was able to identify ways in which youth were able to find meaningful engagement by developing or becoming part of a PARC unit – constructed by participation, activities, relationships, and culture – which is not unlike the participation equation or the ecocultural understanding of development.

An important factor to consider is that ASPs are, generally, voluntary for youth. Utilizing spot sampling, Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, and Prescott (1977) found that youth experienced ASPs as less coercive as compared to the formal school context. In fact, Larson (2000) considers a defining feature of ASPs that promote positive development to be that they are voluntary and reflect activities that youth would want to engage in. Having activities be less associated with

dynamics of power is an important attribute of ASPs. Heath and McLaughlin (1994) argue that

"effective CBO's [community-based youth organizations] are powerful sites where just the kinds

of learning and problem solving urged by school reformers take place: learning for

understanding, higher order thinking, transformational learning, for example," (291). School

reform may be calling for the kinds of learning environments ASPs provide, but seem to have

difficulty actualizing the vision. ASPs, often unhindered by the same rigorous standards as

schools and voluntarily chosen by youth, are able to become engaging, meaningful communities,

and places for learning.

Low-Income and Minority Children and Youth

For many students, especially low-income and minority youth, the achievement of

culturally normative educational and social outcomes can be difficult and they are continually

identified as being "at-risk" for various negative developmental outcomes (Children's Defense

Fund 2017). Some of the outcomes that they are considered at-risk for are those that occur in

educational spaces, namely school. It has been well documented ethnographically that low-

income and minority children and youth are more likely to experience alienation, negative

teacher interactions, and higher levels of disconnect in schools (Foster 2000; Gutierrez, Rymes,

and Larson 1995; Heath 1982; McDermott 1997; Philips 1993). In addition, research suggests

that spending time unsupervised after school poses more negative possibilities for low-income

children as compared to others (Belle 1999). ASPs are seen as playing an important institutional

role in response to these social issues. As Halpern (1999) states:

> "Four principal factors are driving this growing interest [in ASPs]: (1) a belief that public
> spaces such as streets and playgrounds are no longer safe for children's out of school
> time, (2) a sense that it is stressful and unproductive for children to be left on their own
> after school, (3) a concern that many children need more time and individual attention
> than schools can provide to master basic academic skills, and (4) a conviction that low-
> income children deserve the same opportunity as their more advantaged peers to explore

expressive arts, sports, and other developmentally enriching activities," (Halpern 1999, 81).

The enriching qualities maintained by certain ASP programs has made them attractive sites for providing opportunities for children and youth considered to be at-risk. No matter the exact reason a certain program may cite, an underlying understanding is that ASPs as a context for students to spend their time in provide supports that help cultivate successful developmental trajectories. Halpern goes on to caution though, that the programs need to provide "quality" and that "'good enough' programs are not necessarily good enough" (1999, 86). Issues of funding, resources and staff result in programing for low-income students which varies substantially on factors concerning quality. This may be particularly true the older children become with "less emotional support from staff" reported (Halpern 1999, 86), which is considered an important ingredient for quality ASPs.

Bryan (2005) sees ASPs as only one partnership in at-risk students' lives that can help promote academic achievement and resilience more generally.

> "We find that an increase in participation of this magnitude [100%] would decrease the black-white achievement gap by only 2-4% in reading and 4-7% in math, and would decrease the Hispanic-white gap by 2-5% in reading and 5-12% in math. These findings highlight an essential point: ASPs are best viewed as one part of a much larger, multifaceted approach toward closing the achievement gap,"(Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn 2009, 5).

Halpern (1999) agrees with the view that ASPs are only part of the sum total influence on youth's lives: "The truth is that, for different reasons, none of the key institutions in poor children's lives has the wherewithal to compensate for the social neglect those children experience…different children get what they need from different developmental resources" (93). Halpern not only captures the finding that there is a network of influences, but also that it is unlikely that any one ASP will be able to give every youth the support that they require.

Nonetheless, in a study with low-income immigrant Latino children who are considered at-risk, Riggs (2006) found that a high "dosage" of programing – that is, increased amounts of time spent there – has been correlated with increased social competence and decreased problem behaviors by having an impact on developmental trajectories. Increased attendance can be seen as providing two things: exposure to the program's activities, values, and staff, and offering a protective space. In this case, the ASP is considered a place to be exposed to something that home or school do not provide, thereby making positive youth development, as defined by the broader social context, possible.

Qualitative research by Nelson (2009) at YELL – an ASP at which Latino/a youth conducted their own social science research – found that students had variable experiences, though two main components stood out as having had an impact. First, strong, enduring relationships with staff members as an "active" component of experience, not just auxiliary, could lead to transformative experiences for the youth. Second, activities that encouraged skill building such as public speaking and fostering a sense of belonging were impactful on them even years after participating in the program. While Nelson's findings reflect quality components of ASPs that have already been documented, it makes clear that these equally pertain to Latino populations in the U.S. In Chapter 5, I will present what youth and teachers consider to be the most important things to experience at GDT. Similar to Nelson's finding, the youth mention self-development – such as coming out of ones shell and learning to speak up – as a vital part of the GDT experience.

In an account of two ethnographic examples of "community-based youth organizations," Heath and McLaughlin (1994) describe the rich learning environments that low-income inner city youth were able to participate in that included job training and academic tasks through

activities unlike those offered in schools: "Learning in this kind of setting is a (seeming) by-product of activities that excite and engage children, inciting them to be active constructors of their own knowledge" (289). Schools, the youth in the study felt, were not really there for them, that teachers don't teach, or they felt there was no "place" for them there. The programs Heath and Mclaughlin examined were able to create spaces in which this was not the case. The authors attribute this in part due to schools' bureaucratic responsibilities tying them to structural and educational standards as compared to ASPs. The authors argue that effective partnerships between programming and schools would increase learning opportunities for inner-city youth overall – especially if they are sensitive and responsive to youth's everyday realities.

Fredricks and Simpkins (2012, 282) argue that "micro settings" such as found in ASPs "can promote resilience and positive development in ethnic minority youth," but that there can be variable outcomes depending on youth background characteristics. They see this as an intertwining of "macro factors such as ethnicity" with the micro setting present at a given ASP. When considering "at-risk youth" as a category, it is important to remember that it is not a homogeneous group. This becomes even more nuanced when we also take into account individual agency within any given macro category, a theme that will be explored further in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, ASPs can be beneficial for low-income and minority youth and can, in a climate of rigorous educational standards and strict classroom expectations, offer an alternate path for learning and success.

The Arts and After-School Programming

Heath (2000) states that the visual arts provide unique contexts for learning as compared to other activities that may be the focus at ASPs such as sports or academics. Arts based ASPs provide activities that are collaboratively completed in joint efforts with peers, adults and older

youth. Children who are involved in arts programs have increased "opportunities to take part in joint problem solving and critique" (Heath 2000, 126). Beyond that, there is also engagement in joint decision making which requires children to be knowledgeable about contextual norms and procedures, even as they are able to draw on their unique past experiences. Heath argues that being able to do this can be pertinent to school achievement.

The arts mediate a feeling of "freedom" even while children and youth are engaged in a guided and structured activity. The arts are a time where children can feel a relatively high amount of autonomy (Bauman 1982), and engage in a powerful activity even as they maintain a feeling of leisure (Trilla, Ayuste, and Agud 2014). A sense of leisure may be incredibly important as it diminishes the coercive feelings associated in other learning environments, such as can be the case with regular school work. The qualitative experience associated with the arts may have an impact on differing opinions about school and after-school programs as will be discussed in chapter 7.

Arts are also a medium for self-expression (Trilla, Ayuste, and Agud 2014), which can have social recognition. For example, exploration that occurs as part of a play can eventually lead to the embodiment of a socially meaningful title, e.g., "actor" or "technician." Trilla, Ayuste, and Agud (2014) also believes that the type of exploration that occurs in arts programs is similar to the sensory exploration that children naturally engage in as part of their learning mechanisms. Like Trilla et al., Silvey (2014) emphasizes that arts provide "voluntary acts" which are similar to children's play. Silvey argues that performing arts, by being closely tied to children's natural inclinations, provide "engagement that enable children to achieve and maintain a sense of well-being" (1079). If a learning environment can incorporate these natural

tendencies, it has the potential to build on the children's strengths, capturing their attention and sustaining their participation.

Even while the arts can be personally and individually satisfying, they can also foster a collective creative process. Sannino and Ellis (2014) argue that when significant practices or activities with a common object – a direction or goal – are engaged in by a group, collective efforts potentially produce creative or novel knowledge. It is the common object that "motivates the intentional participation of groups of people and what is fashioned and potentially transformed through their participation," (8). Theater, band, dance, etc., often have a common goal for all the participants – a show, performance or the creation of a "piece." By having arts-based after school programs, students have the opportunity of engaging collectively, ultimately working on skills (e.g., problem solving, skills required for the art) that better situate them to meet contemporary societal challenges (Heath 2000; Sannino & Ellis 2014).

Bauman (1982) speaks of children's folklore – things children create as they engage in play (often a collective activity) that is not pure enculturation or reproduction of culture – and sees the connection to the arts as well:

> "My conviction that the arts should play a significant role in education and my clear impression that increasing numbers of educators are coming to share this conviction, suggest that children's folklore, representing what might aptly be called the indigenous art form of childhood, unquestionably valued and enjoyed by children themselves, might constitute responsive, locally relevant arts programs in the schools" (184).

Although Bauman is arguing for arts to be used during the normal school day, this significance of the connection between children's play or folklore still hold true for ASPs as well. Children's folklore is not about pure reproduction, but can, and arguably should, deal with real-life concepts and issues. In a study involving middle schoolers, (Bhukhanwala 2014) examined how participation in "Theater of the Oppressed" after school allowed the students to have "conversations about issues that matter to them" and to explore "empathy and perspective

taking," ultimately "helping them make sense of differences and address issues of bullying," (10-11). At GDT, exploring different subject matter is not uncommon and is something the teachers take pride in. Theater, and perhaps the arts more generally, provide a way to meaningfully imagine, explore, create, and "gain knowledge of themselves, their peers, and their environment" (Bhukhanwala 2014, 11). As a form of "play" and "folklore," theater provides a rich context for the after-school setting.

Heath (2001) describes how all the processes involved in the arts reflect skills necessary in work settings including "a demand for design, structuring processes, precision in focus on detail, accumulation of reference knowledge, collaborative critique, and a sense of an end goal of quality achievement for public review by experts," (12). Larson and Brown (2007) similarly find that the unfolding sequences during participation in theater led youth to feel a sense of development which included learning managing interpersonal stress, managing positive emotions, and a better understanding of emotional causes and consequences. In this way, the arts offer an enjoyable, voluntary, and engaging pathway towards practicing skills that are important beyond the ASP's boundaries. While there may be a general push for academic success through educational institutions, activities involving the arts should not be discounted and can lead to important developmental outcomes that are generalizable to youth's lives more broadly.

Chapter 2

Cast and Crew: Methods and Field Site

Methods

The main research took place over the course of the 2015-2016 school year. I continued to re-visit the theater once a week 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. During the focal school year, I attended GDT's ASP four days a week for 30 weeks spending time with age groups from first grade to high school. In total, I spent roughly 360 hours at the program, volunteered for the Mexican Día de los Muertos celebration – a cultural celebration in honor of ancestors, volunteered to assist with professional shows at GDT (as the youth were asked to do), followed youth for four full day school visits, and went on GDT fieldtrips with the youth (see Figure 2.1). During this time I engaged in participant observation, for which I would switch between actually participating alongside the children and youth and sitting on the sidelines to jot notes. Once consent had been collected from all children, youth, and their parents, I was also able to record daily sessions with a video camera set up on a tripod to the side of the stage. Throughout participant observation I also gathered data from informal interviews and conversations that were going on around me. This included short conversations with children and youth as well as with parents, staff, and teachers/staff.

Figure 2.1: (Left) One of the youth and me laughing after sharing a drink during one of the fieldtrips. (Right) Youth applying make-up while volunteering for Día de los Muertos.

Throughout participant observation I tried to limit my embodiment as an authoritative adult at the theater. For example, I told teachers that I would not take a disciplinary role, though inevitably they tried to rely on me at times. When students themselves would ask me questions starting with "Can I…" I would generally respond that I didn't know and that they would have to ask one of the actual teachers. Children wore red shirts and youth wore black shirts during programming (youth did not consistently do so until later in my fieldwork year). I got my own copies of the shirt to wear to class and hung out with youth in the lobby to try and align myself as much as possible with the students rather than the teachers. At the end of the year, I also took part in their shows as one of the actors. Of course, this still was not able to hide the fact that I was an adult nor that I did speak with the teachers at times in a different manner than they would. In addition I felt myself pulled between hanging out with the girls versus hanging out with the boys. While I could join in conversations with either, ultimately it often meant I was "in" with one group at a time. The year following my main fieldwork, some of these barriers seemed to have dropped for the youth themselves.

By the time I was doing interviews with youth, I felt some of the dividing lines between us had been broken down. A few times during interviews – which sometimes took place in a closed side room at the theater for convenience – youth would look around to make sure none of the staff were around, but then tell me something they did not want the other adults to overhear. I took this as a good sign. Another example is reflected in shared eating. Food was a marker of sharing amongst the youth. While the theater provided snacks in the lobby, youth would also bring their own at times. When one of the youth showed up with a styrofoam container of chili-cheese fries from the popular, local burger joint across the street (or a different, comparable snack), it was not uncommon for multiple hands to dip into the food. I was hesitant at first – I

starkly felt my own positionality as an adult who would be taking food with monetary value from the youth. By the end of the year, not only would I participate in some of their shared snacks, I would not even ask verbal permission, with them slightly re-angling a bag or container to accommodate the extra mouth.

However, it is inevitable that my data were colored by the age difference between me and the youth participants, as well as my being female and white. These specific positionalities meant that I was perceived in certain ways by different youth, as well as shaping my own perceptions (Orellana 2009 offers a useful discussion on this). It is only fair to say that my own history has been influenced by the dominate narrative that low-income Latino youth are less likely to succeed in school and be at risk for problematic behavior. While my education and training in anthropology has since run counter to this being a blame-the-victim situation or "school as normalized," it nonetheless is a powerful and persuasive storyline. I believe the youth have also been actively confronted by it – the theater, for example, made it no secret that funders, in part, gave money on the basis of these assumptions. If youth associated me with the white, dominant group, this surely would have impacted our conversations, interviews, etc. As reflected in the examples above, I did notice a change in youths' behavior towards me after directly engaging with the program as "one of them," rather than an instructor to reduce, though not extinguish, the social distance between us.

While I conducted participant observations with all age groups, I limited my in-depth conversations, interviews and EDA measures to the students ages 13 and up for a few reasons. First, I hoped to capture the perspectives of students who had attended the program for several years. Second, I wanted to ensure the time and space for in-depth conversations, and teenagers typically were less limited by their parents' schedules and had more time to spare after the

program. I interviewed all except four of the attending youth (N=16) and a few of the thirteen-year-old students from Friday's class (N=6) for a total of 22 interviews. Of the youth who did not do interviews, one youth chose not to participate, two dropped out of the program for unknown reasons and could not be reached, and one had scheduling conflicts. In total, I interviewed twelve teenage girls and four teenage boys, roughly mirroring the higher proportion of girls attending the program, in addition to 3 female and 3 male thirteen-year-olds. Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to multiple hours spanning two sessions. Interview length was dependent on each youth's willingness to talk and their natural inclinations towards describing situations in detail.

Focal youth were interviewed throughout the course of the school year. All youth interviews were conducted utilizing an ecocultural family interview (EFI) format (Weisner 2002) to focus on routine activities. The Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI) is a semi-structured protocol. It is grounded in the starting questions of "tell me about your day," and informants begin discussing their daily routine. The researcher also has a list of topics that need to be covered by the end of the interview. If they do not come up naturally, they should either be probed at opportune moments or before ending the interview. The process aims to reduce false negatives: it was not assumed that a topic was irrelevant to the participant just because they did not mention it on their own (Bernheimer and Weisner 2007). The EFI is a natural way for participants to talk as they recount their days through the activities they engage in. Because it is more like a natural conversation, it is also well suited for work with youth and can span multiple contexts which included GDT, school and the home/family. In addition, youth were given low-budget digital cameras and asked to take photos about things that were important to them in their

everyday lives. These photos were used to help spur conversation during subsequent interview sessions.

Those youth who agreed to the full research study also filled out the *Multidimensional Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS)* (Huebner 1994) which was used to get a sense of the perceived overall conditions in students' lives. The MSLSS has forty items each pertaining to one of five domains: family, school, peers/friends, living environment, and self. The survey has been successfully used with ages 8-18 (Huebner and Diener 2008). Responses were recorded for each item on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

I also wanted to have a broad understanding of school versus the after-school context. Previous research has used experience sampling to understand engagement and other concepts for the various settings in which youth spend their time (Vandell et al. 2005). Since I wanted a general understanding of these two contexts, I chose to have youth fill out a survey about school and about GDT on the same day over the course of up to 10 weeks. First, youth were each given a booklet to keep in their backpacks, but I found that even with text reminders youth did not fill out the survey after school nor did they remember to have the booklet with them. As a result, I personally handed out a copy of the survey as soon as youth got to the theater to fill out regarding their experience and opinions pertaining to school. Then, immediately following after-school programing, I handed out a new round of surveys to be filled out in response to GDT. This allowed me to collect data over multiple weeks specific to school and theater, rather than intensive sampling during a shorter period of time in regards to many different contexts.

Additionally, focal youth were asked to wear an Empatica E4© (E4) wristband during one day of programming at GDT. The E4 is comparable to other smart watch wearables and is sensitive enough to document the physiological response electrodermal activity – a proxy for

physical and psychological activation – without having youth hooked up by multiple pads and wires. Immediately following programming, I sat down with each respective youth for a debrief session in which we examined their physiological data in conjunction with the video recording from that day. This method will be explained in more detail in chapters 3 and 4. In total 16 youth participated in this part of the research.

Two additional methods of my research ended up being small but useful components. I had three semi-structured interviews with parents of children at GDT. Due to scheduling constraints and communication issues it was difficult to get parents to commit to interviews so only three became possible. Part of the reason was that the youth, for the most part, were individually responsible for their attendance at GDT and their parents were relatively un-involved in terms of being physically present. This meant I did not get to meet all the parents personally to build a connection. However, regular work conflicts on both sides also played a role. While not representative of all parents, the interviews gave a sense of some of the narratives they had regarding their child's participation at GDT.

In addition, I conducted five focal follows during the school day each with a different youth, during which I took notes, sat in on classes, and conversed with the youth and their friends. This allowed me to see and get a sense of their normal days at school to further contextualize their responses during interviews and on the surveys. I was unable to visit one of the main schools that youth at GDT attend as I was never able to get a hold of the correct administrative person to gain entrance.

Finally, all staff members and teaching artists were asked for a semi-structured interview. In this case the main focus was on their beliefs about and orientation toward the program. Data from the interviews were intended to give a richer understanding of the program's structure by

understanding the adults' intentions, values, mores, etc. Most of these interviews lasted about an hour. In total I interviewed 10 staff members and teaching artists including one college student who was working as a teaching artist assistant as work study. In addition, I had a second interview with Addie – the main youth teaching artist – and Dana – the long-term and consistent staff member – at the end of the school year to get their comments regarding an overview of the year. This gave an impression of what they thought went well or poorly as well as the year's comparison to past years.

Study Sample Characteristics

Youth

While research was conducted with all age groups at GDT ranging from 1st grade up until end of high school totaling a little less 100 students, the focus of this dissertation is mainly on the youth aged teenagers who had class on Wednesdays as well as six thirteen year olds who were graduating middle school during my research year. It is with these youth that I conducted in depth interviews and debrief sessions regarding GDT programming. The six thirteen-year-olds that participated in Friday's class were chosen for having been in the program for longer periods of time – each had were in at least their 6th year – as I was interested in issues of continual participation. Table 2.1 shows a breakdown of the youth by pseudonym, age, number of years attending GDT and whether or not they came back the next year. For reasons of anonymity, ethnicity is not reported in association with Pseudonyms as it makes the few non-Latino students easily identifiable. However, out of the 22 focal students, one was Ghanaian-American, one was Korean-American, and one was Japanese-American. 14 of the 22 students were confirmed first-generation Americans.

Pseudonym (self-given)	Age	Years in program	Returned the following year
Aitana	15	3	Yes
Andres	13	6	Yes
Anna	13	6	Yes
Beatriz	15	1	No; conflict with other ASP
Belle	15	2	Yes; only briefly
Bianca	17	5	Graduated
Blue	15	2	Yes
Bradley	13	6	No; did not make transition to teenage group
Celaena	15	1	Yes
Crystal	14	1	No; interested but felt overwhelmed with other obligations, namely school
Elena	14	1	Yes; though later stopped attendance due to anxiety issues
Fergalicio	13	7	Yes
Flor	16	3	Yes
Juliana	14	1	No
Leo	16	2	Yes
Lisa	15	2	Yes
Malena	14	5	Yes
Mickey	17	2	Graduated
Regina	13	8	No; schedule conflict
Roxas	16	2	Yes
Sebastian	14	1	No; failed to appear for final performances and was not re-invited back[2]
Sophia	13	6	No; moved to further away school

Table 2.1: Focal youth who participated in wider research components including interviews, questionnaires, and electrodermal activity measures. The table gives their age, years in program, and whether or not they returned the following year.

Responses to the MSLSS (described above) show that, for the most part, these students are within reasonable ranges of life satisfaction. While the students at GDT are considered to be

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[2] Sebastian was at GDT first and foremost for community service hours which he had to complete after being arrested for loitering on school properties where he was spending the afternoon with friends (no elicit activities at the time). He did not show up for the final performance and when he came back asking about the following year, he was told they would have to talk more given the circumstances. Due to staff turnover, I believe this case fell under the radar. Either way, he did not come again and I was unable to contact him further.

"at-risk" for being low-income and minority youth, they are overall satisfied and doing well though their perceptions of living conditions (including neighborhood and housing) and school were on the lower side. Figure 2.2 shows the average scores as a percentage of total possible points for each domain in the MSLSS. According to (Huebner and Diener 2008) adolescents score lowest on school for satisfaction when compared to family, friends, self, and living environment. While school came in at a close second lowest, for these focal students living environment had the lowest average score of 68%, perhaps reflecting the characteristics of low-income neighborhoods. Even a score of 68% satisfaction with their living conditions is not detrimentally low.
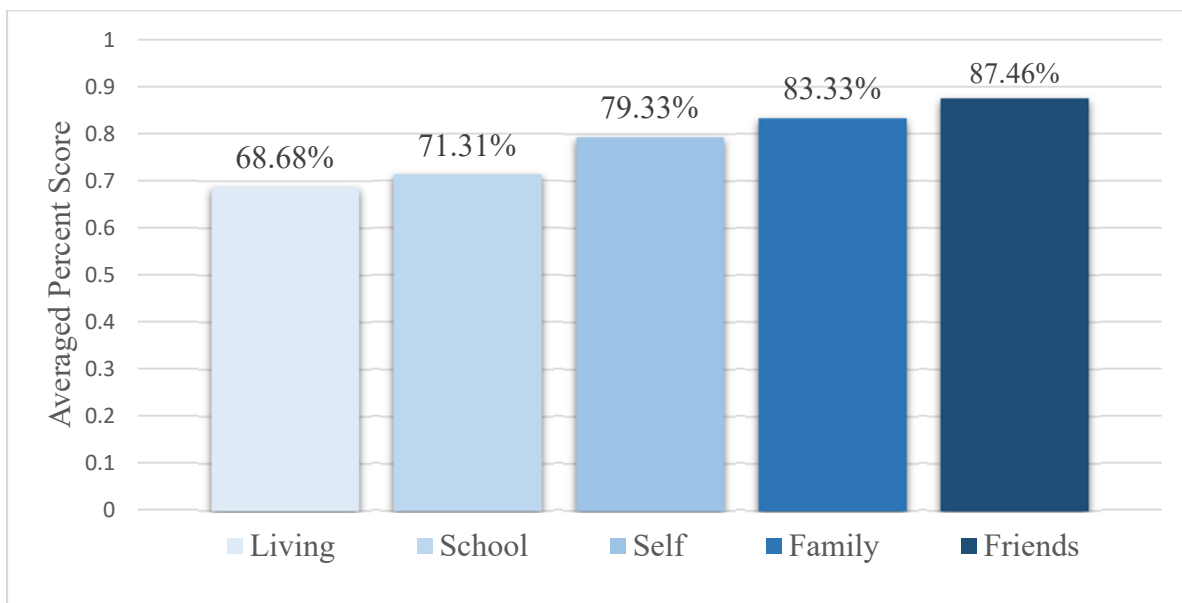
Figure 2.2: Graph depicting average responses to the sub-domains of the MSLSS.

Teachers and Staff

GDT has a core of teachers – or "teaching artists" that actually lead the theater classes – and staff who are present in and around the programming in the office and lobby of the theater building which will be described below. While their jobs did entail different foci (teaching vs.

administration), teaching artists and staff are often considered as one unit throughout this dissertation because they worked as a team with each member taking on many different roles that blurred the boundaries at times. Importantly, they considered themselves to be a sum total unit that worked together to create the atmosphere and programming at GDT. However, it is important to note that teaching artists are hired for a different set of skills (teaching and quality artist) as compared to staff members who do not necessarily have to be good at theater. Table 2.2 presents the teaching artists and staff that were an active part of my research, i.e., completed interviews.

During my research year GDT had an extremely high turn-over rate in teachers and staff putting the remaining team members into overdrive (see Table 2.2 for teachers/staff who left or joined later in the year). When I had asked Addie to reflect on the year, "not losing teachers" was a large part of her discussion and that "if you're losing staff… all of your bandwidth is used up, [just] delivering the program. You can't – think… I mean [we're] in here scrambling around like crazy." While I was at GDT only one staff member spoke fluent Spanish, and after she quit her job due to family circumstances – she was quite emotional at having to leave – there was a gap in the language presence for communicating with parents. For example, a few times I was asked to take a phone call to converse with Spanish speaking parents. Two of the teaching artists also spoke Spanish, one of whom also left half way through the year.

Additionally, a few other team members left, including the staff member mainly responsible for running the Teen programing administratively which meant the youth did not have a central person holding them accountable, though the rest of the staff and teachers did their best to fill in. An unfortunate loss, it meant that there was some instability in programming, though on the whole, the program was able to maintain its normal functioning. One parent

commented that she wished teachers wouldn't rotate so often so her daughter could get used to the teachers more effectively. But on the whole, she still thought the program was doing a good job. In the two years following, new recruitment led to increased stability again and new staff members who speak Spanish have filled the language gap. In general, GDT has, on average, 8-10 staff/teachers that are directly related to the ASP (as compared to other programming the theater does) during a normal operating week. More regarding teaching philosophies will be discussed below in "Guiding Principles."

Pseudonym (given)	Job	Stayed, Left or New	Languages Spoken
Addie	Teaching Artist/Director/Founder	Stayed	English
Dana	Staff/Youth fieldtrips and organization/Executive Assistant	Stayed	English
Benno	Staff/Youth fieldtrips and organization	Left	English
Tuck	Founder/ Director	Stayed	English
Violette	Teaching Artist	Left	English
Judy	Teaching Artist	Stayed	Spanish/English
Sally	Teaching Artist	Stayed	English
Gaby	Staff	Left	Spanish/English
Sadie	Teaching Artist	Stayed	English
Martha	Staff	New	English
Raya	Teaching Artist	Left	Spanish/English

Table 2.2: List of teaching artists and staff members that completed interviews or were part of the core after-school program team. There were four additional team members that were either temporary or did not participate.

Field Site: Green Door Theater (GDT)

Nestled between the residential neighborhood of a predominantly Latino neighborhood in California and a busy, slowly gentrifying strip mall intersection there is an old re-designed historic building. It is home to a small black-box professional theater. According to the co-founders and the teachers at GDT, the neighborhood has changed in regards to the Latino

community as compared to roughly 20 years ago when the theater was founded, resulting in an increase in diversity including White, Asian, and Black individuals.

Currently, the population in the immediate census tract of the theater is about 75% Latino according to the (U.S. Census 2010). If surrounding census tracts are also taken into consideration, this number drops to 62.87%. The Latino population in all of Los Angeles County is estimated to be 47.74%. The numbers indicate that GDT is located in a pocket of a predominantly Latino community, which is reflected in the youth population that attend GDT's ASP, as will be discussed below.

The neighborhood is also predominantly low-income. The Los Angeles Times (n.d.) estimates that the median household income is $18,533 which they consider low for the overall city of L.A. with over 45% of the households making less than $20,000. For 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that a family of four with two children had a poverty threshold of $25,858, this is reduced to $19,730 for a single-child family of three. If the Los Angeles Times' estimates are correct, then roughly 50% of youth are likely to be living in poverty near GDT. As will become clear, the level of low-income households and the resulting at-risk child and youth population was paramount to the development of after-school programming at GDT.

The front of the theater's re-designed building is adorned with a large sliding door that allows any passerby to peek inside. It may be the physical openness that beckons outsiders in, but it is ultimately the philosophy of social and emotional openness found within that welcomes outsiders to become insiders and stay. The wide door is open whenever possible and is the entry to the

Figure 2.3: Lobby and box office after entering through the green door

small black-box "Green Door Theater" (GDT), which I gave this pseudonym in honor of the basic and fundamental undercurrents of openness. Upon entering the space, one is greeted by a bright lobby painted with warm colors and flooded by the light coming in from the open door. Scattered around the room are tables with shabby chairs that give the air of a classic theater. To the left one finds a kind of bar at which brewed coffee, tea, sugar, and powdered creamer are available to *anybody* who walks in. Frequently, one of the staff members sat at the far corner of the bar with their laptop and the theater's phone. Really, one wouldn't know it was part of a theater per say, except for the white box letters inscribing "Box Office" on a green wall. A box office that serves both as a place to purchase tickets, but also as an office which contains multitudes of binders each for the various programs being operated.

Figure 2.4: Side view of the stage.

If one proceeds through a further set of double doors, one enters a small black-box theater with a tremendous amount of charm. The rafters have been preserved from the buildings historic days; the theater's lighting grid is superimposed on wood beams with white chipped paint. The stage area, which is a flat black floor, is decorated with various objects including red curtains, a decorated keyboard piano, a costume rack, and a disco ball hanging from the ceiling. As it turns out, these are all set pieces for the ongoing show the theater offers to local schools as a field trip during the day. In theater terms the stage is "hot" (set for performances) throughout the year. This is the same stage where the heart of youth programming takes place.

Importantly, the open door was directed towards children and youth as part of the after-school programming the professional theater provided four days a week, thirty weeks out of the year. The theater also played home to professional performances, a post office for a few local homeless, community events such as their ever growing Día de los Muertos neighborhood party, amateur performances, and wandering researchers – all with great enthusiasm. For attending youth, this meant GDT provided a community oriented, rather than formal educative, space in which to engage in regulated activities after-school – a space many of the youth I conducted research with

Figure 2.5: Altar for Día de los Muertos inside the theater decorated with photos and notes brought by visitors. The party spilled onto the street with vendors, a "graveyard," and performances. The street was blocked off for the evening.

returned to for a second year and beyond. In addition, programming was offered completely free to all the after-school children and youth so that money was not a barrier to attendance. Free programming was something the theater strived for and was proud of. And while the after-school programming is now securely established, its origins were more humble in nature 18 years ago.

A Serendipitous Beginning

The following is GDT's ASP origin story re-told from interviews with Addie and Tuck recounted as a narrative with such enthusiasm that it unfolded like a book to me. I therefore present it in dialogue format as Addie and Tuck had done:

Addie and Tuck, a married couple who are also the co-founders of the after-school programing at GDT had been part of the set-up of the entire theater – the historic building had been suggested to them by an acquaintance as a place for a potential theater. In the process of cleaning out the

space and hanging the light grid, Tuck and Addie found themselves on top of ladders when they heard a Latino boy call out to them through the open door:

"What are you doing? What you gonna be? What is this thing?" The boy called from the entrance.

"It's a theater, you know?" responded Tuck.

"We're actors and we're going to put on a play here," added Addie.

"What's a play," the boy asked quizzically.

"Well you know – a play, it's got actors…" Addie began to explain.

"You mean like a nightclub or beer hall?"

"No. A live theater. There'll be shows."

"So will there be beer?"

It was then that Tuck and Addie realized that the boy didn't even have a concept of what theater was. They realized "it wasn't language, it wasn't vocabulary, and it wasn't sensibility." "Theater" wasn't anything that he understood. They just looked at each other.

"We got to back this plan up. If we're gonna have an audience, we have to teach the audience first!" Exclaimed Addie, then added turning to the kid in the entrance "'Come in Monday and we'll do some theater games together."

Later Tuck and Addie talked more about it.

"Wow. There's really a *need* here. I mean, they don't even know what it is – theater. Even when you tell them. Wow. We can actually make a difference here," Tuck said.

Years later Tuck reflected that this had been a big turning point: "You know, this [he waved his hands at the theater building] is not just about doing plays. We could actually- we could actually make a difference. So that was the beginning [of the after school programming]."

Addie agreed:

> "The needs were so clear. And the poverty was so clear. Just the marginalization was so clear in this world of Hondurans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans and Mexicans, you know, they needed us and we needed them. We needed them. They taught us about what it is you do for a community when a community calls to you. They taught us that. It's not about plays. It's about social services. It's about social justice. It's about this community and how you use theater as a learning tool. And it just sort of bore fruit and the neighbors came in and they didn't know what we were doing, but [parents] signed their kids up for [the program]. It was one day a week and then it was three, now it's four."

As Addie herself said, from then on the door stayed open and the program grew becoming an official non-profit organization in the process. Aside from dedicated teachers and staff, the growth has been made possible from federal and state funding such as the National Endowment for the Arts and California Arts Council, as well as contributions from local colleges and some private donors. Through this financial support, the program has been able to grow from one day to four days a week.

Guiding Principles

Addie is the current leader of the teaching artists at GDT as Tuck has taken on the administrative trials of running a non-profit organization. Through Addie, the main philosophies for programming are passed on and disseminated to the other staff and teaching artists which become the foundational basis guiding interactions with the children and youth. While there are many, two principles stand out as the most important and supported: theater as a tool and GDT as authentic.

Despite the program being branded as a theater ASP, most of the staff admit that it's not actually about the theater, but rather about social and emotional development. Theater is based in emotions, speaking, and ensemble (community) by nature. Addie described theater as a "tool" or "magic potion" that she uses to help "save lives," even if not for every child that walks into GDT. Theater became a vessel: "[it's] the skis. It's really about you soaring – it's a wonderful art

form," (Addie). It's the experience and embodiment of being on "skis" rather than the skis themselves that is important at GDT; theater is a means towards development and growth.

Other staff members agree that GDT is "not really about acting" (Sally) or that "you're [not] gonna go out and book a commercial" (Dana). Rather, it's "about being able to get a job, look someone in the eye… through the tools of acting" (Sally), "[students] writing their own stories and recognizing their stories in their peers [which is] forms of communication" that translate outside the theater (Violet), and to "feel a little more comfortable doing public speaking. You're going to leave with more confidence. And self-esteem," (Dana).

For GDT the focus is on the student as a whole person who is still developing generally, rather than on the student as an actor only in the ASP context. And yes, the staff see themselves as offering important skills to children and youth, many of whom they believe will benefit from it. In this way theater is considered a tool for socializing and/or teaching skills that will help children and youth in their future lives. Even having the children owning the title "actor/actress" is considered a developmental milestone as it allows them to "experience options" (Gaby) and feel a sense of pride and self-worth. The emphasis on general skills and development infuses all the activities and interactions that take place at GDT. While staff push for better acting from the students, they do so in order to develop other skills that they see as critical for development in the United States.

The authenticity at GDT stems mainly from two sources: the feeling of community/family and the at times tough and hard-hitting content of classes. As far as community, GDT strives for this by allowing anyone into their space through their open door policy. For returning students, there is a family emphasis with Sally (teaching artist) going so far as describing herself as "mamma bear." Judy (teaching artist) noted how students stay over long

periods of time: "And they still keep coming back. As corny as it may sound, it's like a family thing. The kids keep coming back. And they keep, um, wanting to come back, and they're excited. And they teach other kids – it's family."

For the parents this also seems to hold true. On some days a few parents could be found sitting at the tables and having a conversation over coffee. On parent evenings, many parents would hug teaching artists that they had known for a few years. Finally, parents trust GDT. Belle's (15) mother described how she was comfortable having her child attend GDT because: "I like the people around her- it's a good *ambiente [environment].*" Ultimately, teachers and staff at GDT want to create a space that is comfortable and safe for the children that then allows them to work on the tough subjects that are part of their overall authenticity.

Figure 2.6: Youth hold a tableau with its own unique content/story while Addie narrates the focus and emotional content of the exercise.

Addie described how one of her goals was to be able to push youth in a warm environment: "We have some structure that gives [the youth] comfort, but then it's- and then what?! Then what are we gonna do!? Then we're gonna push you off the ledge, you know? And catch you and kiss you." The authentic feel of family allows the teachers to dig into, discuss, act out, and explore difficult subject matter with the youth. During my fieldwork this included, for example, human status, political prisoners, gang violence, feelings of invisibility, and family loss, but also love, extreme happiness, and comfort. It makes programming authentic as students are able to engage the full breadth of emotions through fictional stories inspired by their own ideas and experiences.

Judy gave props to Violet for leading an "authentic" class: "You don't shy away from tough subjects with the kids. And then, it's very sophisticated and depending on- I have to give credit to Violet. She's a very good teacher. She teaches very sophisticated – the subjects they get taught – in a very fun way." During one class period with grade schoolers, children were asked by Violet to share something that annoyed them about their family life with a partner. After they had shared a story, they were supposed to get up, and acting like their partner, share the annoyances. At first, one boy did not want to share, but relented to his partner and they got up and performed each other's points of view. The boy's partner said "you know last week, my father didn't get paid the way he was supposed to and now we don't have money. And that's annoying."

The vignette portrays an example of the hard discussions and acting the students were doing at GDT even at the younger ages – in this case the harder parts of family life. They were sharing about themselves, bringing in things they had experienced in their lives into the theater. Finally, despite his initial hesitation, the boy was OK with sharing. The fact that he was willing is a testament to the authentic feeling of safety and family. When I later asked Addie about this she responded "that's powerful stuff. And that *is* feeling safe and courageous. There has to be an authentic culture though. It can't be [just] a mission statement. There has to be a culture around it. And it is here." For Addie, this tied straight back to the open door policy: "Specifically, it's just eighteen years of love and support, you know? I mean we felt welcomed in this neighborhood from the very first second and we just didn't close those doors. How do you remain relevant and how do you feel connected to your community? You *leave the door open!* The metaphor for that and the literalness for that is why that kid said that."

The teenage group was no exception to confronting GDT's authenticity. In their interviews they emphasized a positive collective that GDT provides; quite a few used the term family. And they felt comfortable revealing things about themselves, as one girl did when in the middle of a rapid-fire game she was spouting out things about herself and inserted "something people don't know about me is that I like girls." While I have no doubt that she had friends she could, and may have, spoken to about this, it seemed like it was the first time she had done so to a group in such a declarative manner.

Hirsch (2011, 68) noted that ASPs are often "seen as more authentic… at least from the perspective of youths" because they are places where project-based learning allows for more autonomy. Having less structure than schools, ASPs are often places where the youth can have more initiative within the context. Hirsch further argues that this "can provide opportunities for more ambitious and personally meaningful experiences." The concept of "authenticity" is not a novel nor extraordinary feature of GDT, but my data suggest that GDT as a context in which youth spend their time is successful at producing it through their general cultural context.

Theoretical Considerations: GDT as Crossroads

I feel it is important here to take a minute to theoretically appreciate the precarious situation GDT and other ASPs find themselves at. They are, in many ways, considered to be transitional institutions that are capable of significantly changing the "pathway" youths are on by impacting their psychosocial development and academics; a positionality that has myriad interpretive implications. In simple terms, one interpretation is that there is a dualistic undertone: youth as they are now versus the adults they will become and ASPs as influencing the "becoming." The future of youth is also closely tied to the concept of "well-becoming" – or well-being for an individual in the future (Ben-Aryeh, Frønes, and Korbin 2014). For programs that

are serving "at-risk" youth, this can be further specified as youth with high chances of future "failure" in the broader social terms including education, later job opportunities, the upswing in social mobility, and the ability to overcome these adverse factors to be successful despite various hardships and difficult circumstances which are often tied to economic backgrounds, family relations, and neighborhood characteristics.

In many ways GDT reflected this dualistic belief with the staff's understanding of "disadvantage youth" and outcomes they *could* have - given the right opportunities. The staff and the structure of programming was, in part, set up to encourage behaviors, skills, and ways of being that increased youth's chances in the "real world," realities of American society, and globally more broadly. Using the concepts in their basic form, youth in their own *Gemeinschaft* – communities – are discursively placed in opposition with expectations of the overarching *Gesellschaft* – the broader societal. ASPs are a mediating institution between the two and play a role in preparing youth for *Gesellschaft*. In addition, because each youth has their own unique history, ASPs are spaces ripe with potential "borderlands" in which "encounters with difference may be a common occurrence" (Rosaldo 1993, 28). A cultural concept may be understood differentially between teachers and youth as well as between youth.

In his analysis of the Copperbelt in Zimbabwe, Ferguson (1999) offers an approach contrary to cultural dualism by focusing on what he calls "cultural style," which is useful for understanding GDT as well. Not unlike Bourdieu's habitus, which Ferguson cites, cultural styles are performative dispositions that make individuals competent in certain contexts that are embedded in the wider political, economic and societal realities: "Whether it is knowing how to act tough on a street corner or how to "sit like a lady" at a formal dinner, style entails a kind of knowing that is inseparable from doing… Like riding a bicycle, cultural style is a kind of skilled

social action you do with your body, often with little conscious elaboration or awareness," (98).

Since cultural competencies are dependent on the context in which they are validated, we can also make use of the term "contact zones" as presented by Pratt (1991), where individuals meeting in social space results in cultural clashes which are shaped by larger issues of asymmetrical power. In order to be successful or capable in a certain context – for youths at GDT the context in question is the wider adult society in America – knowledge must become embodied. The theater and it's, at least partial, prescription to the wider American realities, mean that they can and do reflect the dominant, powerful culture.

This alone does not preclude a cultural dualism. One could argue that the youths at GDT must shed their old styles and don a new societal cloak simply trading in their "traditional" home life with all its "risk factors" for the "modern" Western society. Ferguson argues, however, that individuals can have "more balanced stylistic repertoires" with competence building on more than one dimension. Instead of a linear relationship between two cultural styles, both can be simultaneously developed, though it is noted that "the distribution of people in this stylistic space is not random. A few virtuosos may excel at both [cultural styles]. But stylistic competence is costly and difficult to acquire… people tend to specialize that is, in one stylistic mode or another," (Ferguson 1999, 107). In other words, investment and learning in one style precludes progression in another for the time being. He further argues that this undermines a tendency to think of one style as superior, rather focusing on competence in either as a form of developing capabilities.

Important to our understanding of ASPs and youths' engagement in them is that building capacity is "costly." A challenge for ASPs, which will be discussed more throughout this dissertation, is youth "participation" as defined as enrollment, attendance, and engagement

(Weiss, Little, and Bouffard 2005). The youth have to invest energy into their ASPs – both time and focus – in order to have a changed outcome. But it is not that alone; it also requires building a capacity in a different cultural style that may come at the cost of building capacities in another such as may be reflected in school, the home, peer groups, or the neighborhood. Let me present here a moment during theater programming when Addie pushed for both a cognitive and bodily disposition toward "volunteering" – a skill that Addie considers critical to being a leader and successful adult in today's global society. The following excerpt from my field notes, portrays ethnographically how volunteerism was explicitly incorporated into GDT programming. After having had prep time, youth who had been assigned the role of directors were asked by Addie to volunteer their group to present:

> Addie: Which director wants to volunteer their group to go next?
>
> *The room stays quiet – it's like crickets.*
>
> Addie: People! What do we have to do to remind you that to be a leader, to get ahead, to get the job, you need to volunteer? All of the directors should be volunteering their team. Where are your hands?!?
>
> *This begins a discussion on volunteering and putting yourself forward, and how important that skill is. She asks them to put their hands up. No one does. She says it louder and with more emphasis. A few seemingly shy hands snake their way up with a bent elbow, timidly – as if hoping not to be seen almost.*
>
> Addie: Everyone – hands up! ((Addie looks at the results)) That was like a B minus.
>
> *Addie changes tactics – she seems pretty determined about this, not angry per say, but this is perhaps my first glance of her being somewhat disappointed or incredibly focused on getting something into the teen's heads. It was clear by how she changed her demeanor – with a forceful and directive voice, that she was not in a joking mood about this matter.*
>
> Addie: We're going to do a cue. What's a cue?
>
> *As a group, they discuss that a cue gets you do to something. Addie introduces cues, by verbally saying numbers and assigning certain forms of hand raising as a response. The cues are as follows:*

1 = Right hand in the air – straight, no bend
2 = left hand
3 = both hands
4 = both hands and standing up
5= both hands, standing up and verbally and energetically saying "me, me, me!"

Addie begins throwing the cues at the youth, almost like a call and response, except Addie calls verbally and the teens respond physically. After throwing these cues at them a few times and encouraging youths' excitement levels especially for cue "5", Addie changes the cue "5" to "who would like to volunteer?" Addie re-starts throwing cues at the youth. After she says the cue "who would like to volunteer?" a few times with the teens jumping up, hands in the air and shouting "me, me, me" Addie continues the conversation.

Addie: ((forcefully)) And that's how your life should be led. And that little synapse that has been formed in your head, unbeknownst to you – wants to volunteer. And that's how you should lead your life."

Addie finishes the conversation and performative exercise by giving an anecdote about her "old self" and how she got to her current position: "and I did it by volunteering." While Addie is emphasizing a point that is important to her, there is some laughter from the teens throughout.

The vignette depicts a push for skill building that requires both a cognitive attention to the idea of volunteerism – Addie explicitly describes the skill and its importance – and a bodily or performative style to go along with it as shown by the physical "game" the youth engaged in utilizing their full body, hands, and voice to reflect the concept "volunteering." Addie's comment about the "synapse" being formed during this process highlights that she believed that the activities at GDT – youth practicing certain behaviors etc. – has an impact on their actual cognition and gets incorporated into their unconscious behaviors (e.g., "unbeknownst to you"). We could imagine the youth here quite literally "practicing" towards a new self.

But not everything is unidirectional as Ferguson also points out. I think the real crossroads comes when one thinks about the embeddedness of many ASPs in "community." There is an entire subset of ASPs entitled "community programs" which are seen as closely tied to the neighborhood or local culture. GDT would be considered one of these, and I believe the

founders valued this positionality (see above "A Serendipitous Beginning"). It means, however, that the program is not only charged by the macro society to prepare youth for success in the Gesellschaft, but also to value and be part of the micro community or Gemeinschaft.

Overall, I believe the evidence suggests that the theater activities at GDT allowed the teachers and youth to live in the "in-between" fairly harmoniously. By allowing youth to fill in the actual content of many of their scenes, they were able to explore and engage in "universal" issues such as emotions, economic realities, societal problems through their own local understandings and experiences. Further, the youth maintained a tie to their peer, school, and home lives through scenes and conversations while practicing "real world" skills such as, for example, being able to speak up, read emotional undertones of social situations, and look someone in the eye. The flexibility in activity content is further discussed in chapter 5 as a mechanism for producing quality programming. By maintain this balance throughout activities, capacities in multiple cultural styles have the potential to be developed at GDT.

When discussing low-income youth, Halpern (1999) has made a similar observation:

ASPs "provide resources and relationships that are distinct from and complementary to those provided by both family and school. They are neither distant nor intimate; rather, they are in-between. And they typically integrate the values and priorities of the larger society with those of children's immediate community," (Halpern 1999, 93).

It is in this sense that GDT was a crossroads where youth can enter and find a mix of foci in an attempt for programming to straddle cultural and societal lines.

Of course, that does not mean conflicts do not occur, because they did. One common point of contention, for example, stemmed from teachers seeing part of their job, nested in the "outcomes oriented" programming, as pushing youth to be responsible for themselves and to follow through on the commitment they made; youth signed a contract at the beginning of the year that outlined program expectations, for example. When youth could not attend they were

asked for explanations and often reminded of their responsibility. This did not always sit well with the youth. When I asked Lisa (15) about things at GDT that stressed her out she had a clear answer:

> "When I have something else to do and I have to call them to like tell them 'oh I can't make it.' I didn't really like it when Benno (staff member) would tell us "well you had a commitment, you had a duty.' And it's like, "I know! I signed the papers. I did- I- I went for the application [process], but sometimes it just can't be helped.' You know, because me- like I said before, I'm not really good with people. So, being at school is really- it's hard on me. So sometimes when- it gets too much and I want to go home and I want to rest. But like, you know, Benno kinda tries to say that everyone is the same: 'Oh if someone else can do it, you can do it!' And it's like 'we're not all the same people, Benno. Relax.'"

For Lisa, having to conform to some of the expectations was stressful, annoying, and made her feel categorized as "the same" compared to everyone else when she, in fact, felt like she was not. Her comment also had the undertones of annoyance felt when being reminded of the "responsibilities" that she, of course, already knew about very well. However, this was not a point of contention for all students nor did it occur for any one student every week. Nonetheless the commentary conveys the difficulties inherent to possible developmental trajectories being enacted.

In very real, practical ways, GDT is a site at which the varying cultural styles come together at times harmoniously and at times in opposition. The analysis, however, extrapolates the difficult positions community programs are asked to fill within the broader societal context. By straddling the "current" with the "becoming," ASPs are a sort of hybrid zone in which youth are inhabiting a "present self" and "future self" while engaging with societal expectations with neighborhood, family, and individual histories.

Another consequence of this theoretical understanding of ASPs is understanding that the fabric of culture is not passed on from one generation to another in a uniform fashion (Strauss 1992): while ASPs often reflect broader societal norms and values, we must depart from

uniformity in our understanding of experience and outcomes. As was already mentioned through Ferguson's theory of cultural styles, individuals will vary with how much capacity an individual has for any one style. Some youth may find themselves more closely aligned with the Gesellschaft style than other students and vis versa. Some may be successful in both or neither. Here both Bourdieu's "habitus" (Bourdieu 2010) and schema theory offers ways to conceptualize the "individual factor."

The habitus is a well-known social construct that describes individuals as having a set of predispositions shaped by past experiences. The predispositions in turn impact how the individual encounters their world, and perceptions about the present world, and its structures (Bourdieu 2010). Habitus in Bourdieu's terms is conceptualized as something that is shared by similar individuals based on their positionality in a society. However, the concept of habitus also leaves room for the individual component. Since an individual's experiences shapes the habitus, it is easy to grasp how the habitus can vary; depending on an individual's own biology and surroundings the habitus has been constructed through unique histories. When the habitus is patterned similarly and shared between individuals due to comparable – if not exact – circumstances, individuals may not be consciously aware of their own habitus since they are embedded in ecocultural contexts that are congruent with their own. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) likened this to fish who do not feel the weight of water because that is their accustomed state of world, e.g., the social context.

After-school programs, as unique "third environments", can place students in situations in which they feel "out of water" (or not) due to their individual contextualized histories. Yet these contexts are heavily impacted by the individuals who, with their own views regarding the GDT space, can impress their will for change or stability. In other words, each possible

"encounter" has numerous plausible outcomes depending on the exact conditions and the individual's involvement in them. If encounters in new "out of water" experiences are sustained, possible outcomes include an individual change in habitus.

Worthman (2010) explicitly states that habitus is a developmental outcome through "ingrained practical competence and social capital acquired and actuated through practice in social context" further extrapolating that the development is a direct result of embodiment through bioecocultural processes (556). It was already noted by Bourdieu that the habitus is not immutable. New experiences can be seen as layering onto the old to create new forms of embodiment. In this way, GDT is not only a crossroads between one community and one society, but also is appointed to taking on a plethora of individuals, each with their own constructed habitus, and be able to acknowledge/value the variability and then, through routine practice, create predictable outcomes for attending youth, such as improved academic outcomes. As will be further described in chapter 4, evidence of Aitana's (15 year-old female) experience suggests that even activities that youth do not view positively at GDT in the moment can end up impacting their perceptions over time.

While habitus focuses on embodied processes we can also think about cognition in relation to the issue. Schemas, which are individually developed cognitive representations of environmental regularities, can be shared by individuals reflecting common understandings (D'Andrade 1995). Schemas are, however, never exact copies from one person to the next: "Schemas are context-dependent interpretive devices; situations which look the same to the observer may be quite different to the actor" (D'Andrade 1992, 33), and are different from actor to actor since culture is not copied through a "fax model" of internalization (Strauss 1992). Again, we have youth entering a cultural context – GDT – and begin participating over time

through which their schemas may be contested, confirmed, strengthened or changed. This also means that each individual will have their own experience and engages in an active co-construction of space with those around them.

When we consider then a society, a cultural community or group of individuals it is important to maintain an understanding that there is variability within any category. As Strauss (1992) states: "I do not mean to deny that societies have dominant, persistent ideologies, only to point out that rarely, if ever, does the public realm of culture present a single, clearly defined, well-integrated reality" (11). While we as humans can operate together as cohesive groups, cultures, or communities, this is never done in a complete homogenous fashion. Considering the myriad backgrounds and histories represented in the U.S. which can be described as "chaotic" – if their coming together results in, for example, disrupting family routines or incongruent goals and values (Weisner 2010) – understanding and appreciating the heterogeneous crossroads at GDT plays an important role in its positionality within the public sphere and the processes occurring during its programming. GDT then should not be assumed to be a space of homogenous experiences, nor outcomes, and that our understanding of these spaces as meaningful societal institutions should be continually developed and empirically understood reflecting the variability within the community. Also, GDT as a "positive space" cannot be assumed – rather it is subject to empirical research. In chapter 7 the youth's perceptions of GDT and their schools will be compared to highlight in what ways GDT is experienced positively. As will be presented in the following chapters, there is a constant give and take between youth and their teaching artist Addie as well as differential experiences during similar activities.

Chapter 3

Electrodermal Activity and Ethnography

Introduction

Adding physiological data to qualitative and ethnographic methodologies can greatly enhance our understanding of individuals' ongoing subjective experiences, but the equipment and protocols have not been well established. This is, in part, due to the fact that earlier technologies required a lab setting or extensive wires and thus realistic in-situ ethnography was impossible. Newly developed mobile technologies offer an avenue for mixed-methods protocols that use physiological measures to support and add to ethnographic research (Christensen et al. 2011). Physiological measures such as electrodermal activity, provide valuable information on individual experiences during social activities, including the unique individual differences in how social participation is registered by the body and can be used as part of a qualitative protocol rather than in a strictly quantitative manner. My exploration of EDA-enhanced ethnography focuses on understanding children's subjectivity experiences in routine activities, under the framework of ecocultural theory, and is a first step towards developing a more rigorous methodological protocol that successfully incorporates physiology along with in situ ethnography.

Ethnography inherently includes the subjective nature of engaging in fieldwork, as well as the issues of reflexivity, power dynamics in the process of knowledge production, and the constant threat of essentializing any community being studied. In fact, the very basis of how to produce ethnography is hotly debated. Yet being there in the field, in the situations, in the lives of those we hope to better understand and describe – being present and engaging with interlocutors – is precisely the way to surmount this hurdle. Fieldwork, the long standing

essential tool of anthropologists and other social scientists, remains a way of producing in-depth knowledge that is capable of capturing both the patterns of ongoing interactions and the nuanced differences among of individual interlocutors (Borneman and Hammoudi 2009).

However, how does the anthropologist actually know and represent what her interlocutors are thinking, feeling and experiencing? What is more, how do we capture the dynamic views individuals hold depending on the circumstances? Moore (2009, 180) aptly points out that the "whole is never visible… one can interact only with a part of a society at a time. And while a given domain is in view, events emerge elsewhere, often out of sight, that may affect what one is looking at." Dicks, Soyinka, and Coffey (2006)**,** for example, point out that neither photos nor written fieldnotes can fully capture the multimodal in situ experience as it is socially unfolding.

While we cannot strive to get a complete and exhaustive account, we can employ methods for data collection that help us answer the questions we ask – to uncover some of the elements hidden to us. Kusenbach (2003, 478) has already addressed this as an issue and suggests the "go-along" method as one way to transcend the 'here and now' and acknowledge the "*reflexivity* of human engagement." By capturing streams of consciousness from participants as the researcher follows them during their routines, data are saturated by the unique internal dialogue that our interlocutors have as they experience their environment.

Conspicuously hidden right in front of the observer are ongoing physiological reactions. To go beyond the visibly observable and the verbal affirmations from interlocutors, the additional collection of electrodermal activity (EDA) can contribute to explanations of participatory phenomenon by illuminating the interplay between internal states and environmental factors (Schmidt and Segalowitz 2008). However, the raw output by itself does little to describe what was actually occurring or what emotion the individual was feeling. When

combined with ethnographic behavioral observations and participant interviews, EDA, which is one possible proxy for psychological arousal, is one avenue for validating what an individual experiences contextually (Coenen, Coorevits, and Lievens 2015). EDA, as a physiological response, is able to provide an independent and objective measure that can be incorporated with ethnography (Repetti, Reynolds, and Sears 2015). In this way, rich ethnography can be used to help contextualize and interpret the EDA data. Conversely, the EDA data can inform the ethnographic data. Using mixed methods such as EDA is a desirable practice in ethnographic research. It provides and enhances multifaceted accounts of lived experiences and can enhance the validity of findings by having various sources of information come together to cross validate observations (Greene 2005; Hay 2016; Weisner 2005; Worthman 2010).

Children's developmentally significant routine activities, for example, may be better understood through the combination of physiological measures and ethnography. How children grow to become adults in their given environment has been a long standing research interest. The methodological goal presented in this article is to deepen the understanding of individual experience as children participate in everyday activities, with highlighted data examples from a summer camp. Complementary data sets allow the researcher to assess and re-examine what was observed with an increased attention to subjective experiences during naturally occurring activities. Despite its potential, EDA has not yet been validated as part of an ethnographic research protocol in naturalistic settings, having been constrained to laboratory or controlled environments.

To test the feasibility of incorporating physiological measures of EDA using a newly developed E4 wristband, the research was conducted at a summer camp. The E4 is particularly useful with children, as past models of wearable technology were more cumbersome requiring

multiple sticky pads and/or wires and generally usable only in the laboratory. The E4 wristband is comparable to other fitness trackers though it is research grade and takes more accurate measures. Out-of-school programming is an important arena of children's lives which provides cultural contexts distinct from school and the home (Heath 2001) and are a rich source of information regarding children's engagement in routine activities (Barton Jay Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011). Therefore, the summer camp provides a suitable environment in which to test the current mixed methods protocol.

This paper presents a case study of how EDA can be used with ongoing observations and conversations to illuminate more about Nathan's (pseudonym) routine activity of riding tricycles at the summer camp. The findings suggest that using EDA as a complimentary ethnographic tool allows more about Nathan's experience to be exposed and reveals more about the unfolding interactional processes than could have been using observations and debrief sessions alone. In fact, Nathan's experience – alluded to through arousal levels and conversation with him – runs counter to what the teachers and the researcher believed or observed. EDA, then, can be instrumental when documenting the phenomenon of participation in relation to activity settings. Ultimately, the paper is the beginning of an ongoing project that aims to develop EDA as a tool for ethnographic research.

Background

Ecocultural Theory

Ecocultural theory plays an underlying role in the design of this methodology, because of its analytic interest in discrete activities that are part of daily routines. Activities permeate everyday life and are a way to analytically parcel ongoing experiences and lend themselves well to focused observations (Whiting and Whiting 1975), discussions with children (Weisner 2002;

Worthman 2010), and EDA measures. Ecocultural theory holds that because activities are shaped

by cultural norms, goals, and the involved persons, it is through the repeated engagement in these

activities that developmental trajectories are created (Weisner 2010). By utilizing bounded

activity settings to analyze the data, the co-occurring physiological arousal, material and social

context, and subjective engagement during particular events can be understood. In addition,

further insight regarding subjective meaning making about said events can be documented. In

order to fully understand development through the ecocultural lens, individual engagement must

be considered when assessing the lived personal experience of a child, or group of children

(Konner 2010; Rogoff 2003; Weisner 2010)

Learning and development ultimately take place through the co-constructed act of

children's participation (Gallimore, Goldenberg, and Weisner 1993). Construction, as discussed

in ecocultural theory, includes the "meaning of a particular activity to the participants" even

while this meaning is shaped by wider social, cultural and environmental contexts (Gallimore,

Goldenberg, and Weisner 1993a, 540). The activity setting allows for development, often a

monolithic concept, to be deconstructed into understandable components and requires attention

on the individual.

The Individual Child

Given that activities rely on the participation and engagement – whether voluntary or not – of

children, the individual is an important component. People often assume that development is

something that happens to children through learning and socialization, through which the child is

considered to be a passive recipient of a process that is thrust upon them by parents, caregivers

and contextual impacts (Munroe and Gauvain 2012). However, Rogoff (2003) demonstrates that

it is the individual's *doing* that drives development. Children's subjective experiences and

interpretations can vary significantly from the conclusions drawn by researchers alone (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007; Korbin 2010; Orellana 1999), and has gained significant momentum in research concerning children and youth. Children are partial agents in their own development, thereby making the documentation of their differing experiences a crucial component of contextualized studies. The current methodology uses EDA as an additional tool to highlight individual children's experience during activities that may be hard to capture otherwise.

Electrodermal Activity (EDA)

EDA data give a unique and highly personalized insight into an individual's experience during any chosen period of time. Raw EDA data can provide information about the degree of individual arousal in relation to various environmental stimuli, by measuring how well the skin conducts electricity through pore regulation. Both the Empatica E4 device (Müller and Fritz 2015) and its predecessor, the E3 (Gaggioli et al. 2014), have been successfully used with children as well as adults. EDA is moderated by the sympathetic nervous system (Dawson, Schell, and Filion 2017; Garbarino et al. 2014), which stimulates and activates physical responses such as sweating, increased heart rate, and making hairs stand on end. The arousal can stem from physical activity as well as from psychological stimuli such as emotions, attentional focus, and other internal states (Coenen, Coorevits, and Lievens 2015; Müller and Fritz 2015). It is important to note that physical EDA responses are similar regardless of whether the stimulus is positive or negative, or whether they stem from physical or psychological origins.

EDA can cue researchers as to when things get particularly exciting, fun, distressing, frustrating, physical, stable, etc., from the participant's point of view. However, without contextual information regarding the participant's perceptions of the activity, or carefully

designed experiments to streamline and thus factor out such contextual information, researchers cannot determine what the actual response was. Analyzing social context in relation to the EDA output gives more meaning to the physiological response and allows the researcher to capture more about lived experiences. This is particularly important as EDA responses rarely occur in isolation, but are rather the result of multiple stimuli and the complex processing of the autonomic nervous system (Dawson, Schell, and Filion 2017).

EDA can be analyzed in one of two closely linked ways: 1) measuring tonic conductance levels or 2) phasic skin conductance responses. Tonic skin conductance level refers to more stable, slow-changing patterns or trends that are visible over longer periods of time ranging from minutes to hours (Empatica Inc. 2018; Fowles 2008). It can be calculated by filtering out high frequency variations. The resulting filtered data are shown in Figure 3.1 as a smoothed line. The tonic levels may be used to look at general trends of skin conductance for an entire period of time or throughout a given activity.

Phasic skin conductance captures the quick, in-the-moment variations that indicate reactivity to specific environmental or psychological stimuli, on the scale of seconds. Using phasic responses, a given activity can be analytically broken down into moments of reactivity and provide information about discrete stimuli that may be important to the participant (Empatica Inc. 2018; Fowles 2008) The circles in Figure 3.1 indicate examples of phasic peaks. These can give clues as to what direct events – psychological responses as well as environmental stimuli – throughout the activity have an impact on the participant. It is important to note that while Figure 3.1 depicts an example where both phasic and tonic changes are occurring simultaneously, although one could occur without the other.
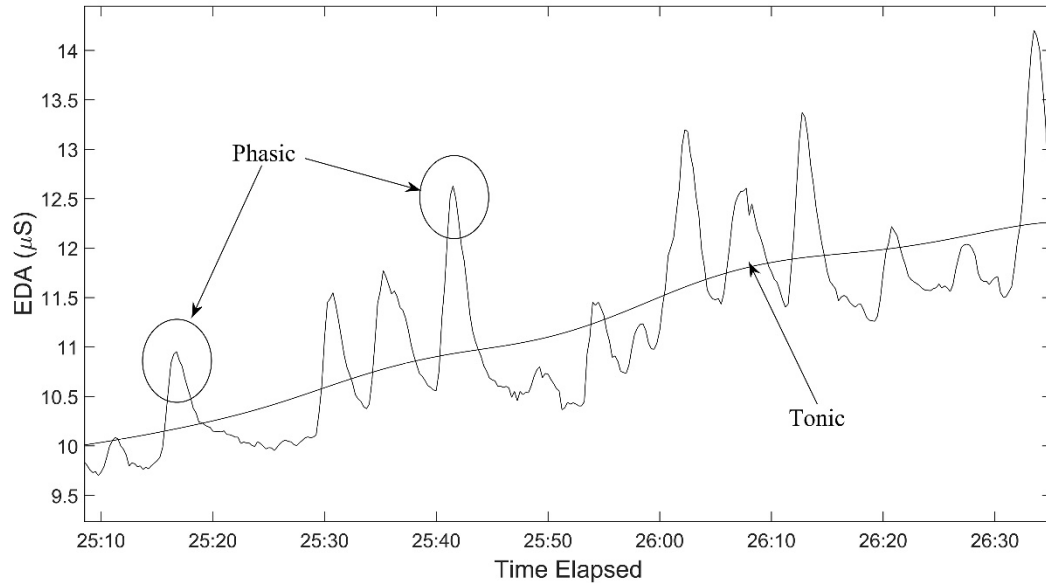
Figure 3.1: Visualization of phasic and tonic responses. The x-axis represents time elapsed relative to the video data. The y-axis are the EDA levels in microSiemens.

Electrodermal activity measures are non-invasive and can be used with adults as well as children (Dawson, Schell, and Filion 2017; Empatica Inc. 2016), but have generally been used within a pathological and/or experimental framework rather than under everyday circumstances. Examples include testing cultural impacts on emotional reactivity (Chentsova-Dutton and Tsai 2010), children with autism spectrum disorders (O'Haire et al. 2015), comparing children with defiant or conduct disorders (Posthumus et al. 2009), and pediatric pain studies (Hullett et al. 2009). While experimental and laboratory research yields interesting results, this work remains relatively uninformative regarding either context or ongoing activities that take place in everyday life. Following a call for the triangulation of continuous EDA measures with participant experiences in vivo (Coenen, Coorevits, and Lievens 2015), the current method seeks to move EDA out of the laboratory and into a non-hypothesis testing framework.

Method

This paper focuses on one illustrative research session with Nathan, a nine-year-old summer camp participant, utilizing his film footage of his focal follow, the E4, questionnaires, and a brief conversation with Nathan after the focal follow. The focus of this article is to explore the feasibility of combining continuous EDA and ethnographic data and the use of EDA as an additional methodological tool to explore how subjective experiences may be expanded on. Therefore, while the full study utilized a wide spectrum of methods, not all of them are addressed here.

Field site and participants

A German-language summer camp in California was selected as the field site due to the researcher's long-standing working relationship with the program, which ensured ease of access. German was spoken almost exclusively by the camp teachers and staff, though this was a circumstantial artifact rather than a focus of this research.

The activities were divided into two major segments during typical camp days: academic and one which was a 'free choice' period of time, where the school grounds were generally open and a variety of activities were offered by teachers and teaching assistants that students could choose from. During free choice a sort of contention was inherently created between the teachers' belief that students should not only engage in at least one of the structured activities being offered, but also enjoy and naturally gravitate towards them. A common discussion during staff meetings was just how to grab students' attention and exasperation with the perceived lack of interest.

Children's interest did seem high for certain structured activities such as building a stone oven, grinding flower and cooking small bread patties in the oven as evidenced by the crowding

of children around the activity's space or lines to take turns. But certain students often, left to their own devices, chose to ignore the structured offerings from staff and instead enjoyed free play. One major attraction were tricycles that could be used on a stretch of parking lot that was coned off for this use. Surprisingly, the older children at the camp could be viewed commandeering the tricycles for equal amounts of time as the age appropriate three and four year olds – often to the exasperation of their teachers.

In order to conduct the research, the full protocol was approved by UCLA IRB. Parents of children ages eight and up were informed of the research via e-mail or in person and were given the opportunity to ask any questions before signing consent forms. A nonprobability sample of child participants was selected based on willingness to participate. Since the intent was to test the method that incorporated the E4 device and to explore the potential of resulting data, a representative sample was not necessary. Before any research took place, children were independently asked if they had any questions or concerns before signing modified minor consent forms.

Focal follows

Each child participant was followed and filmed during a free choice period during the summer camp. This was chosen so that the children could be observed engaging in activities of their own choosing, and not interfere with the academic part of their day at camp. During this time, children also wore the E4 so that the activities that were observed were simultaneously monitored by the wristband. Sessions varied in length depending on the activity in question, on the arrival of a natural stopping point, or on when the child asked to take off the E4.

The child participants were instructed to go about their normal as much as possible while researcher followed with a camera on a monopod to capture the ongoing processes. Naturally,

the researcher's presence did impact the children. While the children did direct commentary towards the researcher at times, the researcher did not initiate any conversation to avoid being the one interrupting activities as much as possible.

Questionnaire

Immediately following the focal follow, each child filled out a short, simple questionnaire that used semantic differentials (Rosenthal and Rosnow 1991; see Chapter 7 for a more in depth discussion) regarding their participation and emotional states. That way, children could be asked about their activities and then rate general feelings about them. Responses were meant to give a sense of the children's perceptions about the time period during which focal follows took place, which allowed analysis to be placed within the context of their general subjective and emotional evaluations.

Empatica E4 Physiological Measures

As an easy-to-use wristband, the E4 is simply attached on the wrist via adjustable snaps. The E4 is connected to a computer via USB and, once uploaded, the data was stored and viewable on the company's secure online platform and can be downloaded from there. No names or identifiers are stored with the raw EDA output and are therefore anonymous. The E4 device allows researchers to collect EDA values while still giving participants full mobility to carry out their normal activities, rather than restricting the research to a laboratory setting (Garbarino et al. 2014). The easy-to-clean exterior allowed children to play with various things (i.e., silly putty) without fearing for the expensive device.

As compared to standard commercial tracking and sports devices, the E4 takes data with more precision and at higher frequencies. EDA is measured at 4 Hz, or four times per second.

This is important since EDA has fast reactivity and shows arousal within a second's time. This gives the researchers detailed, micro data to work with (Empatica Inc. 2018).

There were occasional technical issues with the E4, though these have since been diagnosed and completely fixed by Empatica. During this study, an issue with the electrodes resulted in some of the sessions recording unusable data. These data appeared erratic – EDA values would suddenly fall off to zero and then jump back. This paper presents data from a focal follow which did not have these issues. The researcher has no commercial interests in the E4 product.

Debrief Session

Whenever possible, participants were asked a few questions about their activities following the focal follow and were also able to look at their E4 data if they wished. Questions began with 'how was that for you?' and varied depending on what had occurred during the session. The conversation was in either English or German as preferred by the individual child – in Nathan's case English. This way, any stress or discomfort from speaking a second language could be avoided. The unstructured conversations yielded further subjective descriptions that were more detailed than the prior surveys.

Matlab

Output data through Empatica is available in raw form, allowing researchers to design scripts and processing specific to the research needs. Matlab was used for visualization and basic signal analysis. Matlab is a software commonly used in physical sciences, and lends itself well to use with raw E4 output data. Using Matlab, for example, allows researchers to mark data with tags or codes, distinguish between tonic and phasic responses, and generally visualize the data with more flexibility.

The video was aligned to the raw data in Matlab down to a 1-second interval. Either one of two methods was utilized. The E4 could be filmed while it was starting up – first blinking green and then red – which indicates when the data collection from the device actually begins. The other option was to film the E4 when the participant or researcher pushed a button on the wristband that creates a timestamp tag in the data.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Below, two concrete examples from Nathan's tricycle riding activity are presented to illustrate the mixed methods coming together. The purpose is to show how moments of the data can be successfully analyzed by combining ongoing observations, conversations and EDA data. The first instance starts with an observation and then uses the EDA data to explore it further. The second example stems from the EDA data and then uses the observations to explore what might have been occurring. While seemingly mundane, the examples presented below show that integration of the mixed methods allows for the exploration of the social and subjective excitement Nathan experienced during the activity.

Nathan, could be described as being at the tipping point of what we might consider to be a "child" and "preteen." His baseball cap of choice that summer was red with a rock-and-roll stylized Mickey Mouse – as he called it – who was depicted playing the drums. A mix of interest in stories and fantasy and the cool and modern which was reflected in his engagement at the camp.

Nathan seemed to flip between being a 'cool kid,' skirting the activities headed by staff, and being genuinely interested in what the summer camp had to offer such as being a pretzel vendor for the rest of the children. While Nathan could show an industrious nature enjoying structured activities, his investment in such activities was frequently 'interrupted' by long

stretches of time during which he seemingly listlessly rode tricycles. When Nathan discussed the project time, the 'bicycles' were something he pinpointed as important to himself:

> Researcher: can you describe the project time [free choice] in general, how is that for you?
>
> Nathan: It's ok. Some of the projects are fun, my favorite projects are probably the ones with fire.
>
> Researcher: Ok, so this week? [the theme for the week was fire]
>
> Nathan: yeah. And- but bicycles are fun, even though they don't really bring them out all the time.

From the perspective of adult staff and an observer, the extensive tricycle riding was uninteresting and a waste of time if engaged in for a long period of time, but it was one of the highlights for Nathan. This view placed the children's desire to ride at odds with the teachers' at times. The tricycles were a favorite pastime of the camp children – especially Nathan – to the point that teachers would sigh, pointing out that the children should be engaged in 'productive' activities. One teacher even asked if she should remove the tricycles while the researcher was filming to see if Nathan would engage in more 'interesting' activities during the focal follow.

Despite the teacher's suggestion, and my own feeling that tricycles were making for a dull research session, Nathan's responses on the questionnaire immediately following the focal follow indicate that he generally felt good and that the activities he had engaged in were, albeit not challenging, interesting and meaningful to him. The observations in conjunction with the EDA data are able to elaborate Nathan's point of view and point to something far more interesting having been experienced by Nathan. It is precisely the discrepancy between Nathan's subjective experience and the teacher's interpretation – tricycle riding as a waste of time – that makes this a compelling example to explore.

From Observation to EDA Data

During the focal follow, Nathan commandeered a tricycle after a while of waiting and pestering other students – this was the normal way for the children to switch off riding tricycles. While he rode around for a while at various speeds and engaged sporadically with other children, Nathan turned his focus to a more introverted activity. He began running over a piece of chalk that had been left on the concrete, using a figure eight circular motion to keep riding back to it. It became a bounded activity within its own right that differed from other periods of time Nathan spent on his tricycle. Rather than anything exciting, it visually felt to me like a "filler" activity to avoid boredom to me at first. To teachers, it could be construed as downright destructive without purpose. However, he obviously *chose* to engage in chalk crushing rather than other activities at that time. So, I asked Nathan why he chose chalk breaking after the focal follow for his own views on the subject to which he answered:

> 'Cuz that's all about I could fou- could find that I could actually break. 'Cuz I li –
> I looked and 'it's not breaking!' And then I looked over ((bends over as if looking
> under the tricycle)) it breaking a lot underneath. And then! I went from all the
> way over there ((turns and points behind him takes a few steps and then walks
> back)) to the chalk and then I kept going figure eight ((uses hand to draw a figure
> eight and makes sound effects)) Neuum neuum neu… fun.

From the conversation Nathan seemed a little excited during his recounting, but also ended the conversation with a shrug. He did not seem to think it was something extraordinary to tell about. Interestingly, while his physical activity level declined – instead of doing longer, fast stretches of tricycle riding, Nathan was maneuvering the tricycle in a more controlled figure eight with extremely short bursts of quickness to crush the chalk – the tonic skin conductance increased. This seems to be, at least in part, to his having discovered the chalk and enjoying running over it, or perhaps finding it a challenge to maneuver his trike so as to hit the chalk.

The center vertical line in Figure 3.2 indicates when Nathan's face visibly lit up with a smile as he discovered that he could run over chalk, as was observed from reviewing the film.

From that line onward there is a slight increase in tonic skin conductance. Average tonic levels

of EDA can be defined both before Nathan discovers the chalk (shaded box left of center line in
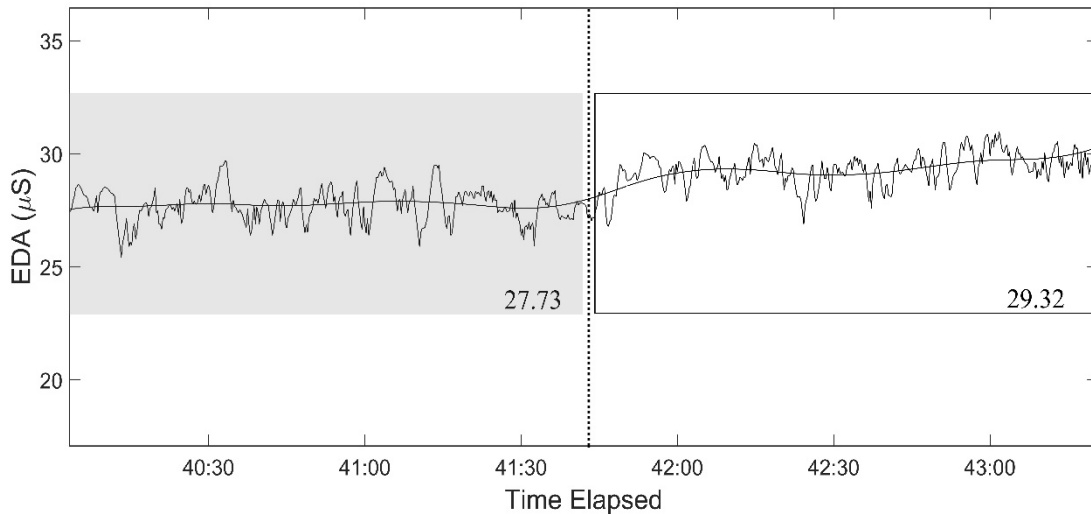
Figure 3.2: Tonic conductance levels before and after chalk crushing.

Figure 3.2), and after (clear box right of center line in Figure 3.2). The difference resulted in a

5.7% increase, indicating that, in general, his skin conductance had increased for a period of time

as compared to before the chalk-crushing activity. This cannot be explained through physical

activity as he had been riding for a while before that, and visibly reduced his physical exertion

upon starting the chalk activity.

The chalk crushing can be examined in further detail by looking at phasic responses.

Figure 3.3 shows three phasic peaks tagged by vertical lines on a close-up image of a section

shown in Figure 3.3. These three lines each represent instances of the moment right after Nathan

further crushed the chalk. They are associated with a local increased phasic skin conductance

response, indicating that the actual moment Nathan was running over the chalk elicited discrete

arousal responses possibly stemming from the anticipatory excitement of crushing the chalk as

well as when he felt or noticed that he successfully ran over the chalk. Nathan's comments about

it being 'fun,' and a small smile observable in the video corroborate this being a positive experience for him.
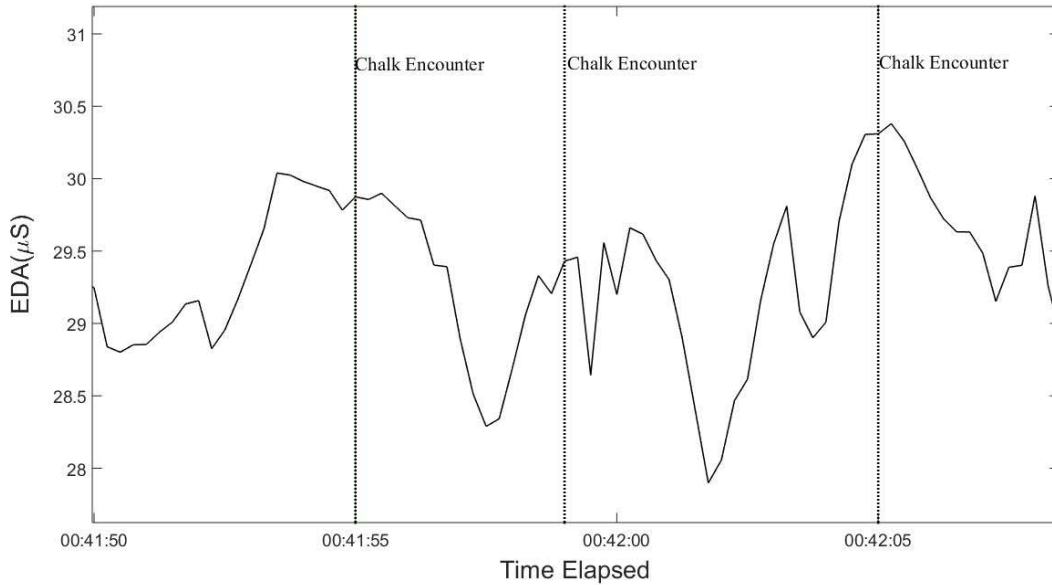
Figure 3.3: Chalk encounters and phasic conductance responses.

While Nathan explained that crushing the chalk was fun, the EDA data expand on that explanation by illuminating that each 'chalk encounter' was impactful for Nathan, and that his general arousal level – in this case due to focus and positive emotions – were elevated. He was engaging in a task-oriented behavior that was focused and had a positive impact for him. Further developing this method could lead to more of an understanding of levels of engagement.

From the E4 Data to Observation

The next example shows the strength of EDA data as a tool to analyze the qualitative components of the methodology. The EDA output was used to identify the highest reactive point during the focal follow. Once identified, the video was examined to see what was occurring before and during that period of time. It was a moment when Nathan had ridden the tricycle quite vigorously, though the physical exertion alone does not explain the high EDA levels. Numerous

65

moments of vigorous riding had considerably lower numbers, indicating that the elevated arousal levels may have had other influences accounting for it.

Reviewing the period before the highest point in the EDA, the video shows that right before he rode off on the tricycle, Nathan had been talking to two girls on a double tricycle, which already had an impact on his EDA, though the conversation did not outwardly appear stressful or exciting to either party. Effectively, they were lounging around chatting casually as if they were sitting around. From behind Nathan another boy comes up and pointed to his tricycle and asked 'can I have your bike?' The two girls excitedly exclaimed 'oh!' and rode off quickly – clearly not wanting to be asked to give up their tricycle as well since the students often figured out turn-taking without adult intervention. Nathan, instead of responding, looked down and slowly turned his tricycle before riding off at a rapid pace, following the girls' lead on getting away. Figure 3.4 shows the EDA output as well as the smoothed line which shows a general increasing trend throughout the whole process.
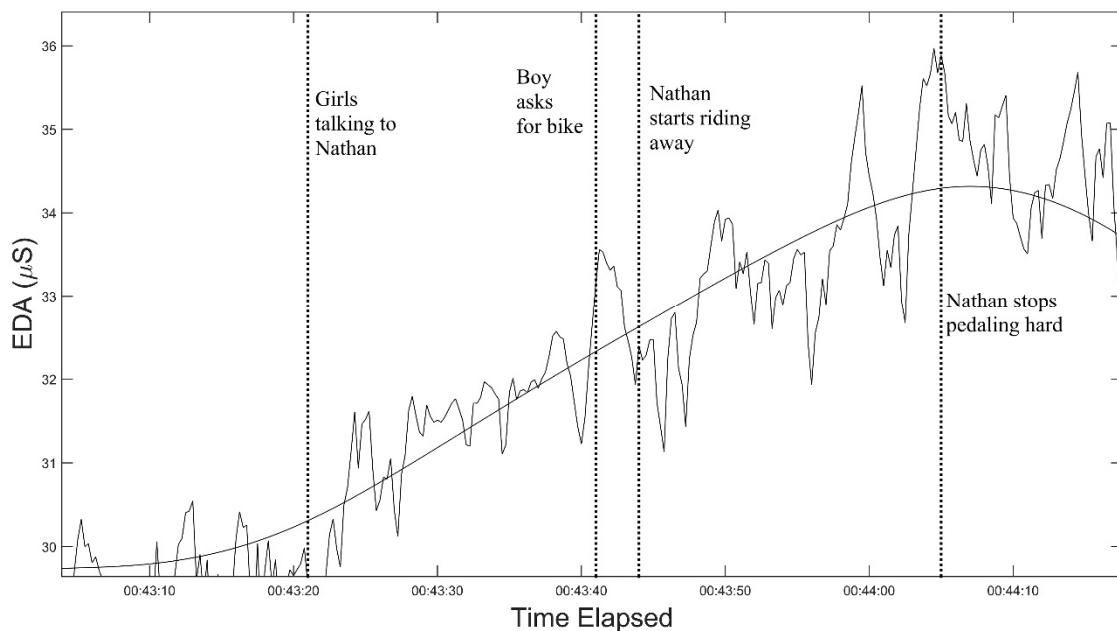
Figure 3.4: Nathan's social encounter.

The analysis of Figure 3.4 explores how important these small interactions can be. There seemed to be something exciting or stressful about first talking to the girls and then getting away from the boy. Nathan may have had such high reactivity from psychological worry of losing his tricycle, or elation that he got away and snubbed the other boy in the attempt to get the tricycle. The video shows Nathan looking back over his shoulder with a half-formed smile on his lips after he stops pedaling. Since Nathan did not show or verbalize any strong emotion at that moment, it was difficult to pick up on it as an important event until the physiological data were examined. Nathan's response to the questionnaire did indicate that he had felt part of the group during the focal follow, but this would have been attributed mainly to a general social presence rather than the short sporadic interactions he was having.

It is of methodological interest to examine these moments during Nathan's tricycle riding. They point to the personal investment in the subjectively meaningful micro-interactions which occur even during an activity that – when observed generally by adults – appears to be fairly solitary and physically oriented. Nathan was actively negotiating his unfolding social situation when the boy asked for his tricycle. The EDA data suggest that he was not only doing the negotiation, but that he was emotionally invested in the process, elaborating on fluidity and emergence of social encounters – a focus of interactional approaches (Housley 2009). Through observations alone, despite seeing small interactions, the researcher was unaware of the degree to which the ambient sociability and direct interactions, in sharing the space and 'the road,' were having a pervasive impact on Nathan.

Conclusion

This article explores the relatively new E4 technology through the case study of a specific child's activity. Such initial explorations suggest this can be a powerful tool in combining traditionally

separate methods. I argue that it can illuminate more about the uniquely individual engagement within a socially constructed context in which development and learning take place. The analysis of EDA is able to engage the subjective experience of children in relation to ongoing activities, a component that can be difficult to capture.

The in-depth exploration of Nathan's tricycle riding reveals that these activities are actually extremely important to him and should be taken seriously when considering his activity setting and developmental pathway. While this article does not address the actual impact on development, it demonstrates the methodology's strength in foregrounding the subjective experience during ongoing activities. The discrepancy between the teacher perspective and Nathan's exemplifies that what children choose to partake in and how they are impacted by them should be taken seriously. Further, the article highlighted the fact that analysis is useful in either direction – the video or EDA data can be viewed first depending on the future protocol and methodological developments. While a component of subjective experience is alluded to by the EDA data, using ethnography allows in depth and meaningful interpretations of the EDA data to take place.

This is one of the first attempts to incorporate physiological data into a truly naturalistic qualitative methodology, only now possible with modern technology, and represents a step towards the incorporation of EDA with ethnographic research methods. Future research should expand on the presented case, incorporating EDA into larger research projects to develop a more complete and rigorous protocol. Particularly, using EDA with various age groups and longitudinal use of EDA should be explored. It also does not mean that this is always the methodology to be employed, but rather can be considered as part of the suit of possibilities to apply towards research.

My ongoing research at a theater after-school program is already using EDA data in conjunction with longer debrief sessions to explore the elicitation of narratives and create individual visual timelines that allow us to follow the unfolding experience of activity. My experience with a few children who wanted to view their data on their own accord indicates that viewing their own EDA was a powerful visual tool for prompting deeper explanations regarding their activities and engagement. Having been briefed that the EDA was linked to both physical and emotional reactivity, the children naturally engaged in discussions of their feelings and personal thoughts. Debrief sessions using video from cameras attached to participants' glasses (Lahlou 2011) and pictures made or taken by child participants (Orellana 1999; Punch 2002) have shown similar success in eliciting responses. However, what EDA offers is a relatively unbiased quantifiable data output as compared to photos or videos. Further development of debrief interviews that include EDA data offer a unique avenue for participatory visual research that include opportunities to engage the 'emic' view (Pauwels 2015; Ponzoni 2016).

The successful integration of EDA with in-depth ethnography is only now becoming possible and this article serves as the beginning of a discussion regarding its methodological and analytic use for issues regarding, but not limited to, subjective experience, embodiment, interactionism, and routine activities. While electrodermal physiological data have informed and influenced qualitative ethnography, and vice versa, it still requires further development. The intergration of EDA and ethnography should also be part of further discussions regarding the general value of such approaches and the possible implications of using them. EDA offers one way to expand on 'being there' in order to cross-check observers' interpretations with those of the interlocutors and capture more of what is hidden from view.

Chapter 4

Individual Pathways towards Contextual Well-Being

Introduction

There are diverse pathways towards engagement and well-being in youth cultural groups. The ETHOS special issue "The Organization of Diversity: Developmental Perspectives" (2009), provides the conceptual frameworks, theories, and illustrations of such processes. By supplementing traditional ethnographic methods with the additional research tool of electrodermal activity (EDA), this article examines the variable ways in which culturally shaped routines and normative activities are subjectively experienced by youth at a theater after-school program in the Western Coastal United States. Psychological Anthropology's concern with the impact that cultural conditions have on individual phenomenological and psychological experience also includes how individual assumptions and bodily predispositions alter the experience of the cultural context and transform the outcomes for individuals via their interpretive processes. These transformations happen within the everyday routines and activities that produce certain observable behaviors and outcomes for individuals.

For youth in schools and educational programs, a transformation or outcome of interest is the creation of well-being in the present and well-becoming in the future (Ben-Aryeh, Frønes, and Korbin 2014). Whether focused on positive experience now or later, children and youth are in a unique situation as they are still dependent on adults and their "well-being is rooted in the interplay of a series of factors on the micro level, framed by the social structures of the wider society" (Ben-Aryeh, Frønes, and Korbin 2014): 3). Schools and other learning environments are critically important for youth "well-becoming" in the United States.

Quality after-school programs (ASPs) have been shown to be one way to improve developmental and learning opportunities and produce positive outcomes (Eccles et al. 2003; Gutierrez 2002; Larson and Verma 1999; Heath and McLaughlin 1994). Unfortunately, the actual processes by which such outcomes are produced are often unknown or uncertain and described as hidden in a "black box" within program interactions, organization, and structures that remain insufficiently understood (Deutsch 2008). The black box also includes the specific thoughts, feelings, and experiences of individuals which we generally understand only post-hoc using various self-report methods.

In fact, programs are typically only discussed in terms of outcomes, not process and social production. Yet these processes are complex and play out in mundane, everyday activities as youth interact within the program activities and their associated staff and peers. Furthermore, the cultural knowledge youth attain from their participation in after-school programs is not, of course, simply copied into their brains in what Strauss (1992) critiques as a straightforward "fax model" of internalization. Rather, it is mediated by their active individual participation in the programs, making documentation of personal experiences pertinent to understanding the production of contextual well-being in such programs.

I utilize mixed-methods data collected at the Green Door Theater's (GDT) ASP in Los Angeles to explore how the ecocultural context – that is, the ecological and cultural components of a community and of this program – is differentially experienced by youth ages 14-17. I supplement participant observation and interviews with electrodermal activity (EDA) – a way of measuring in situ physiological reactivity in individual youth, which is considered one type of proxy for psychological experiences (Coenen, Coorevits, and Lievens 2015). EDA allows for deeper exploration of individual experiences that corroborate and expand upon traditional

ethnographic methods. EDA is one mechanism through which we can observe the interaction between an individual and his or her contextual environment, providing possible insight into individual experiences in situ.

From afar, simply identifying program norms and overall activity patterns is useful but insufficient. These structured programs can lead to highly diverse youth experiences. We can imagine each individual youth as traversing a unique pathway through the ecocultural environment at GDT, which may or may not result in contextualized well-being for that person. I rely on ecocultural theory's definition of well-being which emphasizes the mechanism of engaged participation in desirable community activities as capable of producing positive social and psychological outcomes (Weisner 2014). Despite the similar environment that each youth encounters, each pathway takes its own unique shape because of the individual's unique personal histories; the objectively observable circumstances are subjectively interpreted, embodied, and internalized. GDT proves to be an interesting site in which negotiations between individuals and the after-school program community play out through participatory activities that can lead to well-being.

I will examine the domain of well-being through two specific activities at the program: *performances* and "*gospel circle*." This paper also contrasts case experiences from youth with *high and low levels of engagement* while participating in these activities in order to illustrate the complexity of the situations and the added value of EDA. I suggest that even seemingly low engagement youth (e.g., low attendance or tardiness; not participating as actively; seemingly disengaged; not following the formal scripts of the program activities; even doing things counter to the normative scripts at GDT) are still able to achieve goals deemed important by staff for development as well as experience subjective well-being or, in some cases, well-becoming. The

added evidence from exploring these various individual youth pathways can deepen our understanding of the nexus between culture/context and the individual, as well as the flexibility in experience that is inherent to such cultural activities.

Theoretical Background

In order to analyze a change in outcomes such as well-being due to participation in after-school programs, I consider individual experience to be constituted by the mind and body, both unconscious and conscious processes, and interactions with dynamic environments similar to Anderson's (2003) description of "embodied cognition." A phenomenological encounter with the ecocultural environment is colored by an individual's cognitive and embodied predispositions.

For my purposes, results from an interaction can impact individuals in two ways: physiologically and a cognitive understanding. Stimuli are corporally experienced through the activation of physiological responses including EDA. However, responses such as EDA are, to a certain extent, neutral in valence – the same kind of physical response is elicited no matter the stimuli or subjective interpretations. Secondly, cognitive processes put forth through individual effort result in a conscious understanding regarding the interaction, including the conscious experience of emotions like the perception that "I am happy."

Our psychophysiology is an important output of processual participation. Emotions, both positive and negative, and other psychological experiences activate our sympathetic nervous system that in turn stimulates levels of physiological arousal. EDA measures levels of skin conductance resulting from the activation of the sympathetic nervous system (Dawson, Schell, and Filion 2017; Garbarino et al. 2014; Sapolsky 2004). Measures of EDA can indicate when participation was emotionally charged, and, in conjunction with ethnographic observations and interviews, can elaborate on subjective meaning-making during a given event or activity. EDA

provides a window into the embodied impact of the individual encountering context by representing the constant communication between individual cognition and environmental stimuli, which mutually inform the measurable output from EDA.

Depending on subjective experiences and emotions, in addition to the salience and repetitiveness of certain types of encounters, engaged participation produces certain outcomes including well-being (Weisner 2014), EDA outputs, subjective experiences, developmental changes in habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), and schemas (Strauss 1992). After-school programs, by introducing potentially novel ecocultural contexts and activities, can impact individual trajectories toward development and well-being. However, it is very unlikely that the same result will occur for each person. As Garro (2007, 67) writes, "We enter the world as active, embodied, meaning-seeking, and meaning-generating agents whose further development is contingent on ongoing engagement in physically, culturally and socially rich worlds." Individuals will traverse their own pathways shaped by their active, narrative sense-making of unique experience in relation to the context.

Individual Experience

Individuals are shaped by dynamic processes incorporating their own biology, past experiences, and the ecocultural environments in which they have participated. In Bourdieu's (2010) terms, embodiment becomes manifested in habitus, a set of predispositions shaped by past experiences that impact an individual's perceptions of the world in the present and can influence social structures they are in - a process which Downey (2014) sees as inextricably tied to biological and cognitive processes. Habitus combines body and mind by describing it as both "the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field" and "a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 127).

While habitus is durable, it is not unchangeable given that it is a product of an individual's history. This allows older established predispositions, such as those acquired in the family, to influence future encountered structures, such as school, where the interaction between earlier family predispositions and school can transform one's habitus. The changeability of the habitus suggests that interactions in novel situations can alter the individual.

Parallel to habitus, schemas emphasize individuals' cognitive representations of environmental regularities which are activated by the experiences an individual has (D'Andrade 1995). Schemas can become shared among individuals – cultural schemas – reflecting a common understanding, which D'Andrade argued, can occur in routine structured environments through a gradual process. Similarly to habitus, schemas "are flexible interpretive states that reflect a mixture of past experience and present circumstance" (Norman 1987, 536).

Each individual's unique history shapes his or her predispositions – both embodied and cognitive. These histories impact their subjective meaning-making of "what is at stake" (Kleinman 1997) for individuals in a given context or activity they enter into, impacting their experiences and possible outcomes. This paper takes into account individual experience from multiple perspectives by utilizing the links between cognition, behavior and biology rather than separating them into distinctive features; a disembodied approach does not fully appreciate how experiences are (or are not) incorporated into our higher-level individual or shared schemas and habitus.

Individual Youth in the Ecocultural Environment

A framework based on top-down imprinting of cultural knowledge is unrealistic and ignores the individual's active role in the socialization process (Weisner 2009). Hirschfield (2002) made the argument that in studying children, it is possible to examine the continuity of

culture over time, but more importantly its fluidity and transformation. Youth are part of a feedback loop in which the ecocultural environment becomes absorbed by youth in bodily and cognitive ways, even while the individual informs the environment. In his work with Samoan infants, Odden (2009, 175) argued that developmental processes rest upon a "reciprocal adaptation of the child and their developmental niche and their individual characteristics," and there is an important interplay with "physiologically based patterns of reactivity and self-regulation." Carol Worthman (2010) further added "bio" back into the niche or ecocultural environment concepts, highlighting the child's biological body and developmental processes as important to document in relation to ongoing experiences. Her view exemplifies the important role physiology and biology play in shaping youth's experiences as they develop skills/ capacities and become part of a developmental "microniche."

All this is to say that youth as individuals *create* rather than duplicate culture through their own learning, abilities and mediation. Weisner (1998, 71) argued that "the capacity for cultural participation builds on what individual children bring to their learning and participation," meaning that the cultural pathways are actively created between the routine activities provided by the community, and the specific youth's mind/mental states, past experience and body. Understanding what occurs within the "black box" set of processes by which culture impacts youth outcomes, in this case well-being, must also include the ways in which the youth actively acquire or resist cultural knowledge and participation.

Youth in After-School Programs

In many societies, youth inhabit various microsystems that are described as face-to-face settings with distinctive "pattern[s] of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations" (Bronfenbrenner 2005, 148) – rather than following one monolithic culture or ecocultural

context. After-school programs (ASPs) are one microsystem in which many youth spend their time, participate and find meaning in their lives. Referred to as "third environments" (Heath 2001) after school and the home, they are generally considered a positive and beneficial space for youth by promoting academic success and positive social development (Eccles et al. 2003; Heath 2001; Heath and McLaughlin 1994; Larson and Verma 1999). However, assumptions of ASPs as positive are not universally true as these programs vary substantially. In addition, each youth will have their own experience; the assumption also may be broken on the individual level.

According to ecocultural theory, it is through an individual's participation cultural activities – such as are present in ASPs. Not only does sustained and engaged participation result in development; it can also produce well-being as part of the same process: "Well-being is the engaged participation in the activities that are deemed desirable and valued in a cultural community, and the psychological experiences that are produced by such engagement" (Weisner 2014). Well-being is situated within a specific social setting and suite of activities that make up that daily routine, and it incorporates both ecological and cultural factors.

Activity settings – the contextual circumstances surrounding any activity in which a youth may engage – shape trajectories of well-being. An activity is shaped by the people in the setting, the resources needed and their availability, and the cultural scripts, beliefs, and goals represented by the activity (Gallimore, Goldenberg, and Weisner 1993). Understanding the individual student's engagement in these activities is important for understanding schema formation. A student's past experiences are highly variable and so their already-formed predispositions will differentially influence their reception of new activities, such as those encountered in GDT's after-school program.

The staff and teaching artists at GDT become part of youth trajectories and possible outcomes by introducing their own versions of cultural activities that exemplify what they think is important for youth and children. Through the weekly repetition of activities deemed valuable within the cultural community of the theater, participation becomes patterned and normative. The question then remains how well these activities engage youth and shape their contextualized well-being and personal experiences. That is, how does the individual (with their embodied, cognitive resources) traverse, in situ, the pathways that are afforded to him/her and how does that play a role in engagement at the program?

Site

GDT is a small black-box theater in urban California that is nestled in a now rapidly gentrifying Latino neighborhood. It has a large door that remains open whenever staff are present and welcomes anyone in for a drink of water or coffee in the brightly colored lobby littered with tables and chairs.

The program serves a predominantly Latino and low-income population and provides their programming free of cost. While playful and fun, the staff maintained that the program is an important commitment for the youth by using language such as "thanks for showing up for *work*, baby (emphasis added)," (Addie, the youth's primary teaching artist, to a girl who had a cold but still showed up) and "I *need* you to be here for the rest of the weeks" (Dana, a staff member, to a student saying they couldn't come that day). These kinds of interactions served to build an environment in which youth are being held accountable to commitments, albeit with a feeling of "family" and warm relationships.

GDT's program was an opportune space to study after-school experiences for several reasons. First, it was off-campus and therefore entirely separate from the school context,

increasing its differentiation from formal schooling. Students have classes and performances on the same black box theater stage as the professional actors do. Second, the program has a relatively high retention rate of students from one year to another, suggesting that students are experiencing some kind of satisfaction and/or meaningful engagement from attending, or at least continuity of exposure.

On a typical day, youth joined Addie and sometimes Violet (secondary assistant teacher) in class after spending time in the welcoming lobby eating snacks and "chilling." Classes, which took place on the actual stage consisted of a set of warm-up activities that led into preparatory work for a short performance. Performances were always a mix of planning and improvisation emphasizing the need to be invested and committed to the scene in order to react in character properly. Classes usually ended with a brief circling up on stage for a short discussion before students could spend time in the lobby again before walking home or being picked up by their parents.

Methods and Analysis

In order to capture youth experiences at GDT, I conducted participant observation of individual and group activities, one-on-one conversational Ecocultural Family Interviews with 16 youth aged 14-17, semi-structured interviews with staff, and finally EDA-enabled physiological measurements which provided measures of individual reactivity during program events.

As a participant-observer, I took on many roles, but found a balance between talking with staff and students and observing activities, versus participating in program activities. By the second half of the school year, it became routine for me to slip in and out of the group depending on student numbers, what the activity entailed, and my own need to jot down notes. This was

accompanied by an air of familiarity in which everyone became accustomed to my presence and the various research activities. I was an in-between figure. It was clear that I had some rights that they did not – for example I was never forcefully penalized by staff for chatting instead of cleaning up – but the youth also spoke to me more frequently and about more mundane subjects in their lives than they did with staff.

While I conducted participant observations with all age groups, I limited my in-depth conversations, interviews and EDA measures to the students ages 14 and up for a few reasons. First, I hoped to capture the perspectives of students who had attended the program for several years. Second, I wanted to ensure the time and space for in-depth conversations, and teenagers typically were less limited by their parents' schedule and had more time to spare after the program. I interviewed all except four of the attending youth (N=16) utilizing an ecocultural family interview (EFI) format (Weisner 2002) to focus on routine activities. One youth chose not to participate, two dropped out of the program for unknown reasons and could not be reached, and one had scheduling conflicts. In total, I interviewed twelve teenage girls and four teenage boys, roughly mirroring the higher proportion of girls attending the program. Ten of these youth had attended the program for more than one year.

Each participant was asked to wear an Empatica E4 wristband (E4) during one day of programming while I filmed them interacting with the rest of the group in order to capture ongoing context. The E4, comparable to a Fitbit®, is a research-grade device that records physiological measures including EDA. Quick changes to a discrete stimulus are often referred to as phasic skin responses. The overall trends and patterns are referred to as tonic levels (Fowles 2008).

However, in addition to changes resulting from physical stimuli, the device is also sensitive enough to capture increased reactivity due to psychological stimuli such as positive or negative emotions, stress, concentrated engagement or focus (Coenen, Coorevits, and Lievens 2015; Müller and Fritz 2015). These different factors that can influence EDA make it difficult to interpret any particular reaction without real-time observations or subjective commentary to contextualize the data. Reviewing individual EDA data in relation to ongoing activities that I observed enabled me to assess moments of high/low and volatile/stable periods of reactivity and provided cues as to how the youth in question was experiencing events during a given activity.

In addition, I sat down with each youth immediately following his or her EDA session, during which time we reviewed the EDA data and the simultaneously recorded video together. Youths were able to describe their subjective experience in relation to their physiological data. This is a type of participatory visual research to strengthen 'emic' perspectives (Pauwels 2015), and it turned out to be a powerful analytical tool. Youth whom I had prompted about EDA's potential to capture both their emotion and physical activity tended to elaborate on their experiences without much further probing, though it must be noted that this was not the case for everyone. Individual debriefing sessions lasted between 10 and 30 minutes, depending on the data and time constraints. Eight female and two male teenagers completed both the EDA session and subsequent debrief session.

Combining the E4, debrief, interview and observational data creates a CSP Timeline - a visual depiction that is informed by the theoretical background described above. The CSP Timeline incorporates contextual factors (C), subjective interpretations of activities and experiences (S), and physiological reactivity over time (P) (see Figure 4.2 for an example). These timelines are a way to see youth pathways with an emphasis on not only the group, the

theater's normative intentions for its activities, and individual behaviors, but also the discrete physiological responsiveness of individual youth. EDA provides an additional avenue to deepen understanding of how an individual youth was reacting to and engaging with the program environment. Using Inqscribe (version 2.2.3.258) and Matlab (version R2015a) software, accurate time stamps were taken to superimpose data from these different sources. EDA was broken down into activities and marked with particular events that occurred (see Figure 4.2).

Comparing EDA between participants is extremely difficult; biological differences, hydration levels and other factors impact specific EDA outputs and possible ranges (i.e., maximum and minimum levels). Nevertheless, examining EDA within one individual's session allows us to understand how impactful an activity was under the conditions for that day (e.g., hydration levels, general disposition, energy levels). For these reasons, EDA is analyzed only within a single individual session.

To consider the impact of an activity on an individual's EDA, the minimum and maximum values in EDA during a given time period are compared to the total range of values for that individual's session, coded as a percentage. Having a specific activity or event that, by itself, encapsulates a significant range of EDA as compared to the individual's entire range for that session indicates that something of potential significance has occurred. This article focuses mainly on increases in EDA that indicate an activation of reactivity for an individual. Calculating percentages based on the range of one EDA session avoids the need to quantify baselines or differences between individuals. My own preliminary fieldwork using EDA showed that ongoing activities can be aligned with EDA and cue researchers into intricacies of processual engagement beyond what ethnographic observations alone may reveal.

Students generally fall into "high engagement" or "low engagement" categories at programs and will be used for EDA presentation. For my purposes, high engagement is representative of the "ideal" students who are most aligned with the norms and values of the theater and actively participate. Low engagement students are those that seem disengaged or prone to disliking the activity in question. These categories are only loosely defined by teaching staff and inferred from observations, but they provide useful means to examine a possible spectrum of pathways. Surprisingly, many youth who do not display the ideal model continue to attend GDT on a weekly and yearly basis[3], possibly indicating some positive experiences and engagement despite outward appearances. Of course, experience pathways (participation in activities and degree of engagement) vary beyond two binary categorical experiences; they should be seen as existing on a continuum. Using the distinct categories to present cases ensures the representation of engagement that spans the continuum.

The analysis is grounded in a "process oriented" (Garro 2003, 2007) approach by recognizing that experience is a "socially situated experientially-based process"; the interaction between an individual's history and "socially and structurally grounded processes" is how "individuals learn about, orient towards and traffic in interpretive plausibilities," (Garro 2003, 7). The analysis focuses on individual youth's embodied and cognitive activities during a routine day at GDT that are produced by the individual's past and the present circumstances.

I am adding *in situ* physiology and related debrief sessions to elaborate on subjective experiences to help validate and deepen findings (Greene 2005). Using five data sources – observations, interviews, EDA, debrief sessions, and my own interpretations – provides a more

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[3] The year following my research in '15-'16, 67% of the youth returned (not counting those that had graduated or dropped out early in the year). However, only 2 of the 18 students in the '16-'17 school year were entirely new to the program. In the '17-'18 every single youth returned except those that graduated.

coherent and detailed story to be uncovered regarding any particular youth's experience. EDA and debrief sessions can help reject, clarify, or support certain conclusions based on observations or interviews alone, even while these can help inform interpretations of EDA. Discrepancies are just as important as consistent findings across the methods because they help us to ask more questions and dig further into the phenomenon we observe. Because of each unique experience, the data weave together differently for each individual depending on the situation, youth comments, and EDA data.

Traversing Routine Activities: Differing Pathways

This article focuses on two recurring activities to examine different pathways: performing and the gospel circle. Performing is an important activity to analyze because it is the quintessential theater activity. The gospel circle, on the other hand, is a more unique component of this program that is not necessarily part of other programs. While these activities varied in content by day, their basic format and structure was routine, thereby playing a large role in shaping overall participation.

Each activity will be described based on general observations, teacher interviews, and an ethnographic example to discuss what the activity setting is and what it entails, including information regarding the teaching artists' intent. These descriptions will be followed by a discussion of two individuals' experiences that represent high and low engaged youth. After a brief description of the two exemplar youth, their experiences will be analyzed using EDA data which are further elaborated on using debrief comments from the youth, youth interviews, and interpretations from my ethnographic observations. The case examples were selected based on the youths' embodiment of low or high engagement in general based on observations and teacher commentary. Normative participation in the theater program might suggest that the high

engagement group (based on overt participation) might show more positive experience and well-being, yet the data from these multiple levels of analysis demonstrate that both high and lower engagement youth show important kinds of engagement in the program in diverse ways.

Performing

Performing comprises many of the program goals and intentions set by staff and teaching artists. The staff maintained an "actor script" for expected behaviors that includes: using a loud voice, connecting with others on stage, engaging the emotions of the character (empathy), and maintaining focus. All of these were considered helpful for improving other important skills including "having a voice," a sense of courage/confidence, relating well to others, and commitment. The youths' performances were usually a combination of pre-planning and improvisation.

The following vignette is taken from my field notes on a day during which the performances were exceptionally focused and well done in order to highlight how powerful the activity can potentially be, though of course this was not always the case. The scene in the following example was centered on a realistic portrayal of not recognizing a family member because of some behavioral change or something they did.

> Aitana (15) and Leo (16) do their scene. Aitana, the mom, has bailed her son out of prison for shooting someone. They are in the car and Aitana is stoically silent, almost crying. She finally stops the car and gets out saying "Can you drive yourself home. I just can't do this right now." Aitana, except for almost breaking once, does a great job and Leo is being sucked into the focus of the scene. His continuous arguments and questioning of his mom "mom, just talk to me. Would you rather have me be dead? Mom say something!" was great. Aitana even makes a blinker sound and pantomimes it with such conviction that the audience is invited into sharing the imaginative car onstage. After finishing, Leo, who is still sitting in

his "car," lets out a sigh, as if he's been holding his breath throughout the whole scene – like this was hard and he needed to let go of it after that scene.

Both Addie and Violet [the GDT teachers] love the scene work that day. Violet comments that today's collectivity in the scene work was underscored by the trust developing within the group. And Addie ends the day with a final comment: "really great work today – this is the kind of thing that makes it a pleasure to work with you! Really great work.

There was a feel of synergy and focus in the room, and the investment from the actors was clear when Leo let out a deep breath after the scene or by considering that many students that day were able to stay in character through hard parts of the scenes. The impact was felt even for those students, such as Aitana, who often had low engagement. And while everyone did well that day, performing was neither an easy, nor necessarily preferred, activity in which to partake for many students. Given the prominence of this activity, and the youth's continued engagement at the program, their personal experiences should illuminate more about the process of how the cultural activity of performing becomes part of their own meaningful routine.

High Engagement: Belle (15) was highly engaged, loving the community and activities. One of the reasons she loved GDT was because she got to really be herself in the space and loved performing – even solo performances: "I like it [performing] more when I'm by myself then when I'm with a group. But that's just because I like [the] spotlight."

Figure 4.1 shows her EDA for a group performance from the time that she got called onstage to when she sat down. Just getting called on stage produced a certain amount of reactivity from her and watching her walk on stage, she showed signs of being nervous: rubbing her hands and taking some deep breaths. But she clearly calmed down until she actually started performing. In this absurdist scene, Belle – who had been ignored by her fictional family –

sought to get their attention by pretending to split herself in two. Right before she split herself,

Belle let out a long and loud scream on stage, which resulted in a large EDA jump for her.

From just before to right after the scream Belle's EDA ranged from 5.02 to 8.18,

representing 37.40% of her total EDA range (.48-8.90 µS) during the session. Her entire

performance represents 43.10% of her total range that day. The fact that a single short activity

shows such a significant change in EDA suggests that this was an impactful period of time for

Belle on this day.
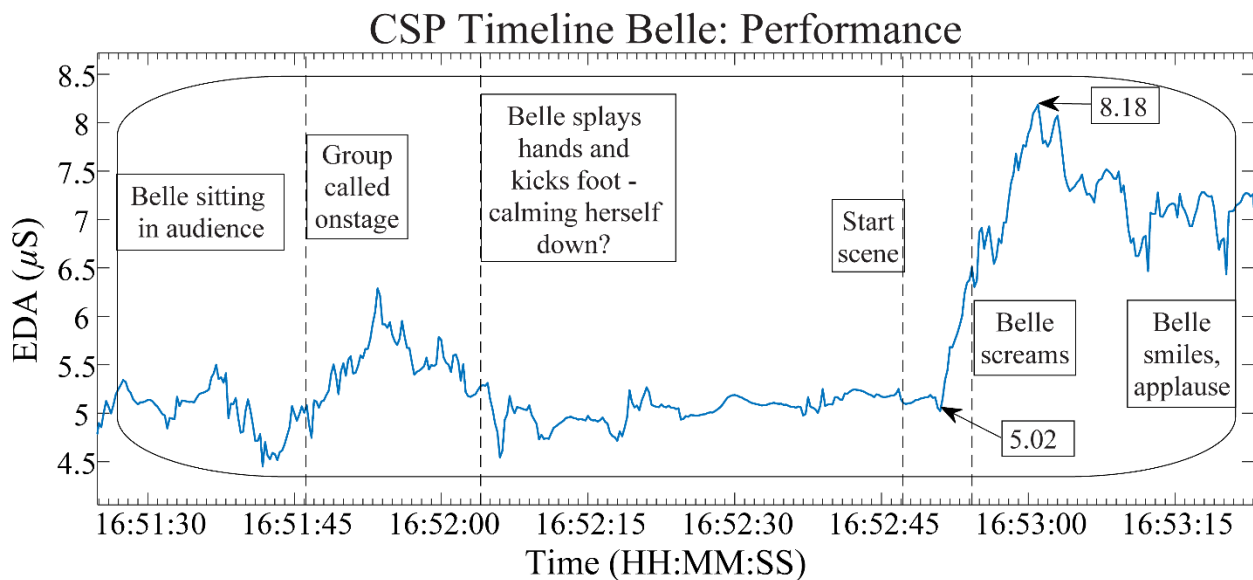
Figure 4.1: Depiction of Belle's EDA during the performance activity only. The x-axis is time passing and the y-axis is in micro-Siemens which are units for electrical conductivity.

Belle commented on her EDA: "I don't know. I think I needed that. This week has been

like- I don't know. I feel like it was moving way too slow and there's so many things to do…

and then I screamed and was like 'Ah ((exhaling loudly))' Like, 'Ye::::s!'" In part, being her

character allowed her to feel a sense of relief, reflecting commentary she had previously made

regarding theater as a way to get away from "out there" or normal life even while it elicited

reactivity in her. Relief is not the only salient experience reflected in Belle's EDA. During her

EDA debrief, Belle also explained:

> I really love everything I do on stage… I feel like whenever I get um, kind of
> applauded for what I did, I just- I have like my own little 'yeah, that's right. yeah!'
> I- I feel like Beyoncé! You know in her music videos, Beyoncé's like all- her
> contouring's fine and her make-up's like so good and she's in a cute outfit and the
> fan is just like 'fffffff ((she shakes her head with her hand mimicking a fan in front
> of her))!' That's what I feel like whenever somebody's like 'yes you did it!'

Belle displayed the skills expected by Addie – being loud, staying in the moment and

interacting successfully with her fellow performers and her own character – and she reaped the

rewards of the effort. A critical component was having her performances socially validated

within the theater. Her phasic response during this performance at 8.18 (see Figure 4.1) was

extremely close to her highest EDA of 8.92. Examining the EDA in addition to her statement of

liking the spotlight allows us to go beyond the assumptions of "stage fright" and "feelings of

success" that could be observer interpretations typical to theater, to understand the importance of

social validation to that process and possible releases of real world tensions in critical parts of

her performances.

Other students echoed enjoying being on stage. For example, Roxas (17) and Leo liked

using the stage and their scenes as a way to get others to laugh. For them laughter, rather than

applause, was the important measure of their success on stage, but they both see this as being a

positive part of attending GDT. Performing, then, was an important part of Belle and others'

experience at the theater and is a meaningful routine activity for her which is integrated into the

community at the theater.

Low Engagement: In this example, EDA data are able to expose a discrepancy between observation and interview data, so as to reveal more about mediating factors and alternate pathways through performance activities. Unlike Belle, a good number of the students did not like being on stage. Lisa (15) was the most extreme in this category and in general came across as having low engagement. Addie called this a "bullshit persona" and described how hard it is to get Lisa to participate properly which "is hard to deal with." As Lisa described herself:

> Generally, I don't really enjoy the spotlight on me. Like on myself. Where I have most of the attention on me. I like more- to work, like, behind the scenes or not very noticeable. I kinda find myself not really artistic or creative so I kinda feel a little bit not, you know, out of the circle, but… I like being a bystander.

Lisa was not the only one who did not enjoy being onstage. As Elena (14), for example, stated "I get nervous sometimes, 'cuz I don't really know what to say, 'cuz I'm not good at talking, you know- at saying something back [to acting partners]. And then, yeah. Get nervous. And like, I ask people who are in the scenes 'what should I say, what should I do?'" While Lisa overtly states not likin the spotlight, for Elena this manifests as a feeling of not knowing what to do.

I expected performing to be reflected in Lisa's EDA with high reactivity due to negative emotions, stress, or being nervous. However, her EDA data and her subjective description of what was occurring tell a more nuanced experience, elaborating on what interviews and observations would have described alone. Figure 4.2 shows her full EDA session during an entire day at the program. To fully understand her performance experience, seeing the entire session is useful. The dotted sphere shows where I would have expected her performance to be.

Rather, while the performance is reflected by a local increase in EDA, it is incredibly low in comparison to the rest of her session. Lisa's performance had an EDA range of only .76 representing 15.82% of her total range as compared to Belle's 43.10% indicating her performance had less impact on her EDA then Belle's did for her.
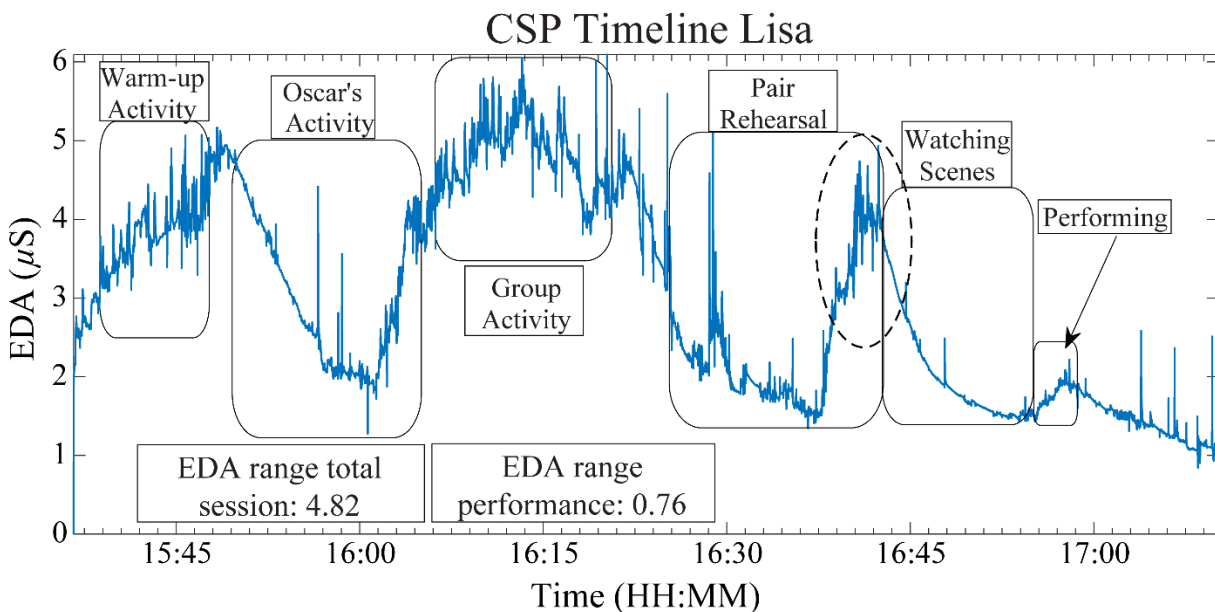
Figure 4.2: Depiction of Lisa's CSP Timeline during a full afternoon at GDT.

Most notable is that a relatively low stakes group activity, which required similar amounts of movement to her performance, was the highest point during her entire session with a relatively high phasic response at 6.03 μS, (though this is only mentioned here to put her performance into perspective). Upon viewing her EDA and the video of performance, Lisa gave the following commentary:

Lisa: Yeah. I'm not too sure actually [why the EDA is low]. Like, sometimes I just do things without thinking too much about it. Like, when…I have a partner to do with, so then I don't have to do all the work, so then I- I don't really think too hard about it nor do I feel too much about it. So I think- that's the main reason.

Scarlett: Did you feel when you were up there with Aitana that you didn't have to think about it as much?

Lisa:	Yeah. I didn't have to think about it much. Because Aitana is a very, like naturally loud, bold person. So, I'm not really like that. So, I think I just had to give her the work to do.
Scarlett:	Interesting you were just giving her the work.
Lisa:	Yeah.
Scarlett:	Ok. You were pretty loud during that scene
Lisa:	Oh, yeah I was.
Scarlett:	It's some of loudest I've heard from you. So I was just wondering if you-
Lisa:	I think Aitana's energy kinda rubbed off on me? Like, I kinda feel, like, I feel bad if I make her do all the work and I didn't do anything.

For Lisa and other youth like her, having others with them was an incredibly important component to performance activities they were asked to do at GDT. These relationships mediated their pathway through challenges that they did not particularly enjoy. Lisa's perception of Aitana as a strong performer allowed her to psychologically step out of the spotlight even while she was in it.

Despite the lower EDA impact of the performance, what resulted was a fairly strong performance on Lisa's part – she was audible and portrayed some of the emotions quite successfully in what turned out to be a pretty heavy scene between family members. While Lisa did not mention it herself, the video then showed her slightly smiling at Aitana while Violet clapped enthusiastically saying "did you see the arc?! That arc [in emotions]?!"

The EDA data contradicted the predictions based on observations and Lisa's interview alone, expanding on what is important in the program and how performing can be experienced for someone who "hates the spotlight." In this case, having strong relationships at the program allowed Lisa to successfully participate in one of the most important activities at the program and experience the resulting praise and applause from her teachers and peers. Social support has been suggested as a correlate with positive impacts on physiological processes such as shielding individuals from stress (Uchino, Cacioppo, and Kiecolt-Glaser 1996), which can be seen as

occurring with Lisa. In addition, similar to what Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois (2011) found across three different community ASPs, positive relationships can lead to successful participation in programming for youth. In this case, it was not teacher relationships, but rather the peers' social ties with each other that affected the experience and engagement.

The data show that they were both able to be engaged in those activities deemed important by the GDT community. Performance activities, which were emphasized by the program as critical, have positive effects on each girl but in different ways. The effects were mediated by personal relationships and physiological responses, which demonstrates variability and flexibility in activity participation. Despite one girl being seen by others as generally highly engaged and the other less engaged, both were on different pathways towards well-being.

Gospel Circle

The gospel circle was another important normative activity at GDT that the program believed would increase a sense of engagement and well-being for youth. It was a time during which each youth was asked to share a bit of good news about their week in order to foster positive emotional development. Addie and the youth gathered center stage in a circle to share their "gospel" news. Addie described that for her "it's important. These guys have so many bad things going on in their lives and they get hung up on the negative teenage life. They need it – they need to think about the good things, no matter how small."

Addie also described it as a time to establish a comfortable zone so there was a structure for the youth to feel good in and "then what are we gonna do?! Then we're gonna push you off the ledge, you know?" For Addie, the gospel circle represented the community coming together before doing the challenging and scary components of the class – those things that she described as requiring courage, such as acting and performance.

Despite the routine, expectable nature of this activity, as well as the staff leader Addie's adamant support of it, it was frequently a point of contention for some of the youth. Addie often had to practically pull gospel from many of the students. The following dialogue was not unusual during the gospel circle:

Addie:	Alright next! Give me some gospel, come on! ((motions toward Leo and claps her hands))
Leo:	u:::h ((scratches his head))
Addie:	how hard can it be?! ((throws her hands up)) God, your lives are filled with so much joy and thi:::ngs!
Belle:	No, we have school
Addie:	School is one of those things! You know we probably need to do a video of people who, uh, don't have educations and how desperate they are. Ok Leo, go!
Leo:	um::. I don't know, um.
Addie:	all eyes are on you. Something. Small or big that you can celebrate in your life. A movie, a phone call, a sweet word, a doughnut.
Leo:	... I can't think of anything.

The experience of the circle was quite varied for the students and far from negative for some. EDA data across participants show that the gospel circle was never a high point for youth during their sessions, but interviews, EDA and commentaries reveal that for some, it piqued interest and a sense of belonging.

Figure 4.3: Youth and Addie circling up on stage for their gospel circle.

High Engagement: Beatriz (15), who was in her first year at GDT, was one of the more openly invested students in the program. She continually expressed loving the program and

enjoying everything she got to do, staying highly engaged throughout all activities. Even the gospel circle was an important activity to her, and her debrief in relation to the EDA is able to elaborate on what about the gospel circle was important to her.

Figure 4.4 shows her EDA during the gospel circle activity. Although it was not her high point during the session, her reactivity steadily rose during that period from 0.45 to 4.75 μS and captured 49.93% of her total range in EDA, representing that she was somehow impacted by the activity and for that day it was a notable part of her experience. Importantly, the EDA rose even before she got to share her own gospel and was at its highest when the group talked and joked about Mickey's (17) gospel, indicating that listening to peers was an important component of the activity. The positive experience of the gospel circle was not exclusively about her sharing her own story – though that did produce a momentary EDA response as well.
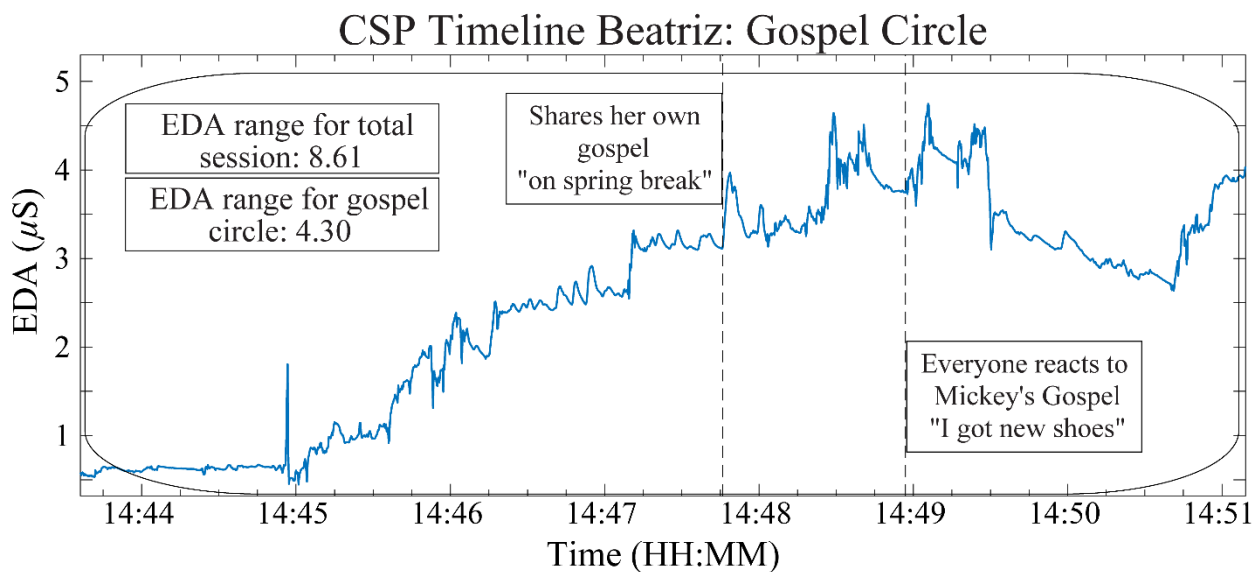
Figure 4.4: Depiction of Beatriz's EDA during the gospel circle.

As we viewed the video of the gospel circle and reflected on her EDA, Beatriz commented that "I feel like we all were really listening well, too, like- and caring what happened to each other throughout the day. I mean, I shared my part and everybody appreciated it. So I like

when we do those, because it shows that we care about each other." For Beatriz, hearing about others' gospel and in turn sharing her own quite literally fostered a sense of community and caring and the EDA data show the impact that "caring for others" had on her. Other's also enjoyed the gospel circle. For example, Juliana (14) stated "it's fun hearing about other people, and also sharing. I don't know, it's fun. 'Cuz then you learn more about the person. 'Cuz, usually in class we talk more about the scene, but then there you get to learn what other people do outside." Juliana further commented on her session that "it [EDA reactivity] was probably because we were sharing [gospel]. 'Cuz Addie makes it funny. Addie saying something funny. That's probably why." Similarly, Beatriz's timeline indicating reactivity to the joking going on around Mickey sharing gospel. For both Beatriz and Juliana, sharing gospel resulted in having fun as well as making connections with the group.

In this way some students actively engage in the gospel circle in a manner in which Addie would like them to, though they did not often acknowledge any benefits from thinking about positive things in their lives. They were, however, creating bonds with their peers, actively engaging in the process of community building and find the process enjoyable. This process was partially facilitated by Addie's energy and commitment to keeping the conversation going.

Low Engagement: Despite her above described performance, Aitana is typical of those students who were not whole-heartedly engaged in the program, which was also reflected in her frequent tardiness. Aitana described feeling a sense of obligation or forced commitment to the program, rather than an emphasis on positivity or enjoyment itself. It can also be said about her attitude towards the gospel circle.

Despite her general disposition, Aitana's EDA data indicated that she was reacting during the activity, as levels rose from after an initial calm period towards the beginning of Figure 4.5.

The gospel circle encapsulates 33.76% of her total range in EDA, which to the observer indicates that for her on that day there was a good amount of possible engagement. She even showed some phasic responses when she shared her news – all promising indications that the gospel circle was somehow impacting her.
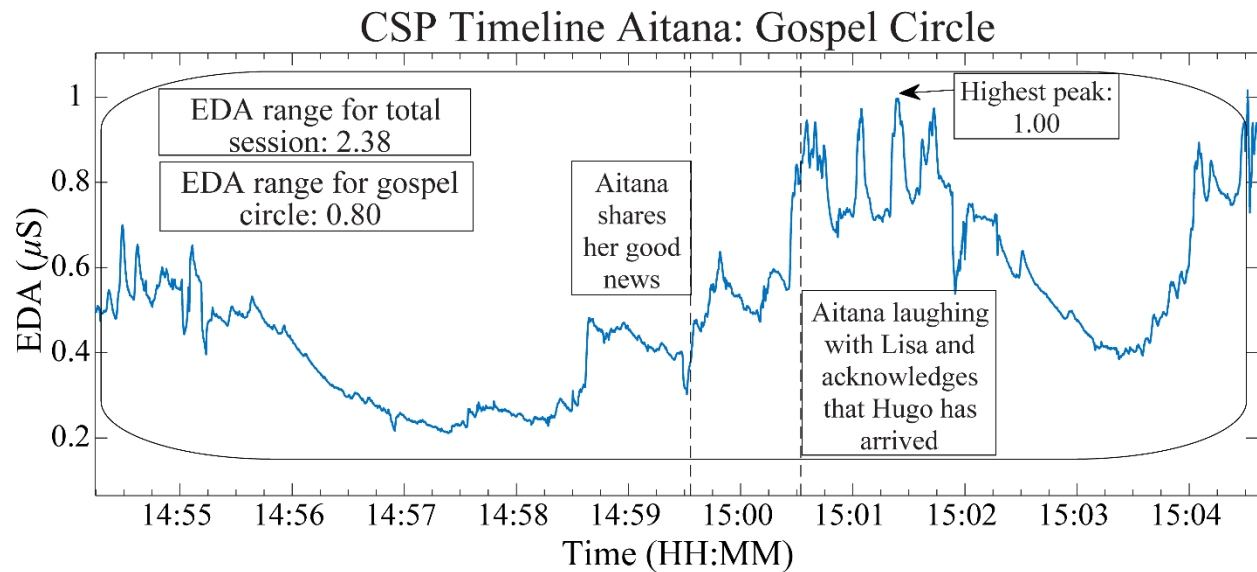
Figure 4.5: Depiction of Aitana's EDA during the gospel circle.

However, Aitana's debrief implies that in her own interpretation of the activity, most of her reactivity was not due to the actual gospel. Aitana described that sharing her news was a mixed event on the day she wore the E4: "I thought today I was actually going to say my real gospel. Like I always hold back so I was like- 'I'm gonna do it.' And I didn't do it. I chickened out. Like, I was going to and then I didn't." Aitana did not generally share her personal good news, leaving that part of her life outside of GDT. Here, the debrief data strongly inform the interpretation of EDA.

In fact, Aitana mentioned not really liking to focus on things outside of the theater:

Like, right now we focus on so much on this like praise. Like this good thing- and I get it like, she's trying to- we're trying to encourage us to appreciate life and

appreciate these positive things. But I just want to get it on and forget about there [outside].

Aitana's comments elaborated the point that other students also reiterated: when they came to GDT, they liked being able to <u>ignore</u> the outside world while Addie was trying to actively bridge the two. In other words, it put them in a space of disengagement from Addie's expectations. Aitana's experience is similar to other students who also expressed discomfort because "I don't really like it. Its 'cuz- like, I guess nothing really, like, for me interesting happens," (Malena, 15). There is a sense from some that the outside world does not have a lot of "interesting" or positive value and they'd rather focus on the inside of the theater.

Aitana had little more to say, but I reviewed the video with her to help elaborate on her experience. It turned out that her attention was being pulled from the whole group to her close friends Lisa and Hugo, who formed a small group conversation during which they laugh, unassociated with the bigger circle. In this way, the video data are critical for a full understanding of what was occurring, pointing to the impact her peer relationships were having.

In some ways, the gospel circle activity was failing to fully engage Aitana and presumably other youth as well. In contrast, Lisa's indirect navigation of performing still allowed her to do what was expected of her, Aitana was dissociating from Addie's expectations by not sharing her real gospel and not listening to the rest of the group.

While the EDA data point to complete disengagement, further observations and her interviews help place this analysis in a broader context. Despite her dismissal of the gospel circle itself, Aitana still found the space and the people at the theater to be important. Moments like the gospel circle required closeness that still had an impact of some kind. Later, during our debrief, Aitana hesitantly suggested that, in general, she might like the program including the focus on

"positive things" a bit better than she used to despite the days lack of involvement. She attributes this to her personality "re-wiring."

> Aitana: But I think I still like [the program] now, 'cuz I- my personality has changed a little bit from how I was then.
>
> Scarlett: because of this or because you're just changing?
>
> Aitana: I think it's a combination. Of like being busy but then coming here and then my personality is like 'ok.' Like re-wiring.

Continuous exposure to the activity produced a potential change in Aitana's attitude towards gospel sharing despite her lack of engagement in it while focusing on a sub-group of friends. This was taken even further when a year later Aitana's reflection on her third year at the program referenced the gospel circle specifically and that she more recently saw value in it:

> [One thing about this program is] the importance of having a positive mind. Every time we come to this class, Addie nags us about saying one positive thing that we've gone through throughout our week, and it can be very, very challenging at times, but it teaches you that even the littlest things can have an impact.

Aitana's experience highlights issues concerning well-being (contemporaneous) and well-becoming (moving towards future desired goals) (Ben-Aryeh, Frønes, and Korbin 2014) and the nature of meaningful participation. At the time, Aitana's momentary well-being may have suffered in exchange for a "re-wiring" as she put it, of her appreciation of small positive things in her own life. As ecocultural theory expects, participation is not always voluntary or happy in the moment; instead, well-being or well-becoming later on is a possible outcome as participation through development and learning changes over time.

Addie's exasperation displayed her desire that the students be more willing to share gospel, but her steadfast continuation of the activity was able to slowly shape the students' own subjective experience of the activities. Over time, Aitana has come to view the theater as family despite her dislike of certain activities which was evident in her interview:

> No one's really blood here, but at the end- even though they annoy you and they- you know force you to do all these little things you don't want to, at the end y'all come together still. And I- it's a good feel- anyway. When you're going through it, sometimes it's like, like 'what?' You know like your confused- you don't really like it. But you see who you are at the end- it feels good. 'Cuz your like, 'you know, I like when I do this.' It's a community.

Being forced into a standing circle with her peers was one factor that facilitated this cohesiveness even if youth like Aitana used it as a time to reaffirm their friendships with specific individuals rather than the entire group. In the case of the gospel circle, Aitana felt her own personality regarding the activity shifting and she ultimately felt like she was connecting with others as a kind of family.

Discussion: The Plurality of Cultural Contexts

There are different individual pathways through which normative, standardized activities of a school or after-school program influence youth. These examples illustrate the intricacies involved in how meaningful participation in daily routine activities influence youths' well-being.

The example of performance and gospel circle highlight that students participate on a spectrum ranging from the seeming high engagement to low, and that "low" can still lead to developmental opportunities and well-being despite representing a "deviant" form when seen from the normative expectations of the program. These differences between youth do not have to run counter to the goals of the program and they underscore the influence that repetitive routines

can have on youths' lives, as was the case in the gospel circle data presented above. Although some data demonstrate that youth engagement can be extremely conscious or even aversive, with time these experiences are facilitated and arguably even incorporated into their habitus as beneficial or enjoyable.

Importantly, the program had repetitive activities that created a routine for the youth. Further, activities were to a certain extent malleable for individual preferences. "Quality" is key to after-school program success (Riggs and Greenberg 2004), and the openness for various kinds of participation at GDT may be part of the recipe. The openness may contribute to GDT's success at retaining high attendance rates from year to year because students can find their own unique pathway without serious negative repercussions. Continued attendance can help the program to have a steady influence on the youth over the course of years which allows for different processes to occur over time, as was seen in Aitana's change regarding the gospel circle.

The low engagement pathway of the spotlight being mediated for Lisa makes a compelling case for the openness of the program that allows youth to participate despite their "bullshit persona" as perceived by Addie and other staff members. Lisa was essentially able to have the spotlight taken off herself by relying on her partner and her resulting discussion of the activity centered on Aitana rather than herself. In this way the negativity – and possible associated reactivity – attached to performing was mediated for Lisa so that she was successfully able to participate in the routine activity at the program.

Aitana's initial negative assessment of the gospel circle is particularly noteworthy for the purposes of program development. In an era of outcome analysis, impacts of programs have to be quick enough to be easily documented, often within one year or even a few weeks. However,

a personal change can take time, as it took three years before Aitana actually talks about the circle as something important. This could point to an area where the program can improve – how could the gospel circle be altered to more quickly capture youth interest? However, it also indicates the way these programs can become infused into daily life over time. A shift in schematic cognition or habitus is a long rather than short-term process and can necessitate periods of higher and lower engagement over time, as the current context clashes with individual predispositions and then cycles back.

When at least some program activities are flexible, youth can maneuver their own personal way through these activities, and more individuals can experience meaningful participation. That is, even those students taking low engagement paths are accepted into the theater's community, which may produce a sense of belonging and prompt continued attendance as well as the gradual development of well-being over time.

If, for example, Addie were to reprimand and look down upon youth such as Aitana and Lisa and only praise Belle and Beatriz, students who follow a low engaged pathway would be excluded from meaningful participation at the program. Addie's malleability and support allowed for meaningful participation. The potential for validated individualized experiences at GDT, including higher and lower engagement, help to create the kind of environment that enables sustained participation.

Conclusions

Culture is not only varied in its shaping of contexts, but also in how those contexts are experienced by individuals. This fact in itself is not new, yet stronger ways to assess such individual-contextual variability are needed. Even seemingly effective and positive programs such as GDT will have varied levels of engagement and activity participation. What this article

shows is that the ability for the youth to have diversified experiences allows for participation from many different youth with varied histories and predispositions; a preferable alternative to the program's staff being more assertive about youth having to be a certain way and effectively bar some of the youth from the community.

After-school programs have varied influences in youth's lives since youth are influenced by many other circumstances, such as their own relationships in the program or even personal character traits (Nelson 2009). But the process of participation leading to this variation is seldom measured in situ or processually as presented here. In many program models and research studies, these components are obscured inside a black box in between some program inputs and measured (short-term) outcomes.

More broadly, the paper has explored some of those hidden features that are known to exist in theory, such as positive relationships, by combining traditional ethnographic methods and EDA to help understand how activities play out for individuals. These trajectories highlight the varied ways in which well-being can come to fruition beyond high engagement pathways that are the ones preferred by the normative scripts of the programs themselves. It is also a fruitful method for examining how youth are cognitively and bodily absorbing social scripts as active agents in constant feedback loops with their environments.

The demonstrated flexibility in pathways to well-being within activities at GDT echo the "organization of diversity," as presented by Raybeck (2009) based on Wallace (1970), which has been an important topic for discussion within psychological anthropology. Organization for diversity is a concept suggesting that behavioral or cognitive uniformity in a community is not replicated similarly for each person, but rather that a society or community manages such diversity across individuals.

The use of EDA methodology represents one way in which anthropology can relate individual experiences with larger questions of cultural impact. By indexing arousal and related states, the methodology uses a physiological measure that is not in participants' conscious awareness. It can then be interpreted by both the youth and the researcher, and can be subsequently used to complement other ethnographic data. In this way, we are able to visually "follow" an individual through their routine activities, confronting head on the "messiness and untidiness of social reality," (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 245), which can have great potential in future research, including studies on cultural transmission and how context and individual experiences converge.

Chapter 5

Coming Together: Co-construction as a Mechanism for Quality After-School Program

Ingredients

Introduction

> "No one's really blood here, but at the end- even though they annoy you and they,
> you know, force you do all these little things you don't want to, at the end y'all
> come together still. It's nice. It's a community." (Aitana, high school student).

Aitana's statement regarding Green Door Theater's (GDT) after-school program (ASP) is

echoed by other youth; her feeling of community reflects a positive feature for success in the

literature concerning "quality" programs that promote positive development (National Research

Council and Institute of Medicine 2002). An important part of the recipe is a sense of belonging

(Weisner 2014; Eccles and Gootman 2002), a place to call home (Barton Jay Hirsch 2005), and a

feeling of safety (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008). In Aitana's words: a community and sense of

family despite not being "blood." However, "community" should not be taken at face value, but

rather studied for its complexities (Bushnell 2001); community is produced through the

successful negotiation between individuals. In this article, I argue that successful multimodal co-

construction of activity settings is a mechanism for producing quality ASPs through its impact on

teacher-youth relationships, opportunities for belonging and learning, and integration with

youth's outside lives.

While there has been an increase in qualitative research in ASPs (Heath and McLaughlin

1994; Pearce and Larson 2006; Larson and Brown 2007; Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011),

more remains to be known about the actual processes that occur in ASP spaces. These everyday

practices too often remain hidden in a theoretical and empirical "black box," (Deutsch 2008;

Vandell et al. 2015). Contextual factors, often unexamined within the black box of program

practices, such as relationships between staff and students, become an important line of inquiry regarding participation at ASPs (Guest and McRee 2009). More descriptive literature is needed that examines ASP mechanisms associated with participation and development through theoretically based hypotheses (Eccles et al. 2003).

After-school programs have become a regular part of daily routines for many youth in the United States. Within the "third arena of learning" (Heath 2001) – in addition to school and home – ASPs are where various individuals come together and mutually constitute, contribute to, and actively create the community that thrives or crumbles. With their own regularities in environmental organization, ASPs provide a particular "developmental niche" (Super and Harkness 2002) that impact youth's developmental outcomes.

This article focuses on the two dominant points of view within Green Door Theater's (GDT) ASP's everyday circumstances: that of the teachers and that of the youth students ages 14-18. The visions, intentions, and efforts of the teachers collide with those of the youth that choose to attend – starting a negotiation between the two parties. While parents can and do play an important role in after-school attendance (Kremer-Sadlik, Izquierdo, and Fatigante 2010), they are not actively present during programing, nor did they play a frequent role in youths' choice to attend GDT.

The inclusion of both youth and teacher viewpoints is critical. (Seymour 1999, 285) Susan Rogers (Rogers 1991) use a "moving tapestry" metaphor to visualize how a whole community or culture is created by interwoven individuals who are both part of the whole yet also tug and pull individual threads, thereby actively weaving and changing the whole. The moving tapestry emphasizes that individual practice and resulting interaction is critical.

This metaphor becomes more relevant to ASPs through Rogoff's (Rogoff et al. 2011, 292) evocation of "patchwork solutions" that are part of a "dynamic process in which each generation and individual builds on prior ways available to them – accepting, rejecting, recombining… While adjusting to new circumstances, people engage in a creative and open process." An ASP's constituted space is an entity that exists outside of individuals (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003, 21) in which "conflict, tension, and diversity are intrinsic" to learning environments (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 1999, 287). GDT has its own tapestry that is constantly shifting as youth from various backgrounds enter the space, each a thread that tugs and pulls, but evokes a piecing together as individuals from a pluralistic society come together (Larson 2011).

My research suggests that staff and youth come to share many, though not all, of the same values at GDT. But the emphases they place on program components differ, which could lead to conflict or a rupture of quality programming. In order to maintain youth attendance – another critical measure of program success (Weisman and Gottfredson 2001; Lauver and Little 2005; Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008) – and functionality of the program, a balance must be struck between the participants within the ASP space.

This article will examine possible points of contention between teachers and youth based on their opinions about the program before examining how, in situ, shifting participatory frameworks can allow for a co-construction of the ASP space that successfully incorporates both youth and teacher viewpoints. I find that the activities at GDT allow for a successful negotiation and co-construction of space between the youth and teacher's foci promoting quality programming. The program illustrates active mediation between multiple individuals' points of view. Co-construction of space is demonstrated as one possible mechanism for quality ASPs to

be produced. Successful ASPs should leave room for this kind of negotiation between teachers and students.

Literature and Theory

ASPs have gained recognition for providing contexts for development in youth's lives in the United States. They have become an important part of many students' weekly routines with a wide range in their offerings. They have been shown to engage youth more than school or other after-school activities such as watching T.V. (Vandell et al. 2005), provide alternate routes to feelings of success (Murtaugh 1988), and may be particularly beneficial to at-risk youth if not seen as only remedial (Halpern 1999; Posner and Vandell 1999). While touted as a possible solution to further positive development and closing the education gap (Mahoney, Larson, and Eccles 2005), more recent research has unveiled a more nuanced picture. Positive outcomes are far from guaranteed and a "one fits all" approach to these programs does not reflect the reality of individual or group participation (Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011) nor the varying amounts of influence a program has for individuals (Nelson 2009). The absence of positive development in an ASP does not necessarily only imply a lack of gains, but might also produce negative outcomes such as, for example, increased problematic behaviors due to peer influences (Eccles et al. 2003) or conflicting expectations from adult interactions (Chen and Harklau 2017). This means that attention must be paid to "quality" and what mechanisms are at play, not only whether or not a student is simply attending.

One commonly reported component of quality ASPs are youth-adult connections and relationships (Lauver and Little 2005) and how these play out during daily activities. Relationships are only one of many components of quality ASPs which include: physical and psychological safety, effective management, supervision and structure, well-prepared staff,

intentional programming with autonomy and choice and strong partnership with other settings (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008). In addition, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine released an executive report that highlights the need for supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, and skill building in order to promote positive development (Eccles and Gootman 2002). Guest and McRee (2009) argue contextual factors such as relationships matter more than the actual activity (i.e., sports, music, or scholastic achievement). Since there is a wide diversity amongst youth that attend, a program must be flexible enough to adapt and work with many of the youth (Eccles and Gootman 2002) allowing for some tug and pull on the cultural tapestry. The ability for teachers and youth to give and take, or co-construct, is a mechanism for producing some of the components of quality programs. This article places particular emphasis on youth-teacher relationships, opportunities for belonging and skill building, and the integration with youth outside lives.

For all these reasons, methods and conceptual frameworks for understanding the context and unfolding interactions of participation is a critical component of understanding ASP success or failure. A useful framework for understanding these interactions and activities/practices of ASPs in context is the developmental niche, and ecocultural theory more broadly (Super and Harkness 2002; Weisner 2002; Worthman 2010). Ecocultural theory emphasizes that skill and social development, and well-being – both desired outcomes of ASPs – occur when an individual experiences engaged participation in activities deemed important by a meaningful community (Weisner 2002). The key component here is *activities* which become the unit of analysis as the mediator between individuals and the cultural community to the extent that activities mirror the norms, values and practices that are considered to benefit individuals and communities (Weisner 2009). Individuals play a large component in activities, and activity settings are socially

constructed. The activity settings and ecocultural context of GDT as a program has institutional norms, practices and activities, but is in constant negotiation between different youths' beliefs, understanding of norms and scripts, and motives for participating.

Interactions between youth and teachers can be littered with miscommunication (Sullivan and Larson 2010) even while stable and "warm" social interchanges with adults are a feature shared by quality ASPs (Mahoney, Larson, and Eccles 2005; Eccles and Gootman 2002). Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005) found that both youth-driven and adult-driven programs can be successful, but that adults used specific balancing techniques to maintain youth engagement. Rather than seeing the balancing as one sided – flowing from adults to youth – the data from GDT show that it is a series of dynamic ongoing multimodal interactions. Gallimore, Goldenberg, and Weisner (1993) have already seen this as part and parcel of activity settings: "By social construction, we mean that part of the structural and operational reality of an activity is the meaning it has in the minds of participants," (540) and the meaning is not necessarily shared by all participants. Youth should be seen as "agentive creators of culture within and across contexts," (Wissman et al. 2015, 188).

Miscommunications or conflict can be a good thing for learning environments such as GDT. In an analysis of urban school classrooms, (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 1999), found that hybridity – or diversity – in activities can lead to productive "third spaces" that transform conflict into catalysts for learning through a give and take between students and teachers: "by departing from their own scripts, teacher and students let go, slightly, of their defensive hold on their exclusive cultures, and the interactions between their scripts creates a third space for unscripted improvisation, where the traditionally binary nature of the student and teacher script is disrupted" (Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson 1995, 453). When children's

"unofficial" verbal and bodily behavior can become incorporated into the teacher's ongoing lesson, students can re-emerge as "official" learners and be positively incorporated into the learning space. Third spaces emerge through the ongoing interactions in a learning community.

Multimodal forms of interaction are often found in discourse analysis. It emphasizes that culture and behavior are not just informed by individual cognition, but are products of contextual participation frameworks which can become highly specialized within organizations (Streeck, Goodwin, and LeBaron 2011). For example, in their analysis of children calling "out" during hopscotch, Goodwin and Goodwin (2000) found that "cognition is not lodged exclusively within the head of an isolated actor, but instead within a distributed system, one that includes both other participants and meaningful artifacts… Crucial components of the cognitive activities in progress are located in the setting and the performed actions of participants' bodies" (38). The documentation of the "interior life of a single actor" does little then to fully understand the "construction of action" and social co-construction of meaning (Goodwin 2000, 1517).

In a detailed analysis of parenting styles Tulbert and Goodwin (2011) find that actors routinely use verbal, visual and material cues to motivate action and orient action toward specific tasks. While a particular intention on one person's part may be presented in a directive situation, the directive's receiver can take the interaction further towards various trajectories – and can do so not just verbally, but physically as well. In the case of after-school programs, it can be assumed that many directive trajectories are presented by teachers but the students can also redirect the "ever-changing horizons of action," (90). Because of this, both the structure and generalized activity setting characteristics are as important as the in-the-moment developments. Research by Barrett et al. (2005) suggests that humans may have high universal stakes in utilizing visual cues based on body trajectories of those around them to recognize intent.

Humans, they argue, orient much attention towards making predictions regarding intention based on just visual cues, indicating that multimodal approaches are a core part of human communication and interactions. Ultimately, the created "situational character" of any given activity setting provides meaning to the space in which socialization in after-school programs takes place (Guest and McRee 2009, 61).

Methods

The data used in this article illustrate these conceptual approaches. The data stem from a one year ethnographic project at GDT's ASP during the 2015-2016 school year. I spent over 240 hours at the program, including over 60 hours of participant observation with the youth age group, interviews with all the teachers and all but four youth. For the purposes of this research, "teachers" include both staff members and teaching artists as the lines were often blurred with the many roles that all the adults performed.

Participant observation was critical to build rapport with youth. As a researcher, I had a different role than a teacher. This difference in roles had, however, off and on success in being recognized. Being in educational space automatically created a model of teacher vs students. I wore the shirt that youth wore at the program and refused to answer teacher oriented questions to further differentiate myself from the teachers. Certainly, they never thought of me as teenager amongst them.

My conversational semi-structured interviews with the youth were guided by the ecocultural family interview (EFI) format (Weisner 2002). Starting with "From the time you wake up, walk me through your day," the interview was mostly shaped by what the youth chose to talk about and put an emphasis on the routine activities giving insights about their life beyond GDT. I kept a list of topics to probe if the youth did not naturally touch on them to avoid any

false negatives, including discussing GDT. In total I interviewed 16 of 20 youth at GDT, 12 girls and four boys. Interviews with teachers were semi-structured and focused on programing. In total I interviewed all of the 10 teachers that were there during my fieldwork.

All interviews included a set of free-list questions: "What are the four most important things for a student to experience at GDT?" This question allowed informants to describe what they saw as important experiences – which I will later call components of experiences – at the program. Since both teachers and youth were asked this question, answers could be compared between the two groups to see if they emphasize different things. I inductively coded the descriptive responses for general themes. The number of times each theme was mentioned within each group was used for analysis. This allowed for an analysis of differences in broad perceptions concerning the program GDT.

Green Door Theater (GDT)

Nestled between a currently gentrifying Latino neighborhood and a busy intersection of strip malls, GDT found its home in an old carriage house 20 years ago. Maintaining a lot of charm, the entrance is through a large green sliding door that is always open to youth, neighbors and passersby whenever teachers are present. Inside is a brightly colored lobby with round tables, a cabinet filled with games and a bar which always has coffee brewed with a dash of cinnamon for whomever wants it.

The youth ASP is the result of an event chain filled with serendipitous and circumstantial factors. Addie and Tuck, the co-founders, began after school programming when a low-income Latino boy stumbled into the theater asking questions when they were hanging the original light grid which has persisted to today. Realizing that theater would give them a way to engage in the

community, Addie and Tuck asked the youth to come back and from then on after-school classes were born.

It was not until about 5 years ago, that programming for high school students began. After slowly increasing the number of classes to accommodate age cohorts, a teacher at the time saw the need to maintain programming for youth that would otherwise have outgrown it and asked about further opportunities at GDT. Through the teachers' efforts, youth not only have the privilege of taking theater classes with Addie herself, but also become mentors for the younger classes on different days of the week. In addition, they go on organized fieldtrips, volunteer as ushers and other theater events, and are able to receive credit towards required service hours.

When the program first began, the youth population at GDT was described by the teachers as low-income Latino with extra specifications that there was a substantial number of first-generation Americans. As the surrounding neighborhood has changed, so have the youth. During the year of fieldwork in 2015, there was a range of income level backgrounds represented, though none were high income, with one white, one African-American, and one Asian-American attending the program.

On a typical day, youth arrived up to a half hour before programming and hung out in the lobby, socialized with peers and teachers, and ate snacks provided by the theater. They were then called into the theater where structured programming took place. It began with a stand up circle in which youth are asked to share a bit of "gospel" (good news) about their past week. This led into a warm-up activity which often involved "moving around the space" and engaging in varying tasks depending on the day. Addie – the head youth teacher – led the youth through an arc of participation that included a subset of preparatory activities and/or discussions that culminated in some kind of performance on stage. Class usually ended with another stand-up

circle with any final commentary from Addie and youth after which youth headed back into the lobby where some more socializing occurred before they started heading home.

Possible Discrepancies: What Staff and Youth Emphasize

In order to frame an understanding of staff and youth at the program, free-list responses are compared. Understanding general attitudes towards the program provides insight into the social environment in which participation takes place and the various viewpoints. Figure 5.1 shows the frequency with which students and teachers mentioned each of the coded themes (the N for each bar is on the top of that bar).
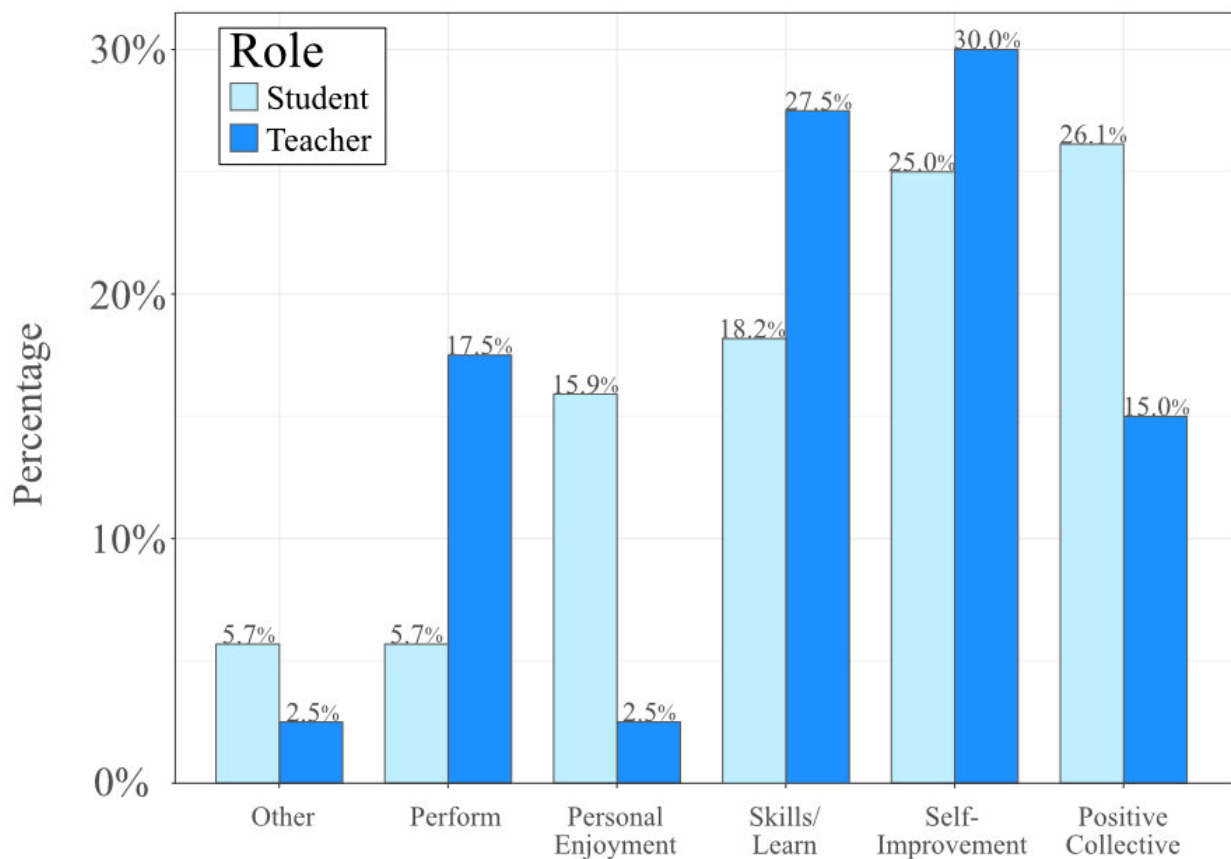
Figure 5.1: Coded themes for the free list question "What are the four most important things to experience at GDT?" Percentages are compared between teachers and students. Calculated example: # of times students mention "Personal Enjoyment"/# of student responses.

The results show that while teachers and students emphasized similar themes, there are some differences in where they placed their emphasis, reflecting some differences in goals and

models of participation at the programming. Table 5.1 shows the rank orders of the top four

categories for students and teachers respectively.

Students	Teachers
Positive Collective	Self-Improvement
Self-Improvement	Learning and Skills
Learning and Skills	Performing
Personal Enjoyment	Positive Collective

Table 5.1: Rank orders by students and teachers of the four most important things to experience at GDT.

The largest discrepancies in frequencies between the groups are "positive collective,"

"performing," and "personal enjoyment." Most notable is students' lack of mentioning

"performing," but the inclusion of "personal enjoyment" as compared to the teachers.

Furthermore, while both emphasized learning and skills as part of program participation, when

this is broken down further, teachers explicitly voiced the need for learning and skills specific to

the theater, while students rarely mentioned it, rather focusing on general life lessons and skills.

What do the Coded Themes Mean?

While the codes provide a neat comparison, they do little to describe what they actually

mean to the participants. Here the top five themes are described from both youth and teacher

perspectives.

Positive Collective

Two youth actually used the term family, but many described the group providing

comfort and a way to produce self-worth in relation to others with terms such as "respect,"

"acceptance," "equal treatment," and "friendship" being directly linked to having a collective.

While two of the staff mentioned the collective in terms of "warm, loving environment" and "having a bond," it was otherwise discussed in terms of collaborative goals to facilitate the theater activities. In this way, staff see the positive collective as functional in providing a means towards learning, activity participation, and self-improvement rather than in its own terms as the youth seem to.

Self-improvement

While this does overlap conceptually with learning and skill development, youth and teachers emphasized self-improvement as separate from formal learning processes. In many ways, both parties agreed on this topic with youth mentioning "coming out of your shell" or "pushing yourself", becoming a better person, and personal success. Further, three of the youth mentioned "self-expression" as a means of becoming a better self.

While teachers agreed with these sentiments, they also linked them to broader goals of getting youth to think bigger or differently about their future trajectories and career paths that may be possible. Such as experiencing the self as "an artist" – something the literature has also emphasized as important (Trilla, Ayuste, and Agud 2014) – which then translates into the emergence of new possibilities. As Gaby, one of the teachers, stated: "just experiencing the idea of options, because I feel like the stereotypical inner city… mentality is that you don't really have options. You're at GDT not because you're gonna *be* an actor, its showing there's an option that you *could* be an actor." The youth did not connect explicitly to these long term goals, though they clearly engaged future-oriented thinking when saying self-improvement – a process that occurs over time – was something they valued. However, the explicit difference highlights the teachers perspective on youth as "persons-in-the-making" and that GDT was part of their road to "becomings" as compared to focusing only on youth as "beings" (Orellana 2009: 15).

Learning and Skills

Both youth and teachers viewed the program as a space of learning. Some students simply mentioned that a student at GDT should experience "learning" with no qualifiers to describe what exactly they should learn. Most, however, focused on learning general life skills needed for jobs such as learning responsibility. Only two students mentioned learning theater specific skills, while teachers focused on them.

Part of the reason staff may have mentioned learning in association with theater skills is that they already shared a narrative that formally linked theater skills – such as speaking loudly in front of others – to general life skills. Also, as people who have long term investment in the arts, they view it as important in its own right.

Performing

In relation to learning and skills, it is important to mention teachers' emphasis on performing itself. While they talked about it separately, their descriptions clearly show the causal pathway that they believed governs participation at the program. "Having a moment on stage," was linked to speaking loudly and clearly, feeling heard, developing an identity, understanding emotions and working with others. The staff saw these things as embodied during performances – even small moments on stage – that could then become part of the youth's generalized repertoire. In this way, performing was linked by the teachers to most of the other topics and thereby was considered an important artistic tool for the overall goal of youth development. Performing was only mentioned twice by youth.

Personal Enjoyment

The youth often simply mentioned "to have fun" as important, and some expanded on this. Lisa (15 year old youth) mentioned that having fun creates motivation and a drive to keep

attending. Others echoed this by stating that it's important to *want* to talk about the theater and their experiences as compared to school which is not seen as exciting. Finally, enjoying the program was associated with dissociation from the outside world with importance placed on "leaving problems outside" and "losing themselves." Having ASPs be fun and relaxing has already been documented as one way for youth to mediate stress experienced in school life (Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen 2003; Halpern 1999).

Only one teacher stated enjoyment or fun as an important experience at the program but specified that it should be "fun with intention" to further learning and development. This orientation is starkly different from youth who did not highlight immediate connections between fun and plausible outcomes, despite it being an important, separate component of participation. This may also be a point of contention, as already mentioned above, between the teachers' push for "becoming" being a fundamental part of the youths' participation at the program, as compared to just "being" themselves in the moment. The youth have a focus on fun and enjoyment *now* without worrying about the later.

Youth "Underlife"

Goffman (1961) describes the ways that institutions may be undermined by individuals' actions which includes multimodal behaviors. The role of students' underlife in educational settings has already been documented (Larson and Gatto 2004; Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson 1995), and GDT was no exception. In fact, I would expect this to be the case given the differences in program themes and goals listed above. While there are many ways in which youth undermined the activity settings from teacher perspectives, two stand out as frequent.

The first is linked to their desire to leave the outside world outside and just engage in the activities. The "gospel circle," when youth shared a piece of good news, turned out to be quite

difficult for a majority of the youth who often stated they had no good news, took a long time to respond or even tried to hide by shifting their position in the circle to avoid being called on. While Addie insisted on sharing news as a way for promoting positivity as well as a cohesive group, this was a moment where youth avoided the collective and sometimes turned to whispering with their friends or assisted each other in coming up with good news. Youth reported not wanting to think about things outside the theater:

> "like, right now we focus on so much on this like praise - and I get it like, she's trying to encourage us to appreciate life and appreciate these positive things. But I just want to get it on and forget about [outside]," (Aitana, 15 year old youth).

The second was the use of phones, which technically was prohibited once inside the theater. While they did use phones to check messages, the time etc., they also enjoyed snapping pictures and videos of each other and posting to social media. It was a strange dynamic between partial embarrassment and group identity.

On one occasion I had been doing a bit of dancing with one of the youths when the soundtrack from "The Sound of Music" was playing in the lobby. They filmed our "singing," and posted it. As it turns out the next day smirking youths walked up to me: "I saw you on snapchat last night!" While it was a joke at my expense, it also got me *in* on the joke in the first place and a barrier had been broken which resulted in the creation of my own social media account headed by young "social managers."

Youth pulled out their phones, subverting the dominating norm that phones should be excluded during structured programming, with the motive of promoting their friendships and enjoyment during activities while building community based on GDT beyond its boundaries.

What can be assumed, is the youth do not simply follow all the instructions, rules or expectations from the teachers, but rather implement their own viewpoints and participation.

Mediation and Co-Construction of the Activity Setting

Based on discrepancies in categories listed above and the presence of a youth underlife, the successful co-construction of the after-school space was not guaranteed. First, two structural components of GDT will be assessed. Then, using an ethnographic example, participatory frameworks will be analyzed to show how an active trajectory of co-construction successfully occurred at GDT. These data will be concretely related to both what youth and teachers emphasized at the program as presented above, and components of quality ASPS – namely youth-teacher relationships, opportunities for belonging and learning, and integration with youth's outside lives which are the focus of this article.

Site Structure

There are a few noteworthy structural components of GDT that facilitated a positive collective and a space for fun, enjoyment and working together. Beatriz, a fourteen-year-old youth, described how the theater itself felt intimate as compared to larger spaces and that "I just feel like you can work with people better, like more closely."

First and foremost, GDT benefits from being off school campus and was not run by school teachers. This was further enhanced by programming taking place on the actual stage, giving a sense of artistic legitimacy and separation from normal life. As Mickey, a 17 year old youth, said: "[the theater space is] a lot different from other places, because I've never been around theater. So yeah, it's something very unique to me." The physical separation from outside also aided a feeling of "entering a whole new world… The world, legit, is like shut out. And you're like in this whole different space and in that moment you're just theater," as to fully

engage in the activities with a sense of enjoyment and relaxation (Aitana, 16 year old youth). Addie described the building itself as "my partner" and that it "seems to wrap its brick arms around us," evoking a sense of deep comfort and love coming from the physical environment itself in which programming takes place.

The second structural component was the lobby filled with small round tables, chairs, a bench, and snacks for the youth to pick at before, and sometimes after, formal programming. With bright colors and the wide open door, it was an inviting space and many of the youth spent time socializing or relaxing there. Because it was so open, youth are able to feel like they belonged in the space. In addition, staff mingled with the youth, often talking about their days and engaging in joking banter with the youth – though they sometimes used it as a time to admonish youth about their responsibilities. This allowed for them to build the youth-teacher relationships beyond structured programming.

Time for open conversation was acknowledged by both youth and teachers as something important, though it was mainly evidenced by field notes and interviews. Leo (17 year old youth) told me the following when describing the theater: "Well, it's simply – Well with Benno, Dana, Tuck and Addie [all teachers] – they kind of welcome me every time I come here and we always start a conversation. And somehow it goes off into a tangent and something funny." These kinds of interactions were quite commonplace in the lobby. Dana, a teacher who was frequently in the lobby, also mentioned that the conversations and banter were important for youth experience:

> "I just want kids to feel comfortable. You know, and to be able to be- who they
> are. And- I really want to make them understand how to use humor. You know,
> and just, like, you can talk to people, you can joke around, you can have fun,
> without feeling 'oh! I can't talk!'"

Any given activity setting during programming was contextualized by these physical and material components which shaped a sense of cohesiveness and enjoyment before and after structured programming.

Constructed/Negotiated Performing Activity Setting

Since performing was an activity that was differentiated between youth and teachers in terms of importance at GDT, it is important to examine it in practice as it could represent conflicts in the co-construction of the ASP space. The differing emphasis placed on performing and the functional components of fun and the collective could have led to possible points of contention.

Performing activity settings stayed fairly consistent though actual content and subject matter changed. Generally, after a short period of prep work with a partner or group with a set of instructions, youth were asked to sit in the house along with teachers to watch other groups presenting. Once on stage, youth performed their partially rehearsed, partially improvised scene. This was done with varying degrees of success on any given day. It also began a dialogue between the actors and Addie as she inserted directions into the scene that reflected task expectations and scripts regarding youth behavior. Most notable was the need for focus, commitment, and talking loudly so as to be heard; other goals such as feeling emotions also played a role. Performances finished with applause usually accompanied by some praise from Addie and/or other teachers present. For those youth in the house, expectations were to pay attention and be a part of the performance as reflected in Addie's (the main youth teacher) directions: "alright, those [that] are watching are loving and caring and focused. And give them [the actors] everything we can give."

The following ethnographic example will depict the trajectory through which the group navigated the construction of the performance activity setting. As the activity unfolds, Addie and youth move through various participatory frameworks in concert, taking on various roles and negotiating each other's stances to produce a successful co-construction of the activity setting. The trajectory will be presented in four junctures at which a change in stance occurs. In this way, the micro in situ co-construction is presented as a mechanism related to the *production* of quality ASPs.

Participation Framework 1: Youth as Authority and Teacher as Audience: When Roxas, Bianca and Flor took the stage, they dominated the center of attention, until Addie – who was sitting in the house as an audience member – stopped them and began a conversation taking authority momentarily. However, the kind of questions she asked, invited the performing youth to maintain authority over their performance as the following dialogue shows:

1. Addie: So you're married to him. But he's somehow letting

2.   you down. He wasn't the man you were hope-

3. Bianca: - I care more about my daughter

4. Audience: ((gasps)) Aw.

5. Addie: You care more about your daughter.

6. Bianca: ((Nods in affirmation))

During this conversation Bianca spoke for the group answering the background questions to establish their beliefs regarding the scene and even cut off Addie's probing at line 3 by inserting her own answer. Bianca's comment elicited a reaction from the audience and got Addie to repeat Bianca's words before moving forward with the conversation reasserting the authority

the youth had. In addition, Addie stayed an inactive physical stance by remaining in her chair while the youth maintained stage presence during the exchange (see Figure 5.2).
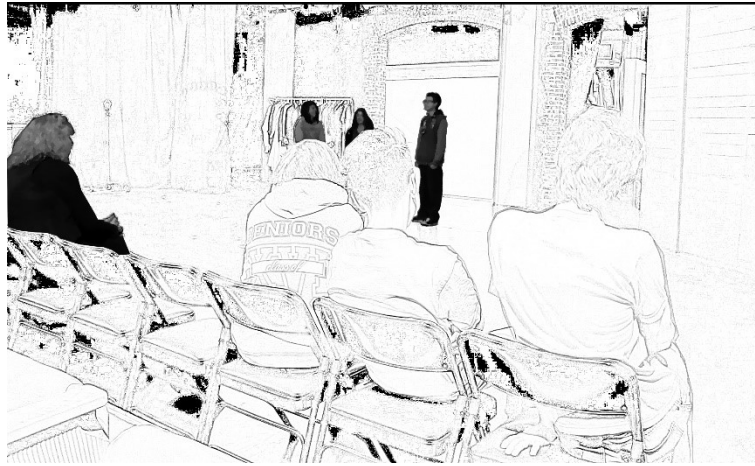
Figure 5.2: Addie (left in chairs) talking to actors Bianca, Flor, and Roxas (from left to right).

Youth are able to bring their own ideas and prominently integrate them into the activity setting while creating a give-and-take relationship with Addie that established them as authorities. This reflects the integration of youths' outside lives and ideas into the programming and fosters a sense of belonging for them, both documented ingredients for quality ASPs.

Participation Framework 2: Youth as Learner, Addie as Teacher/Director: After having continued the Q&A for a while, Addie finally began inserting her lesson into the conversation effectively changing the participatory framework for all involved. Addie establishes that the scene has high emotional content as the daughter (Flor) and mother (Bianca) ignore Roxas the step dad. Addie addresses Roxas:

7. Addie: How did that feel? Give me the feeling behind that Roxas.

8. Roxas: I felt angry at being ignored.

9. Addie: you felt angry?

10. R: yeah

11. Addie: Let me see you be really angry.

12. Roxas: Well, I actually-

13. Addie: Let me see it. I wanna hear you insist on being heard.

14.   I wanna hear you insist on being visible. You dig what I'm saying?

15. Roxas: Mhm.

Addie established some core emotional experience, while taking Roxas'

viewpoint into account in line 9 and made a shift to director/teacher in line 11. The youth

in-turn relinquished their authority and listened to what Addie as a director and teacher

had to say. In line 12 Roxas attempted to insert himself which Addie overrides in line 13

by insisting on anger. Roxas relents with his affirmative in line 15 accepting the shift in

performance framework – as compared to the group's authority in the first juncture. The

scene started again and Addie continued her directing:

16. Addie: Roxas. You're being too nice. They've been treating you like this for

17.   five years, Roxas.

18.   *((Addie uncrosses her legs and claps her hands transitioning to*

19.   *standing and moving towards the group))*

20.   You've been (xx) for five years. Your- your the- you work hard. You

21.   take care of them. You've taken her on as your own child and this

22.   how they treat you?

23.   Go. Go!

24.   *((Addie moves out of the scene **but stays** on stage))*

25.   Come on Roxas.

Addie intensified her director role in line 25 as she physically moved from siting in the

audience to physically joining the actors on stage and clapping her hands creating an auditory

stimulus as well. She maintained the intensity as the youth restarted their scene by remaining on stage, though away from them as seen in Figure 5.2. The youth gave Addie this position taking on a student role of listening to her, taking directives, and allowing her to share the stage without a second thought such as waiting for Addie to return to her seat.
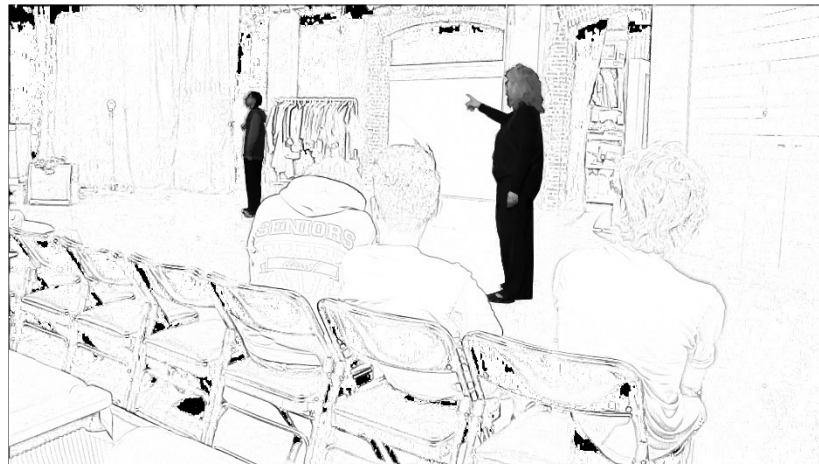
Figure 5.3: Addie (right) directing Roxas (left) and others on stage but apart from them. Bianca and Flor have walked off stage.

This change co-constructed a participatory framework that provided opportunities for learning about general life regarding the emotional content and skills needed to perform the scene, another ingredient for quality ASPs. However, the moment of learning was built on the youths' own ideas and investment in the performance providing continual support for their inclusion at the program. In addition Roxas, Bianca and Flor were actively engaged in self-improvement as they worked on their acting skills. Learning and self-improvement are components both teachers and youth viewed as important; in this case both were getting something they wanted out of participation.

Participation Framework 3: Group Humor: Having fun has been established above as an important component of programming for youth. Even in an emotionally laden scene and intense moments of conversation and direction, the group was able to navigate humor as well. After

Addie intensified the investment in the scene, Roxas made an extreme acting choice, pantomiming a gun and pointing it at Flor and Bianca to express anger:

26. Addie: No wait Roxas!

27. Audience: OH! ((*Laughter and clapping*)) Ah!

28. Addie: No, you can't kill them!

29. ((*Crosses to Roxas waving her hands comically. See Figure 5.4*))

30. Addie: ((*Pulling Roxas back and bending over laughing*))

31. ((*jokingly*)) That's another family dynamic all together!

Here the entire group took a pause to laugh. Roxas' acting choices had set off a huge reaction from everyone in the room creating collectively shared enjoyment. Addie joined in and perpetuated the humor in lines 28-31 and let the moment of collective amusement linger, before she tried to re-focus.

32. Addie: *((jokingly))* Could we have you stop them shy of murder?!

33. *((Her tone turns serious))* Yes. Yes you can. Insist. Use your voice.

34. Ok. Here we go. Don't let them go. You love them. Alright-

Addie made a marked shift away from the humor in line 33 but the group was not ready yet as youth continued to laugh. Addie had been about to slice her hand towards Roxas in an "action" motion at the end of line 34, but hitched the movement as she smiled again and let the laughter go on even joining in herself. Addie allowed the group's humorous focus to influence her own actions as director. Finally, she did start the scene again, but throughout the rest of the performance activity and entire class, Addie re-evoked the humor that the group had shared in small comments such as in line 32 which the rest of the group joined in on.

In this moment the group was established as a whole unit and various other roles dropped away producing a strong sense of belonging as everyone in the theater was "in" on the joke. Addie relinquishing her control momentarily allowed for the fulfillment of "having fun" and the production of collectivity and belonging as well as a strong relationship between her and the youth.

Figure 5.4: Addie (right) waves arms comically and crosses to Roxas (left) who is pantomiming holding a gun.

Participation Framework 4: Co-actors: The final juncture shows how close and intense the relationship between youth and Addie could become. Having now navigated numerous participatory frameworks, the intensity in the room rose and the scene was underway again when Roxas was about to let his character's anger drop. Addie propelled the performances intensity onward:

35. Addie: *((Reaching out her hands towards Roxas))* No wait!!

36.   *((Upstage hand keeps towards Roxas, the other moves towards*

37.   *audience to silence the youth there))*

38.   You want to be seen, Roxas. Tell them you wanna be seen.

39. Roxas: I wanna hang out with you guys, come on! I'm part of the family now.

At this point Addie physically inserted herself into the scene as, what I am calling, Roxas' "shadow actor" by moving behind him (see Figure 5.5). Her eye contact stayed on Roxas, placing focus on him, even as she began acting alongside him in a hybrid role as actor/director. By physically altering her position in relation to the performance she changed the directive trajectory (Tulbert and Goodwin 2011) and demanded full commitment from the youth which they reciprocated.

40. Addie: Go on, keep going. "I'm part of the family…" Keep going.

41. Roxas: I'm your step dad

42. Flor: uh, Roxas. You're my mom's husband.

43. *((Addie makes a beckoning motion from behind Roxas prompting Flor to continue))*

44. Roxas: Right

45. Flor: I have my dad

46. Audience: Oh!

47. Addie: *((reaches out to touch Roxas' shoulder and softly speaks to him))*

48.   Don't give up. Don't give up.

49.   *((holds up a finger at Roxas' side))* They're looking at you.

50. Roxas: *((raises arms up))* I'm the only dad.

51. Flor: uh uh.

52. Roxas: then where's the other dad?

53. Addie: *((still at Roxas' side, holds up her hand again and whispers))*

54. Roxas: I don't see him anywhere

55. Addie: *((quietly))* but I'm here.

56. Flor: Mommy said he went on a trip.

57. Roxas: is he coming back though?

58. Flor: He writes me letters. And he loves me. He doesn't scream at me.

59. Audience: gasps

60. Roxas: I know how you feel. Well, alright. That's fine.

61. Addie: No!

62. Audience: *((laughing))*

In lines 40, 43, 47-49, 53, and 55 Addie was explicitly part of the scene giving possible text and using her body to encourage Flor and Bianca to also become invested in the moment. Roxas gave in at the end of a very intense pause in line 60 and Addie let out an exclamation in line 61 and moved away letting Roxas' release of tension be the end of the scene. The audience began laughing effectively dissipating the intensive connection and focus as Addie and the audience corroborated Roxas' release of tension. Effectively the performance and activity were over.
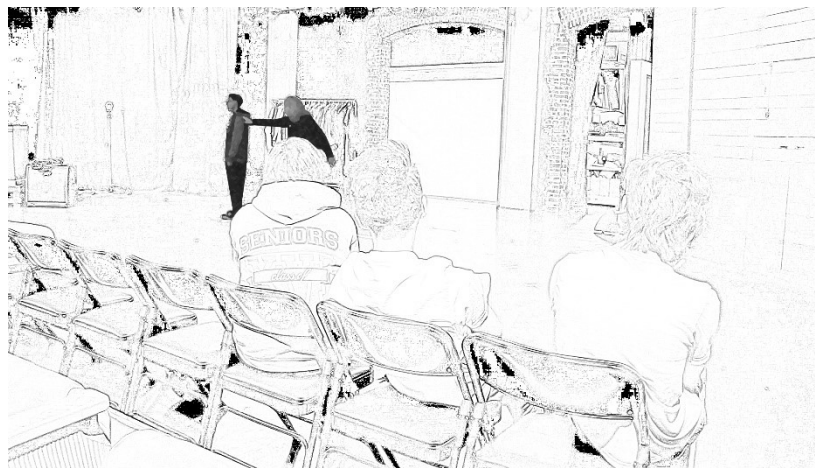
Figure 5.5: Addie (right) shadow acting with Roxas (left).

Afterwards, Addie pulled Roxas over and hugged him from the side, kissing him on the cheek and saying "That was good. Wonderful." When I asked her later about the shadow acting, Addie was very clear about what she was doing:

> Addie: When people will allow y- they'll often allow me [in]. Sometimes not.
>
> But it is, 'I am inside you.' And its intensity, and it's a focus.
>
> We're one basically.
>
> Sometimes [the students] can't do it at all. You have to do it for them,
>
> and then there's a feeling of "I did it myself."
>
> Its puppetry, but it's you know- always with love…
>
> Because it takes courage to do this art form.
>
> It takes hard work, it takes commitment, and it takes discipline.
>
> You know, to stand up in front of a group of people, especially your peers, and
>
> make shit up.
>
> *((laughs))*
>
> And that feeling of courage is something you can wear.
>
> And if you're not wearing it you put it in your pocket [for] later, but it's there."

Addie's statement details how much of a connection she required from students at times. Even while her main focus was on Roxas, she simultaneously pulled in Flor and Bianca from behind him creating an air of focus that all the present youth participated in. The resulting intensity in the scene, also drew in the audience as they began reacting to the scene with more frequency and emotion. However, it required the students to also become invested. Addie herself said "they'll often allow me [in]. Sometimes not."

The strong overarching trajectory enabled Addie to draw on the performance's acting and the joint humor to address actual social issues and get students to think about them during a group discussion:

Addie: ((addressing the whole group)) Really great work. This whole concept around recognition- And then feeling invisible- we ALL have those stories of feeling invisible and how do we get out of that cloud of invisibility. What do we do? You don't' shoot people!

Youth: *((laugh))*

Addie: We laugh, but some people resolve their feelings of invisibility with violence. We hear about it - daily- everyday. For they feel like they're not being seen, so "I know how I'm gonna be seen. I'm gonna make a huge scene. I'm gonna do something violent." So what are the other ways, when we feel invisible, that we can be seen? What did Roxas just do? He spoke up. He used his voice and his heart.

The discussion continued a little longer giving youth the opportunity to think about the performances they had just done as part of a bigger picture. The group quite effectively navigated moments of humor, fun and enjoyment with the tasks, skills, and values associated with performing. Addie did not insist on focus at all times, and even prompted the laughter herself and constantly switched between addressing the individuals needing directions for the actual performance and the entire group maintaining a collective feel throughout.

Discussion

In this example, through the give and take of the performance between youth being the authorities and learners, the humor and intensive focus, the activity was effectively co-

constructed ending with a cohesive group focus on the performance while Roxas, Flor and Bianca were pushing their acting skills. Through Addie's physical movements, from being in the house to onstage and finally in the scene, the performance was re-negotiated between herself and the youth. Instead of giving up on the scene, losing focus or blocking Addie from the scene, the actors allowed her into the new spatial configuration and gave their focus as Addie was giving hers. The most extreme moment happened when Addie began shadow acting with Roxas.

The performance reflects the values students and teachers have as discussed above. It portrays a vivid example of switching between the tasks at hand – putting on a performance as emphasized by teachers – and allowing fun to permeate the activity. These moments of humor were prompted through youth actions on stage and collective responses which Addie engaged in herself. She even furthered the joke as she re-engaged Roxas' choice of pantomiming a gun. In this way, the feeling of relaxation and enjoyment was re-affirmed even as the youth were asked to focus on a task requiring effort and engagement with difficult emotions. This all took place during a time of high collective identity as the audience was permitted into the performance from time to time through comments and reactions such as when Bianca in explained that "I care more about my daughter" in line 3 or when Flor, in character, told Roxas "I have my dad" in line 45.

Throughout performing activities active mediation took place between moments of serious focus in which skills and learning were promoted as part of acting and watching, moments of fun and joking, and teamwork as part of a collaborative group. The youth were dynamically engaged in the activity, at times pulling on Addie to redirect her own focus. It is precisely Addie's lack of insistence on hegemonic control and the youth's investment that allowed a dynamic and fulfilling co-construction to occur between the two parties. In this way a

"third space" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 1999; Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson 1995) was able to successfully come to fruition.

Conclusion

The co-construction of activities in Green Door Theater illustrates the mediation and balance that takes place between youth and teachers during routine programming and activities. By examining general beliefs, norms and values between the two parties based on free list responses and ethnography, I explored how collaboration occurred during a key performance activity at GDT that youth are expected to participate in and the teachers highly value for its potential impact on self-improvement and learning. As seen in the ethnographic example, performing unfolds interactively.

Deeply examining how perspectives come together at GDT in order to enhance the ongoing processes in both terms of youth-teacher relationships, opportunities for belonging and skill building, and integration with youth's outside lives, reveals how quality programming is produced throughout ongoing interactions. In this way, successful co-construction is a mechanism for producing components of quality ASPs. This is one way to focus attention on how micro interactions can be considered in relation to abstract concepts such as "opportunities to belong."

The co-construction mechanism in this example was realized through 1) youth input on and authority over content of their scenes, 2) the teacher building on the content by becoming a director and providing opportunities for learning and skill development, 3) sharing in joint humor and allowing it to be infused in future interactions, and 4) creating moments of deep focus enabled in part by physical proximity between teacher and youth.

In consideration of educational places, it is important to carefully examine and understand how exactly youth and teacher interactions play out in positive ways to produce successful learning environments, similar to the "third space," (Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson 1995). When there can be a balance, the predispositions of both parties can be central to activities promoting "interdependent collaborative groups" and, due to the inclusion of multiple viewpoints, can generate unexpected contexts and partnerships that often add up to some outcomes that are tough to achieve elsewhere" (Heath 2001, 15–16).

At GDT, the activity settings remain flexible; the similar and differing foci from the two parties could both be actualized allowing both parties to be validated in the participatory frameworks. Flexibility and co-construction were seen in the performance example as a mechanism through which positive relationships between youth and teachers are practiced and re-affirmed. We can see Aitana's sentiment of "No one's really blood here, but at the end… y'all come together" being actualized as both Addie and the youth tugged and pulled the tapestry strings as participatory trajectories changed. Discovery and exploration of mechanisms such as the negotiated co-construction of space are needed in order to make clear how suggested components of ASPs are created in ongoing participation.

More generally, formal and informal educative spaces will be better able to serve their diverse student populations if teachers understand and learn how to engage these kind of negotiations. The process is quite distinctly nestled into the performances at GDT by allowing, for example, youth to control the actual content in scenes even while they allow Addie to insert directions to build on their ideas. While this will not directly translate into all learning environments, the concept may be thought about in relation to other activities. Possible questions to ask based on the analysis in this article would be "how can structure be maintained while the

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actual content is open to youth contribution?" or "how can teachers and youth engage in joint

humor even while progressing the activity overall?" If these become successfully answered and

realized in situ, the resulting tapestry is comprised of both teacher and youth inputs and can

create an inclusive and "quality" learning environment.

Chapter 6

The Micro Temporal Arc

Introduction

Youth in the United States are spending more and more time in an after-school program (ASP) to fill the time between school and being home with family with enriching, structured activities that can help promote positive youth development. It is abundantly clear that quality ASPs *can* have a large impact on children and youth both socially and academically (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Vandell et al., 2005), but it is an assumption that requires evidence (Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011). In California, where my own research took place, 25% of youth attend after-school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2016), so the potential influence on youth is significant, and growing. However, a common challenge for ASPs is student attendance considering many programs are voluntary for youth. Naturally getting youth in the door is important, but so is maintaining their interest in the program and motivation for continual attendance (Bartko 2005) or participation which is defined as youth enrollment, attendance, and engagement combined (Weiss, Little, and Bouffard 2005). Arguably, the benefits of attending after-school programs are attained by continual involvement, so an important component for program development is how to achieve individual engagement and retention rates.

One way to capture youth's attention is by having program activities build towards a common end product over the course of a year that marks the culmination of efforts. Larson (2000) and Heath (2001) have referred to this as the "temporal arc" of activities which I will discuss more below. The temporal arc explains that long term intentions and goals of programming have motivational drive, but does not explain how programming plays out on a

daily basis. My own ethnographic research at a theater after-school program, which I call Green Door Theater (GDT), provides corroboration for the concept of the temporal arc as the year-long program moves towards a small play that is partially constructed by youth's improvisations throughout the year centered on an overarching theme. GDT has a relatively high long term attendance rate; a resulting question was how does the daily programming become part of the overarching temporal arc thereby promoting participation described above?

My data reveal useful information on a practical level for daily lesson planning that mirrors the temporal arc on a daily scale which may encourage attendance and engagement. The article presents the "micro temporal arc" (MTA) which expands on the concept of the temporal arc and will give a qualitative example to show the process through which it takes shape. What the MTA suggests is that setting up daily programing to mimic the long-term temporal arc within one class period can promote youth participation. As many practitioners can attest, a long term temporal arc can seem daunting when youth are prone to forget what they did a day ago, let alone a week. The youth at GDT, frequently would avoid eye contact with their main teaching artist, Addie, when asked "what did we do last week?" This article suggests the use of a MTA as a tool for creating daily programming can promote youth participation and can then be incorporated into longer term goals.

The Issue of Participation

One major issue with ASPs for older youth is that they generally are opt-in environments; students must choose to be present at the program and can choose to leave. By comparing "program youth" to "non-program youth" during out of school time, Vandell et al. (2005) suggest that the impacts of ASPs may not be purely due to a selection biases (those students who choose to be in programs already have certain characteristics): the programming itself can have a

large consequence on the ASP's impact on youth development. For example, in a population of rural Latino students, Nathaniel Riggs (2006) found that students with higher ASP attendance had increased social competence and decreased problem behavior as rated by school teachers pre and post program attendance. The relationship was not visible if all students' pre and post-tests where taken as a whole, implicating attendance as an important variable in ASP success. Riggs implies that there is a "dose-effect" of staying with the program as part of after-school programming which remains relatively understudied (Bartko 2005). Weiss et al. (2005) suggest that attendance (some measure of time spent in programs), when combined with enrollment (getting in the door) and engagement (involvement that includes affect, behavior, and cognition) is part of a "participation equation." Here a clear link between engagement and attendance is made. Participation, through all three components, results in more positive outcomes then if only some of the conditions are met.

In a study involving eight after-school programs in Maryland, Weisman & Gottfredson (2001) found that those students considered to be most predisposed for risky behavior were also the ones most likely to drop out of ASPs, though they are the ones that may benefit the most (Mahoney 2000; Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011). According to Weisman & Gottfredson (2001), being bored was the top reason for dropping out, suggesting that programs need to provide activities that hook and maintain interest. The resulting question is what components are present in activities that end up captivating youth attention?

One key factor in combating boredom is promoting continual participation – namely engagement. Pearce & Larson (2006), examined the processes by which intrinsic motivation can be fostered at a civic engagement program to promote long term attendance. Using Ryan & Deci's (2000) theory of motivation they examined how youth changed from being a-motivational

to becoming extrinsically and finally intrinsically motivated during program activities. The authors specifically argue that making quality personal connections and having instrumental support from staff leaders facilitate the development of intrinsic motivation which is often experienced during collective group activities; there can be individual implications within group dynamics.

Another factor is youth finding meaningful activities to engage in, whether this is through structured after-school environments that offer only one main activity (i.e., theater) or "garden style" programs where youth can choose from a variety of activities to participate in. Even in garden style programs, Hirsch et al. (2011) theorize that for after-school programs to be most successful, youth must find PARC units to engage in which add significant structure to otherwise unstructured environments. A PARC unit includes: the program, a specific activity, relationships and culture. Similarly, Bartko (2005) lists the ABCs of engagement which stands for affective, behavioral and cognitive engagement, to spark youth interest and support their attendance. The ABC's and PARC units are actively involved in the routines that are sustained in ASPs. Students' personal interest and investment in activities can promote their continued attendance so that the programs can have a positive impact in their lives. The temporal arc and micro temporal arc are another mechanism, related to PARCs, which encourage engagement by focusing on the how activities build on one another and some kind of end-goal.

The Temporal Arc

The temporal arc of participation represents one way to create circumstances of meaningful activities and sustain attention and engagement over longer periods of time. Larson (2000) and Heath (2001) have noted that collective end-goal oriented work is one of the defining features that structured after-school programs can successfully provide which schools often do

not. It quite literally provides a "shape" to youth participation over time that directly impacts their interest in the program (see Figure 6.1).

Through the temporal arc adolescents engage in goal oriented behaviors over long periods of time. A temporal arc facilitates the long term investment for youth and development of initiative, by culminating towards an end product such as a performance that requires collective preparedness and effort (Larson 2000). Heath (2001) elaborates detailing that the process involves cooperation, feedback loops and intensive preparation which generate an atmosphere of importance – that is the activities become meaningful to the individual within the after-school community. Specifically, Heath outlines that the stages of the temporal arc are: planning/preparation, practice/deliberation, final intensive readiness, and culminating presentation, and evalutation/down time. We can envision the temporal arc "shaping" participation as presented in figure 6.1.
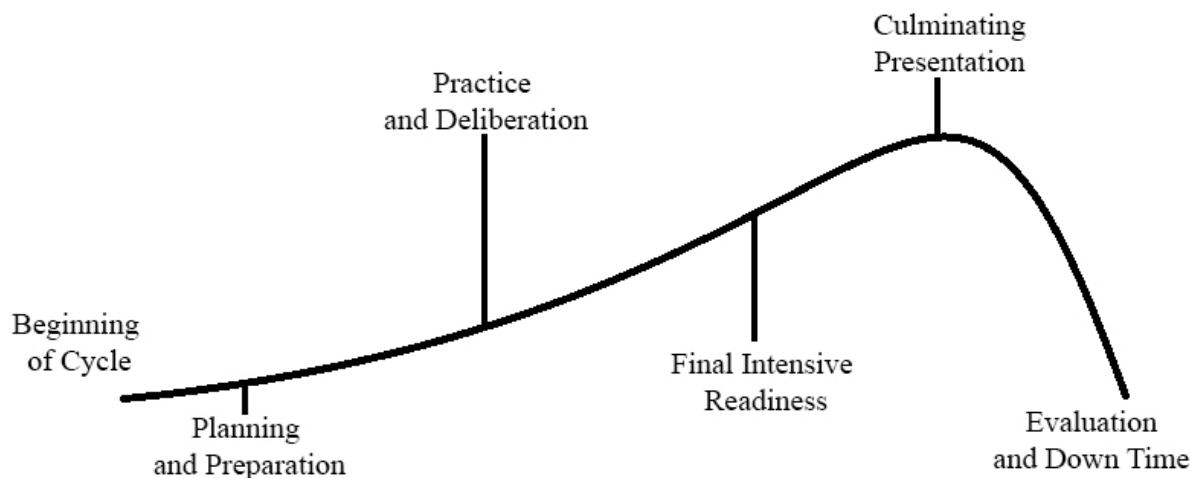

Figure 6.1: The temporal arc visually depicted. Adapted from Larson and Heath.

Since the temporal arc includes the creation of a product which, through intensive readiness, participation in the various stages, embodies many factors that are also considered important to hooking youths' attention. This includes, for example, though is not limited to, deep

states of absorption and focus in psychological states called "flow" where challenges and skills are well balanced for an individual (Csikszentmihalyi 2009).

It is precisely through meaningful participation in routine activities over time that developmental trajectories unfold and youth can experience well-being (Weisner 2002). Activities are part of a predictable routine which are the stepping stones for development because they are shaped by necessary skills, norms, goals and people present. It is, then, critical that youth maintain participation on a *day-to-day* basis so that a routine can be sustained over time, to which an end-of-year project can be a distant goal.

Setting and Methods

The ethnographic study took place at Green Door Theater (GDT) during the 2015-2016 school year. Youth participants had theater classes on Wednesdays for 30 weeks with their main teaching artist, Addie, and a secondary part-time teaching artist, Violet. On a routine day at GDT, youth had some time in the lobby for snacks, doing homework, and socializing with peers and teachers, before going into the black-box theater for their structured class time. Class usually had a warm-up component that shifted to a series of activities that moved towards some kind of presentation or group-work towards the end of class. Before ending, the group usually assembled in a circle for a brief discussion. After class ended, some youth would hang out in the lobby again either talking to friends before walking home or waiting to be picked up.

Data presented in this article are the result of ongoing participant observations during structured class time, informal interviews, and a semi-structured interview with Addie at the end of the year. All names appearing are Pseudonyms; most youth created their own upon request while teachers had me pick theirs. The main ethnographic example presented was recorded

through continuous monitoring and then typed up as field notes that same evening and following morning.

The Micro Temporal Arc

I present the concept of the micro temporal arc (MTA) which stems from my observational fieldwork at GDT. The idea developed from the fourth week of the youths' class when I noticed that towards the end of a class there was a feeling of a collective breath being held by the youth and the main teaching artist, Addie. It was one of those intangible moments that are hard to describe, but those who have experienced it themselves might find themselves nodding along. When the group can be focused, engaged and in-sync, activities can build on each other to produce intensive and culminating group or individual experiences. I was momentarily stunned by where the day had started and where it had ended.

I created a timeline sketch which visualized the progression of activities during that day's theater program and revealed the same kind of temporal arc shape but on smaller scale. In other words, I am arguing that the MTA is a microcosm of the temporal arc presented by Larson and Heath. The smooth transitions between activities highlighted the golden thread woven beneath the participatory substance of the class and connections to the broader theme of family. Observations during subsequent programming revealed that this was not unusual, though it was stronger on some days than others. While Addie might have her own brand of "magic" as an instructor, the creation of micro temporal arcs often underlies her instruction and can be a useful way to go about lesson planning.

When I interviewed Addie at the end of the year it was clear that she thought about programming in ways similar to the MTA that I am presenting. She commented that her aim when planning classes was "you can come and have a standalone class, but if you stay with it

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you can feel like the whole arch is [coming] together. Each one of those classes for me has a goal toward that [end-of-year performance]. They [students] have to feel – the metaphor is: "you want to see the show next week," because you're leaving them hanging." While she is aware of the "arc" towards a thematic performance at the end of the year, she Addie also emphasized that each class period needs to be its own "unit" commenting that only "fifty percent of 'em [youth]" might have a conscious sense of the overarching goals at all times. That youth can come and have one class that is engaging can keep them interested. Having the weekly classes, overtime, become connected to something bigger creates a more impactful process overall.

This article presents the concept of MTA as a way of structuring daily programing, suggesting that if one day's activities can culminate in some kind of product, youth may find themselves more invested in the program on a daily basis which can promote participation. It is not, however, about quick and easy presentations or outcomes that have little attachment to overall programming. Part of the challenge is for daily programing to maintain a connection to the overarching temporal arc even as MTAs are contained within themselves. Figure 6.2 visually represents how I imagine MTAs fit into the overarching goals of the theater's after school program during one school year.

The micro temporal arc can quickly and successfully provide the "hook," or short term trigger (Hidi and Harackiewicz 2000), that is needed to keep youth participating. First impressions certainly play a role, and youth that can experience the kind of investment and challenge on their first and subsequent days at a given program, may be more likely to return in the future.
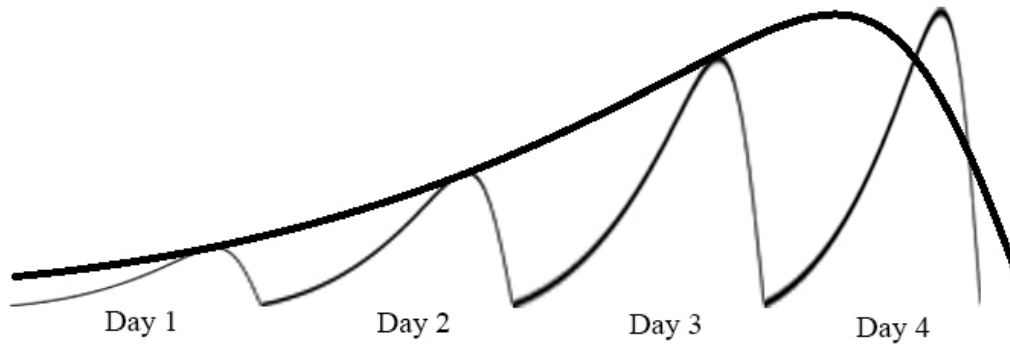
Figure 6.2: Visual depiction of the micro temporal arc.

Including the same components as the temporal arc, the MTA does so in smaller doses and a shorter amount of time so that one day's activities can move from preparation to culmination. Critical is an underlying thread that connects all the activities – this could be based on an idea, concept or a specific skill that students are asked to engage in.

A Mirco Temporal Arc in Action

To illustrate the process through which activities create a micro temporal arc, here is an example of one day's activities. Quite literally, the day started with students creating tableaus of inanimate objects and ended with Addie asking "think of someone in your life who is not on a good path right now. Think about their status. What can you to stop this? What caring or empathy can you give to change this status, because this is pretty damn low." It was an intricate set of activities that built on each other to bring the group to that particular end point and was far from random.

Further, the ultimate discussion about human status related to the overall theme for the year which was family and processes by which family members grow apart and come together. The students' own roles within their families were an important topic that was explored through a variety of activities. The final performance that the students presented at the end of the year was about one family's change in status by winning the lottery and all the consequences of the

status shift. In this way the MTA of the particular day presented here, fit neatly into the overarching theme for the program in 2015-2016.

In order to fully describe how the activities built on each other to result in a culminating moment, I find it best to walk the reader through the day. Some activities during the ASP day will be generally explained and some will be described in more detail, as they seemed like pivotal moments in moving through the micro temporal arc. After reviewing the day's activity, I analytically mapped the components of the temporal arc as outlined above onto the unfolding events based on shifts in conversation and changes in activities. The activities will be split by the main stages based on my analysis: planning/preparation, practice/deliberation, final intensive readiness, and culminating presentation. Figure 6.3 shows the order of activities from left to right and top to bottom as part of a micro temporal arc.
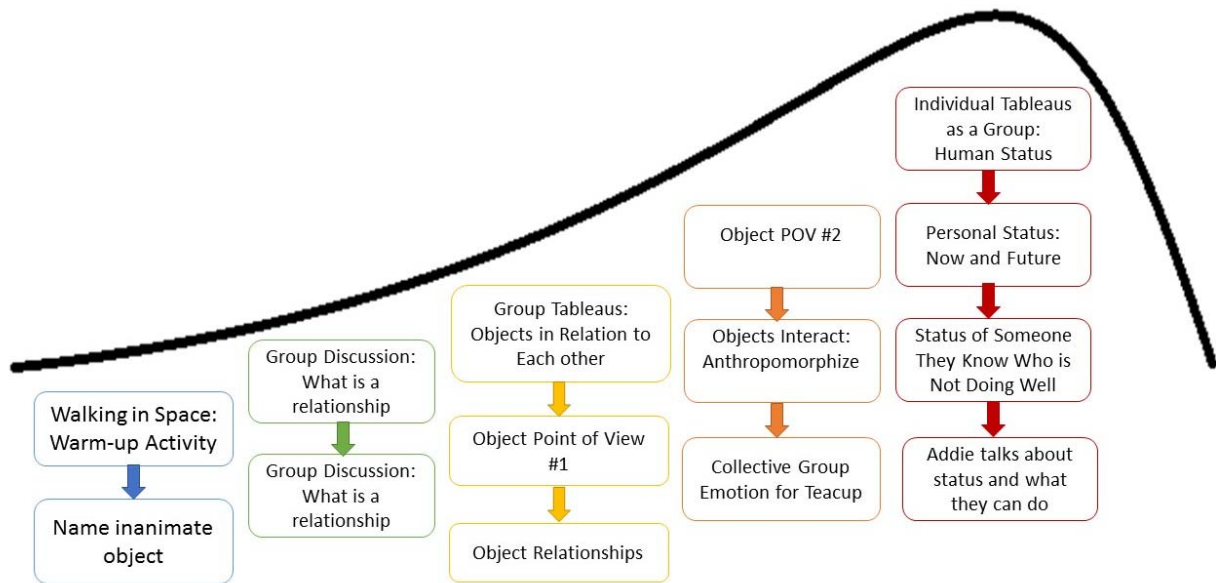

Figure 6.3: One day's micro temporal arc with successive activities.

Planning and Preparation: Warm-Up

Usually, warm-ups consisted of youth walking through the space on stage and being asked by the teachers to intersperse the movement with varying tasks which included striking a

tableau (a frozen picture using their bodies that depicts a concept or story), interacting with a peer or saying something out loud. Often, teachers seemed to utilize a walk around the space to "really use all the space" and then signaled everyone to freeze in various ways. What students did when they froze varied. The teachers placed great value on having some movement, shaking it out and getting into the space of the theater, thereby preparing physically and mentally for class. The malleability of the activity allows for warm-uped to be similar in format while content could differ to serve the specific theme for the day.

On this particular day, the students were asked to freeze and yell out one of the inanimate objects in the room when Addie clapped. With Addie insistently calling for commitment, the students were asked to freeze and represent an inanimate object with their bodies in a tableau. Seemingly a meaningless and strange request, it actually began the engagement with objects which played a pertinent role in getting the students to engage with the theme for the day. It was the first time that it became abundantly clear to me how non-random the warm-up really was.

The concept of inanimate object was carried into a conversation while everyone stood in a circle. Addie guided the following discussion, effectively planning out the theme for that day's class:

Addie: relationships – what is a relationship?

Beatriz: A connection between two people.

Addie: Yes. But right now we're not going to talk about relationships between two
    people, but between objects. For example: toilette, bathtub, sink. What is the
    relationship?

Aitana: They're all in the bathroom.

Addie: Ok, so they're all in the bathroom – there's a relationship. Now, which one has more *status*?

There is a bit of discussion before everyone ends up agreeing that the sink has the most status.

Addie: So, when you are looking around in this room, which object has the least status?

Eric: Those cushions.

Addie: Ok ((she walks over to drag the chair over with the cushions)). These old, black, farted on cushions ((everyone laughs)). These seem pretty low. What else?

The students continue to list things in the room that might not have a lot of status and have a discussion about why or why not. Finally, Addie moves the group into the next phase by introducing the object's point of view.

Violet (teacher): The spike tape.

Addie: Good. Violet, I'd like you to show us with your body the spike tape. Now argue and talk from its point of view. What would the spike tape say?

Flor (chiming in): You just replace me.

Addie: Wow. Being replaceable! That's pretty low.

This portion of the class period served to create a discussion regarding the concepts inanimate objects, relationships and status, but they have only been preliminarily placed in context together. In this way, the group had been preparing for what comes next: taking these concepts and increasing the emotional content when they are brought together. The activity thus far has primed the content for the day reflecting a "preparation stage" in the MTA, but has been relatively low-stakes both in the emotional and physical investment.

Practice and Deliberation: Building Activity

Ending the prior discussion on "being replaceable!" Addie transitioned into a group activity. She gave groups just a few minutes to decide on a collective tableau that would represent multiple inanimate objects in some part of a house. This was a short opportunity for youth to connect with each other and practice coming up with a descriptive tableau to present.

Addie asked the groups to go up in turn and had the rest of the class – acting as the audience – guessed about which objects they were and then to discuss who had the most status – which at times was a hotly debated. In one instance Aitana finally said "the TV has the power to keep people on the sofa, so it has more status," which was supported by Addie's exclamation "Yes! It has the power to keep you trapped on the sofa for hours, damn it!" Here the group entered a discussion on status between these objects.

After a quick walk through space to get everyone moving, Addie had the students sit back down in the theater seats and then revisited the objects they had just displayed in the group tableaus, expanding on the frozen picture by having students insert a point of view monologue to represent the objects in their various status positions.

For one of the scenes, Crystal was called onstage, a student who had been the sink in the original group tableaus which the students had voted as being low status. The following conversation took place while Crystal was onstage as the sink:

> Addie: There are three human essentials: air, food, water. The three threes. Three
> minutes without air, three days without water, three weeks without food. I want
> you to talk about your perspective as the "low status" sink, even though you
> provide water. Water comes out of <u>you</u>, baby.

> Crystal: ((talking hesitantly)) I give you water, you come to me first when you are

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thirsty…

Addie: How does it feel, to be so missused, but to see your own value? Here you are representing the element of water and yet they treat you like this.

Crystal: I feel betrayed.

Here the same characters the students had portrayed before were recycled but now the investment in that "character" was increased as the youth, as seen in Crystal, were asked to add the emotional consequences of status for the individual object.

At one point, Eric, representing the walked-on rug, exclaimed "I'm stepped on. I've had liquids spilled on me. I've been urinated on!" and continued to talk about the "world of anarchy" around him. Addie utilized this speech to introduce the character of the clock which interacts with the rug. By doing this she primed the discussion on which the status of one object is placed *in relation* with each other.

By having introduced point of view monologues, Addie had the group practicing the emotional content of status relationships. This increased the emotional investment students were asked to invest in their small presentations on stage, but was still only building towards what would be required for the later activities. Addie transitions the scenes to a new level when she asks the "clock" to start interacting with the pessimistic "rug" that only sees anarchy.

Before asking students to anthropomorphize and do improvisational skits in which the various status objects talk, Addie pushed the individual point of view, really emphasizing the different ways objects have or do not have status and what the emotional undercurrent of these would be. Throughout all these scenes Addie guided them, adding emotions, asking them to repeat themselves to be louder/more emotional. She really tried to instill a motive or background for the inanimate objects that they were speaking for. The youth applied themselves, but still

relied on Addie to push them to the point of speaking loudly or exclaiming their lines in a way that satisfied the emotional content.

Final Intensive Readiness: Building Emotion

The scenes now not only focused on individual viewpoints based on relational status, but began engaging actual interactions between the various objects. This continued to build the investment in grappling with the issues of relationships and status while continuing to present these in a theatrical format. For the last point of view, Deb called up Aitana, who represented a teacup and mentioned how she has a pretty design and "you put your lips softly on me and drink."

Addie: Oooo I like it. [to the "lips" at which youth giggled or exclaimed "oh!"]

Sebastian, get up there!

Others Students: Ooo! ((chuckling))

Addie: Sebastian you are a human and you are going to sell this cup at a garage sale

Students in the house: Aw!

Addie: You really need the cash. Aitana, convince him to keep you.

Aitana has trouble getting through this at times having to stop and re-start a few times.

At one point she squeezes her eyes shut and presses her fingers to the lids. She takes a breath and says "ok, ok" and shakes it out a little and tries again.

Meanwhile Addie is edging on the scene until:

Sebastian: I have other tea cups

Other Students: ((Audibly gasp))

Addie: Oh! ((Loudly)) Sebastian!

As the emotional content of the scenes was being pushed by Addie, the students had to invest more. Aitana's moments of shaking it out to re-focus reflected increased difficulty, but also commitment to delivering the scene. The engagement with various relational issues – in this case unrequited love – also impacted the students in the audience who began responding to Sebastian's comments toward the teacup. Their collective gasping indicated some kind of shock towards the unfolding scene. The issue of status – a teacup versus the human owner – had become emotionally charged pulling students into the activity. Soon after Addie called a halt and walked onto the stage. She had a discussion about anthropomorphizing, explaining that it's making these inanimate objects human, but then explicated the emotional component:

> Addie: Now, I could just feel the human emotions here. We all know what other tea cups
>
>   means. It means other woman. [To Aitana] how did you feel?
>
> Aitana: It hurt me.

This marks a final shift towards the end goal for the day: from objects to actual human status. In this way the activity had been a final push towards getting the youth to engage with their own and other's status. Important to note here is that Addie needed to maintain flexibility throughout programming. Addie could not have planned for the students to pick a tea-cup. Instead she had a planned end-goal and worked with what the students brought to the room to move along the activities.

After the scene, Addie clapped her hands and had the students once again walk around the room. Even though it was the same activity as before, it was purposely repeated to re-focus the group while introducing a new shift to the stream of activities. Changing the spatial arrangement from students in the audience and a few presenting to all being on stage and moving together shifted the activity and brought the group to the final stage of the micro temporal arc.

Culminating Presentation: Culminating Emotion

As the youth walked around the space Addie began narrating back to them some of the statuses they had just acted out on the stage, pulling on the emotional content specifically. Finally, the youth were instructed to engage in the same kind of activity as the warm-up had been. Addie told the group to think about human status and the lowest possible status of humans – when she called freeze they needed to assume a tableau that represents that lowest status a human can possibly take.

Frozen, most youth ended up on the ground, either lying down or sitting with downcast eyes, hunched shoulders, or chins tilted to the ground. The few standing had very caved-in torsos and hanging heads; they looked like they might fall. A few on the ground had their hands reaching up as if grasping or begging. One girl was sitting cross legged with her hands cupped out in front of her, but she was looking down on her lap.

Addie leaned up against the piano at the side of the stage telling them to hold this position. She very calmly and quietly talked: "you guys nailed it. ((Pauses)) We see them, the homeless. Every day. They carry themselves because there is no one else who will. And it's hard to reach out, because of all the mental issues and other problems. But they, and you, are beautiful in its sadness. I mean, really, you guys nailed this."

The way she spoke was intense, letting the moment sit heavy on students in their tableaus until she snapped out of it, and the youth started moving again in what felt like a flurry of activity, although it was just walking. She told them to think about middle status and high status each time freezing in poses that become progressively taller and more open.

Then Addie moved into quick successive rounds, increasing the intensity in her voice, but also increasing the speed in which the students were asked to react. Addie made the exercise

more real and emotionally charged by directing them to think about their own families: "what is the status you have in your family today, right now", "think about the status in our society that you will have in the future," finally ending with "think of a family member who is struggling right now. The path they are on is not a healthy one. Think about their status ten years from now. You can have hope for them or not. You don't have to share, but it has to be a specific person."

Many of the youth ended up back on the floor the way they had portrayed lowest status. Only a few seemed to show any kind of hope. The youth were as still as I ever saw them and, what felt to me like a heavy silence, permeated the room, which was only broken when Addie continued a narrative for the youth: "What can you do to stop this. What caring or empathy can you give to change this status, because this is pretty damn low." The activities had peaked with a final presentation of tableaus with a high emotional content.

Addie had built towards an emotionally intense culminating activity for the youth and they seem to have bought into the increased focus and collective stage work asked of them. Only after letting the final statement sit in the room for a few long breaths, which on a stage in a tableau can be a very long time, did Addie release the tension when she told the youth to circle up for a short debrief before the programming ended for the day with Addie saying "give yourself a big round of applause." What started as acting out of inanimate objects progressed to students' acting out power relationships in their own lives.

Conclusion

Addie's arrangement of the day's activities offers a vivid example of how activities build on themselves to produce cumulative work reflecting the shape of an MTA. While collective activities with all youth on stage together were not always the end product, it is important to demonstrate that a "final product" does not always entail individual or small group

performances. This highlights the various forms a "culminating performance" can take and the potential for creativity in activities asked of youth. Theater at GDT quite naturally has as an "end product" by often including presenting something on the stage. Other programs may manifest this in different ways building towards a different kind of "product for the day" such as a challenging sports maneuver, playing difficult music together or competing with a peer to practice newly acquired skills.

The everyday routine of an ASP is a key component of engagement, and we need to continually expand our knowledge on how to keep students' attention over the course of days and weeks in order to maintain attendance. The kind of cumulative effort that takes place over the course of the year can occur in small as a micro temporal arc and can help maintain attention and engagement day to day. While lesson planning, it is for teachers important to focus on structuring the activities, allowing for building momentum, rather than forcing only momentary superficial or instantaneous excitement. The ultimate reward for students should be enjoyment and satisfaction from having completed the culminating activity in and of itself, recognizing that these micro arcs will happen next time and each time, culminating in a much larger collective goal. Utilizing the concept of a micro temporal arc can help guide day-to-day lesson planning at structured ASPs. This can be made most impactful if the micro temporal arc fits into an overarching one that progresses over the course of months or a year. Having activities fit a MTA, can be a tool that becomes part of a larger participation equation; as part of other contextual factors, the MTA offers one ingredient that can help promote participation.

Chapter 7

Understanding Green Door Theater and School Contexts from the Youth Perspective

Introduction

After-school programs (ASPs) are often considered to be a space that is markedly different from home, school, or other peer groups. Generally, they are deemed beneficial spaces for youth and, due to being less rigorously structured or subject to restrictions, thereby offering more inclusive and flexible environments than can schools. As a result, research has suggested that levels of engagement, enjoyment, and belonging (amongst other markers) are higher at after-school programs, as compared to school, based on youth's subjective experiences of these spaces (Larson 2000; Shernoff and Vandell 2007; Vandell et al. 2005).

Importantly, understanding ASPs as *compared* to other learning environments such as school, is a central undertaking for understanding ASP participation as an individual's experience never occurs in isolation but should be understand as nested within a web of contexts in which they spend their time (Halpern 1999). In addition, the answer to the question "is there a difference?" can be further broken down into sub-categories of "what differences?" that can do more for understanding the nuances between an ASP and school. This chapter seeks to document such differences for the focal students at the Green Door Theater (GDT) described in Chapter 2.

It has been noted that, for many ASPs, students are able to experience more engagement and well-being at the programs than at school. This is also supported by the ample documentation that there are often tensions in school contexts that arise for students from minority, low-income, or non-dominant households (Foster 2000; Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson 1995; McDermott 1997; Philips 1993; Heath 1982). ASPs being ranked higher on various positive experiential components should, however, not be a foregone conclusion, but rather

should be further explored as an empirical phenomenon with various nuances. First, some students enjoy their school environment despite popular cultural portrayals of indifferent and apathetic "teens." Second, not all ASPs actually are positively experienced by youth. Research literature has clearly documented that the presumed benefits of ASPs are not guaranteed and experiences can be neutral or even detrimental depending on factors that affect the quality of programming such as positive relationships with staff (Chen and Harklau 2017; Eccles et al. 2003; Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois 2011).

This article presents both quantitative and qualitative data to understand how, in general, school and Green Door Theater's (GDT) after-school program are experienced differentially. As part of the research, students were asked to respond to a questionnaire and rate their experiences at both GDT and school. While GDT, on average, increased general scores for well-being as defined through ecocultural and flow theory (see below), examining individual questionnaire variables reveals that the difference in scores is not consistent for each category (i.e., each separate variable). The statistical findings are contextualized by qualitative data. The discussion will be focused on the general differences in reported experience between school and GDT as well as those variables on which GDT and school had more similar impact on scores. Of particular interest will be students' reports about experiencing activities as challenging, where scores were similar and low for both school and GDT contexts.

Methods

This chapter draws on two sources of data from a larger ethnographic study during the 2015-2016 school year. The first are quantitative responses to a semantic differential questionnaire regarding activities and experiences at school and at GDT. The second are

qualitative data collected through participant observations and interviews with 22 youth at GDT and five school visits to three schools.

Quantitative data were collected using a modified experience sampling method. Instead of having youth respond to surveys at randomized intervals using a beeper, my interest in the school context compared to GDT *in general* led me to have youth fill out surveys right after school and then again right after GDT programming. In addition, randomized spot experience sampling is relatively burdensome on participants as the normal flow of activities is frequently interrupted resulting in data collection spanning relatively short periods of time (e.g., a week). While data being collected on school and GDT "in general" resulted in lower resolution, it allowed me to collect information over multiple weeks throughout the school year.

Since I was interested in the concept of well-being as reflected by subjective experience, I chose to create a survey utilizing semantic differentials which "name the target concept and ask people to rate their feelings toward it on a series of variables," (Bernard 2011, 252). Semantic differentials have, for example, been used to rate high school students' intellectual and emotional attitudes towards chemistry (Kahveci 2015), middle school students' perceptions of teachers in relation to "readiness" dimensions (Hao 2016), and to examine possible information sources' (i.g. peer evaluations of professors and online sources) effects on college students' impressions about prospective professors (Liang et al. 2015). For the purposes of this study, the semantic differentials were focused on understanding perceived emotional experience of and perceptions about the school and theater and the activities they participated in in either context. The semantic differentials I chose on the survey reflected components from two theories regarding well-being: ecocultural and flow theory. Ecocultural theory holds that development and well-being stem from meaningful participation in activities considered to be important to a contextually salient

community (Weisner 2014). Flow theory emphasizes a balance between challenge, skills, and enjoyment as producing well-being through complete focus and/or absorption and optimal learning environments (Csikszentmihalyi 2009; Shernoff and Csikszentmihalyi 2009), otherwise known as "flow."

Semantic differentials are implemented by asking students to rate dimensions of experience that each fall between two poles, with a sliding scale; for example, students were asked to rate how "involved" or "uninvolved" they felt while at school or at GDT, where 1 corresponded to uninvolved and a 7 to involved. Higher scores indicate positive dimensions and a 4 would represent a neutral middle ground between the two poles. As a result, a higher score indicates greater "well-being." The questionnaire consisted of eight semantic differentials: 5 pertaining to their experience (Involved/Uninvolved, Good/Bad, Motivated/Bored, Part of Group/Solitary or Left Out, Important/Unimportant) and three pertaining to experience of activities (Challenging/Easy, Interesting/Boring, Meaningful/Meaningless). Responses were converted into a 7-point scale, though the questionnaire did not use numbers, relying on only spatial orientation instead. In addition, youth could expand on their answers with two open-ended questions if they thought more contextualization was needed. A score of "4" is representative of a neutral stance between the two differentials.

I had questionnaires available to be filled out over the span of 10 weeks. In total, 15 of the youth completed questionnaires. The youth with the least responses completed questionnaires on three separate occasions. Three youth responded on eight separate days and the rest had various amounts between those two. Since there were multiple responses per participant, data were grouped by subject for the purpose of analysis, because individual participants might vary in, for example, how they used the scales (e.g., some participants might use wider portions of the

scale than others, or tend to use higher or lower numbers on average). In addition, the specific variables (semantic differentials) respondents were asked on the questionnaire came from a possibly infinite number of variables representing well-being I could have chosen from. The wording of the variables I chose may have had an impact on responses if, for example, using a particular word evokes a specific reaction as compared to another. For those reasons, analysis was done using a linear mixed effects model where items were grouped by participant, and where question item ("variable") was modeled as a random factor to estimate the effect of differences between questions on variation in participants' responses. For example, if "Daniel," participant ID #1, is overall more of an optimist as compared to his peers, I might expect Daniel's answers to consistently be "biased" towards positive scores for both school and theater. The mixed effects model nests Daniel's responses model how different his responses were on average from those of other students. In this way, "Participant," and in a similar manner "Differential Item" (the specific semantic differential asked), are considered as random effects as compared to the fixed effect of interest: school vs. theater. Linear mixed models allowed me to estimate the degree of variance in responses that was due to each factor in question: variation across participants (modeled as a random factor), variation across semantic differential question items (random factor), and variation between the school and theater contexts (fixed factor).

For statistical analysis I used lme4 (Bates et al. 2015) in the statistical program R (R Core Team 2016) to perform linear mixed effects analyses for two scenarios. Model 1 compared the effects of school and theater contexts on average differences in semantic differential scores. Model 2 compared the effects of school and theater contexts on each semantic differential, separately. In Model 1, the fixed effect was the context (school versus theater), and random effects included participants ("ID"), the specific semantic differential I used (marked as

"Differential Item"), and an interaction term for the specific semantic differential and context. For the second scenario my fixed effect was an interaction between context and the specific semantic differential denoting that the value of response was dependent on the context and each individual question on the questionnaire instead of just the context as was the case in scenario 1. As random effects I designated the participant and the specific semantic differential. Following Cumming (2014), results will be reported using point estimates and confidence intervals (CIs) rather than focusing on p-value testing.

Results

Model 1

When comparing just the two contexts, theater affected response by increasing scores by an average of $1.4 \pm .3$ SE on the 7 point numeric scale. Table 7.1 shows the full parameters of the mixed effects linear model. In other words, the theater contexts increased students' responses by more than one point, on average, on the 7 point scale, compared to the school context.

Factor	Estimate	Variance	SD	SE
Fixed effects				
Context school	4.5			.3
Context theater	5.9			.19
Random effects				
ID		.55	.75	
Semantic differential		.27	.53	
Context:Semantic differential		.11	.34	

Table 7.1: Parameters of model 1 showing estimates, variance, standard deviation, and standard error.

Figure 7.1 and Table 7.2 depict the point estimates for school and theater with the 95% CIs side by side. Importantly, the 95% confidence intervals for school and theater do not overlap indicating a significant impact of context on the youth's responses. In addition, neither theater nor school had a point estimate lower than the neutral score of 4 after adjustments for the random effects had been made. However, the lower CI for school was just below the neutral point, while theater's is well above.
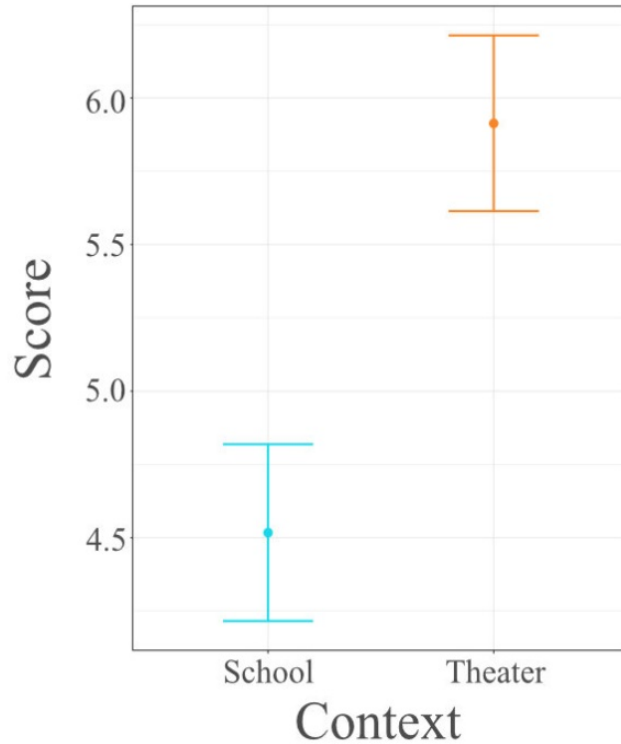
Figure 7.1: Graphical representation of point estimates and CIs for school and theater total effect on scores. R formula: value ~ Context + (1 | ID) + (1 | differentialItem) +   (1 | Context:differentialItem).

Context	Point Estimate	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
School	4.52	3.93	5.12
Theater	5.91	5.33	6.50

Table 7.2: Report of point estimates and CI's for School and Theater for total differences with the following R formula: value ~ Context + (1 | ID) + (1 | differentialItem) + (1 | Context:differentialItem).

Model 2

The second model was used to find point estimates for each individual semantic differential in order look at the different effects based on components of well-being (see table 7.3 for parameters). Figure 7.2 visualizes point estimates and 95% CIs for response scores to each individual semantic differential.

Factor	Estimate	Variance	SD	SE
Fixed effects **School Context**				
Involved	5.03			.57
Good	5.17			.57
Motivated	4.04			.57
Part of group	5.35			.57
Important	4.96			.57
Challenging	3.78			.57
Interesting	3.93			.57
Meaningful	3.82			.57
Fixed effects **Theater Context**				
Involved	6.42			.56
Good	6.34			.56
Motivated	5.9			.56
Part of group	6.31			.56
Important	6.12			.56
Challenging	4.44			.56
Interesting	5.93			.56
Meaningful	5.91			.56
Fixed effects				
ID	5.03	.55	.74	
Semantic differential	5.03	.26	.51	

Table 7.3: Parameters for model 2 reporting estimates, variance, standard deviations and standard errors.

Overall, the higher average scores for theater compared to school context, across the items, reflects the above finding that theater positively impacted scores. For each individual variable there was a positive slope from school to theater; scores increased based on the theater context. However, there are a few noteworthy outcomes from looking at the separate variables. The school versus theater context had a different effect size on each individual semantic differential. While CIs for school and theater did not overlap for most semantic differentials, they did so for three – feeling Part of a Group/Left Out, feeling Important/Unimportant, activities as

Challenging/Easy – and came close to overlapping on one – feeling Good/Bad. The overlaps indicate that while effects of the theater context were in the positive direction compared to school context for each item, the differences are not significant for those three variables. Ratings of activities as challenging were relatively low for both school and theater, but were especially low for theater compared to other scores, indicating that youth did not feel particularly challenged in either context, especially when compared to other variables. Context did not have a large impact on scores for the semantic differential Challenging/Easy.

In addition, the average impact on scores from the contexts never resulted in polar opposite answers. In fact, school, while at times dipping below the neutral score of four, never had CIs below three for any one of the variables. In comparison though, theater did impact the scores on feeling Involved, Good, and Part of Group so that the CI's were within range of a high score of 7. The variables with the most substantial in difference between means for the two contexts when taking CI's into account were Motivated/Unmotivated, Meaningful/Meaningless, and Interesting/Boring.
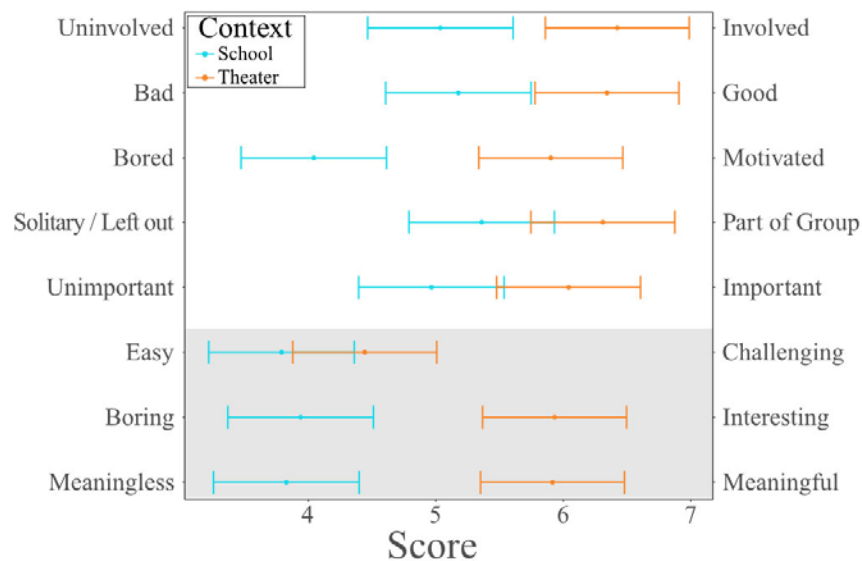

Figure 7.2: Point estimates and CIs for each semantic differential. Shaded region indicates questions that were about activities and un-shaded region was about general experience. R formula: value ~ Context* differentialItem + (1|ID) + (1| differentialItem).

Discussion

Overarching Differences between School and Theater

The finding that theater positively impacts scores overall and on each of the individual variables (though to varying degrees) supports much of the literature surrounding ASPs and the arts stating that these learning contexts are associated with positive subjective experiences. GDT, like others, is an opt-in environment that the youth *choose* to attend. Though their reasons for enrolling in the program varied from parent encouragement, friends, or wanting to fulfill their service hour requirements for school, many youth pointedly remarked that they were planning on continuing attendance the following year because they themselves wanted to do so, and, in some cases, despite having completed their service-hours for school. For some, the sentiment came across as a point of pride. Blue (15-year-old female), who was sitting in the lobby with some snacks, mentioned "Oh, I already have all my hours. Way too many. But I'm still coming!" In fact, 61% of the youth returned the year after my fieldwork (not including high school graduates) and the year after that 100% of attending youth returned. In other words, they actively wanted to be attending GDT.

In comparison, school was described more as a necessary part of life. When I asked Andres (13 year-old male) during his interview how he felt about school in general he responded: "Meh. ((shoulder shrug)) It's like meh. It's school. It's what you're supposed to go through. And we go through it. So, if you complain about it, there's really no point. You just have to go. Meh." For Andres and others, there was a sense of fatalism surrounding school – in other words they were not there because they specifically enjoyed it but rather because they had to be, and there was not much point in fighting it. Aitana went so far as to liken school to a kind of place holder in her life until the next chapter could start: "Like [school] just passes time.

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Sometimes I'm ready to get out. Like, ready to get a job, not the whole college thing… I feel like everyone feels like you learn everything in school, but you- you don't fully." Her description of school as serving to just pass time makes clear that while attendance may be necessary, it was not particularly enjoyable. Aitana's comment also underscores that school did not convey all the knowledge that she thought was important to learn.

Celaena (15-year-old female) did explain that "it's boring if I don't have school," because school allows her to be with friends and gives her something to do. She enjoyed learning in theory, "but I just don't like it when I don't have the right classes that I want. Because what am I going to do with AP computer science? It's the worst class ever." She further stated that "they" placed her in that class in which she had no choice. So while school has some merits, it is punctuated by a lack of control and choice of classes, reflected in Andre's and Aitana's comments as well, and a strong dislike for a lot of the classes they have to take. In this way, school can be seen as a necessary component in youth's lives that they begrudgingly accept, but at times can have positive inclinations towards as well. This is consistent with the survey results that show theater to have a higher score overall for well-being, but school scores are above the midpoint on average. I believe this is important to appreciate, because it is easy to conclude a false dichotomy where school is in all ways "bad" and ASPs are in all ways "good." Rather, they both have important and beneficial things to offer even if one is experienced as better by the youth. As Heath and McLaughlin (1994) have pointed out, there is much to be gained from understanding both contexts and how they can balance each other to create ongoing learning partnerships to better serve youth. I will now turn to looking at the variables where the means were not as substantially differentiated between school and theater.

Specific Variables: "Part of Group," "Good," and "Important"

Having higher scores for theater did not preclude youth from having beneficial experiences at school. Youth responses reflect that feeling "Part of a Group" and "Good" – with CI scores overlapping for the contexts – was something that was not significantly increased at the theater. Based on other data, this may largely be attributed to their friends and a few select teachers based on qualitative data. During their interviews, youth would often frame school as a time in which they are with their friends before school started, during class, and while eating lunch. Perhaps surprisingly, the word "friend" did not come up often during interviews in regards to GDT. Instead, GDT was seen as a larger collective that they enjoyed being a part. In fact, when asked during interviews what the most important things to experience at GDT were, one of the top free-list responses was some form of a "positive collective" (my words), for which some youth explicitly used the term "family." In comparison, hanging out and being in class together with specific friends was more integral to the experience of school – many of the students mentioned getting support from friends in the school context. And while group size varied by individual, all of the youth said they felt like they had a friend group to be a part of at school possibly facilitating the high scores for "Part of Group."

Specific teachers also seemed to play an important role in making youth feel validated, comfortable, and in some cases, enthusiastic about school. All of the youth mentioned one – and in some cases, two – teachers that were excellent and made them feel understood or engaged in class and which may have contributed to youth feeling good, important, and part of a group. Unfortunately, the specific teachers came across as anomalous compared to the standard relationships youth had with their teachers, which may be a reason for school lower scores on many of the variables. For example, when I asked Malena (15-year-old female) to describe one teacher she did not like after describing her favorite teacher, she laughed, commenting, "I have a

lot." The golden teachers were those that could evoke a positive feeling and with whom students made connections, felt understood by, and felt like they themselves were validated. Anna (13-year-old female) described her favorite teacher as follows:

> "He's my favorite teacher. Mainly it's because, like, he helps with my homework.
> Like he _gets_ that I'm a different person. And so he helps me a lot. 'Cuz he knows I
> don't get material. And then his class- he never makes you feel like you don't- that
> you are bad at asking a question. He doesn't think I'm bad at asking questions.
> And so, me, he encourages to ask questions and to like get through. 'Cuz he's like
> 'I was really bad at English,' and thanks to him I have an A in English."

Anna felt understood by her teacher and that he really "gets" her by understanding her difficulties and actively helping her through them. Anna also pointed out that her teacher shared in the experience of being bad at English. Teachers who share qualities similar to Anna's favorite teacher may also have positive impacts pertaining to feelings of importance, involvement, and generally feeling "good."

Belle (15-year-old female) described a teacher she loved likening her class to having some theater time at school:

> "I love that [history] teacher. She's amazing! We always have group discussions.
> She's like 'you can say whatever you want – just with certain restriction. But, like,
> 'say what's on your mind, nothing is wrong.' Unless it really is wrong and then–
> ((laughs)) I like debating. I like- I like [having] my opinion. And sometimes my
> opinion is wrong and I like that she points that out. She's like 'hey that wasn't
> right, but for the next time...' She gives me feedback and she lets me, like, say
> what I feel and it's like– it's very much like here ((waves her hand at the theater)).
> She makes– history class is like my theater for like an hour or two at school."

Though Belle's teacher fostered a feeling of being part of a group and involvement differently than Anna's teacher, Belle felt validated for who she was – in this case an opinionated person who likes to have a chance to express her views – in the classroom. Belle made clear that this was more common and normalized at GDT by comparing her history class to theater. For Sebastian (14-year-old male) having a teacher use humor for interactions was important: "Well,

my favorite class is, like, history. That teacher, like, interacts with you and he's like- humorous. [He] jokes. I like history right now." Sebastian's affinity towards history at the time was largely dependent on the specific teacher, and through the teacher he also grew to like the subject itself.

In this way, the youth's schools provide beneficial experiences that the youth characterize in positive terms. Leo's (16-year-old male) comment really drives home that teachers have a large influence on making school a positive context: "I want to say [I don't like] physics. The thing is that, I've really liked that class [in the past]. Physics was really, really great… until now," when a teacher switch occurred. The past teacher in Leo's opinion had been very good: "She taught everything in the most clearest and concise way that I ever heard a teacher do." After transitioning to a new teacher, Leo now describes physics as his least favorite class despite having a general liking for the subject.

Despite these positive school attributes, the scores for "Interesting" and "Meaningful" pertaining specifically to activities (shown in the shaded region in Figure 7.2), clearly denote that theater had a more positive impact on the actual substance of participation than school. Similar to issues of consistency above, Beatriz (15-year-old female) commented that "some of the classes [at school] I'm more interested in and some are not as interesting." The argument that youth spend time in diverse contexts may be a valuable frame to apply to school by itself: that the context is split into microcosms largely influenced by the specific teachers. Unfortunately, teachers seen as good by youth were few in number, creating "pockets" of well-being throughout the school day. Comparatively, GDT arguably provided a more uniform experience that became reflected in higher scores for the theater context.

Specific Variable: "Challenging"

Perhaps a concerning finding is that the youth for both school and theater do not show high scores for activities being challenging. According to flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi 2009), feeling challenged is critical to experiencing engagement and well-being. Larson (2000) has connected challenging content in out-of-school time to what he calls "concerted engagement," which is important for motivation and development. For the school context, youth speak of school *generally* in terms of stress, having a lot of work to do, and concerns regarding their grade, but when discussing normal classroom activities the word challenging rarely came up. This is contrary to observations I made during school visits during which seemingly struggled with class contents – at the very least they frequently could not answer questions or do assigned work, though this could have been for other reasons such as boredom and disinterest. Perhaps having the activities at school be scored as more boring and meaningless resulted in a lack of engagement with challenges in the first place. It was not uncommon for youth to report that they felt their teachers did not teach or were bad at teaching and, as a result, classes did not make sense (with a few good exceptions some of which were described above).

For example, Celaena commented about one of her classes that "it's hard because the teacher doesn't really teach us. He like gives us a book online and he expects us to read it ourselves and understand everything the book tells us ourselves, but we don't understand anything. So we're mostly just- share work with each other and sit in there and do nothing." It was not uncommon during my school visits to find students be told to do individual or group work during which, inevitably, they made half-hearted efforts or did not engage with the activity at all. As Csikszentmihalyi (2009) points out, challenge has to be balanced with perceived skills or abilities in order to foster deep engagement or flow. In this case, a lack of outset

understanding and active teaching of materials led to a low challenge situation where students did not engage the materials.

For GDT, the low scores for "Challenging" also seems difficult to rectify. Youth often commented that the theater had them do difficult activities that made them nervous or "go over my comfort zone." Despite individuals feeling "out of their comfort zone" at times, the theater itself creates a space in which it is possible to do so. For example, Juliana (14-year-old female) went on to explain that being out of one's comfort zone at GDT is "nice. 'Cuz at the same time I'm learning about myself. Here [at GDT] it's a comfortable zone. So they won't make fun about you for going beyond what you're used to." The theater creates a collective comfort zone in which youth can get out of their own individual comfort zone.

Additionally, theater as an art form may be perpetuating a feeling of leisure (Trilla, Ayuste, and Agud 2014). As had been discussed in Chapter 4, for Leo and Roxas the goal of going on stage was to coax laughter from the audience, even if working scenes could be hard at times. Perhaps having the push beyond a comfort zone occurring in a very comfortable, leisurely and less structured environment compared to school, allowed for "challenging" to appear less threatening and therefore the experience is not defined in those terms. It could indicate that when properly supported and comfortable youth do not subjectively feel "challenge" despite engaging in challenging activities.

Another alternative, as was presented in Chapter 4 with Aitana's pathway through the gospel circle, there can be delayed effects of GDT's efforts where students do not actively realize they are working on themselves and developing until sometime later. If this were the case, it would align itself well with ecocultural theory where communities provide cultural and social scaffolding around activities and that development is the result of small, incremental changes in

participation. In some ways, GDT may be "sneaking" challenging activities under the youth's "challenge radar." However, the conscious experience of challenge could help make activities more engaging and rewarding for the youth according to flow theory.

This does not mean that students never felt challenged in either context. For example, Mickey left a comment on the questionnaire when he had rated school activities as challenging with a "7" that "I felt today was challenging because I had to take 2 exams." In this case, having a specific formally graded assignment drove him to feel challenged. Aitana, commented on GDT that "it was challenging [today] because I kept getting flashbacks of my past." It was a day during which activities centered on anger and frustrations, apparently making them challenging for Aitana to confront. Though for different reasons, Mickey and Aitana both rated activities as challenging because there was something at stake for them under the specific day's circumstances: for Mickey a formal evaluation and for Aitana dealing with her own emotions. In this case, particular days may be experienced as challenging but it is not a consistent condition of participation. Having something at stake was also made clear at GDT when students had high ratings for challenging activities associated with comments regarding their end-of-year performance. The results indicate that both GDT and school could potentially do more to create challenges for youth or at least make the youth actively and/or consciously engage with the challenges more.

Conclusion

It is important to not make a priori assumptions that participation in ASPs is positive. Each program can influence youth's perceptions, engagement, and well-being differently. Having utilized a semantic differential questionnaire constructed through components presented by ecocultural and flow theory, GDT is shown as generally increasing scores. However, the

difference in scores is not consistent for each variable, and examining these differences is an important way to further understand youth experiences at ASPs and schools. Given the overall higher rating of GDT, I would also have expected youth to rate activities as challenging – in a positive engaging manner – according to flow theory. Pulling apart the variables leaves room to address possible improvements. For example, future studies could aim to understanding subjective experiences of "challenge" under the more voluntary and art-based conditions at ASPs. It could, for example, be the case that the word "challenging" fundamentally does not apply to these situations from youth perspectives.

However, as was discussed, there may be something said for challenges occurring without being perceived as "challenging" because they take place in comfortable contexts. In a discussion of youth who do language translating or "brokering" and Vygotskian "zone of proximal development" – which requires activities to be difficult but doable with supportive scaffolds – Orellana (2009: 107) emphasized that adults can facilitate a comfortable space which makes youth more likely to engage in the challenging situation: "Young people did not always seem to feel comfortable admitting to adults when they did not understand something, but Mr. Vick had created a comfort level that facilitated the construction of this learning zone." This is not unlike the description of a communal comfort in which the individual comfort zone can be broken that I describe above. Challenges may be felt or experiences as less threatening when it takes place in a comfort zone. A question to be further developed is whether or not the reduction of perceived or experienced challenge due to feeling comfortable makes challenging activities any less rewarding in terms of flow or engagement. We can almost think about GDT being able to "sneak in" challenges because the teachers and environment evoke a feeling of safety. Perhaps

the concept of scaffolding is best suited to situations for skills, support, *and* comfort are well balanced.

The qualitative data gave a more nuanced picture of the variables, by for example, pointing out that the relatively high rating of feeling "Part of Group" at school may be due to individual teachers and friends rather than a generalized sense of belonging as compared to GDT where it does seem to be an overarching community. This qualitative difference may be one way to appreciate why ASPs are often more successful at creating places of belonging for youth. Importantly, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data together can help provide better explanations of difference – in this case between youth school and GDT experiences.

Chapter 8

Curtain Call: Final Thoughts and Conclusion

I have described After-School Programs (ASPs) as social institutions that are seen as beneficial in youth's developmental trajectories, and are themselves rich environments with numerous interactions between individuals and structural factors occurring on a daily basis. I made clear that most previous analysis has largely focused on outcomes, with some notable and influential exceptions. While understanding plausible outcomes through ASP participation is critical to understanding the transitional functionality of these institutions, it does little to answer the questions of *how* and *why* such programs succeed. Even reports that outline components or "ingredients" for successful quality programming do not often discuss how these mechanisms play out in everyday interactions, processes, and participation. This dissertation looked beyond outcomes to examine *in situ* experiences within the context of GDT's after-school programming.

To explore *in situ* experiences **Chapters 3** and **4,** electrodermal activity was used to examine in-depth individual experience during shared, cultural activities. It became clear, that while there may be a normative form of participation and pathway towards well-being, youth are able to traverse their way differently. The implications are potentially far reaching when we consider the standardized, normative behavioral and participatory expectations communities have for children and youth – especially those associated with education. Even those youth who appear to be disengaged or not meeting expectations, may be on a road towards well-being (though I cannot argue that this would always be the case) because they were still generally accepted within the GDT context or community. **Chapter 5**, took a step back to examine how programming was co-constructed by youth and the teaching artist, rather than each particular individual's experience. Their successful co-construction, through active and interrelated

participation in the theater space, may be one way GDT is able to produce quality after-school programming. Understanding the active give and take between youth and teachers, and a degree of flexibility in activities, allows many quality programming components to come to fruition. Participation in activities is also shaped by Addie's (teaching artist) overarching tactic in lesson planning which I termed the "micro temporal arc" in **Chapter 6**. Finally, taking even a further step away from the micro, **Chapter 7** compared youth's evaluation of both their school and GDT experiences, utilizing questionnaire responses to frame the discussion. In this way, the after-school theater program is not isolated from youth's formal education, but is understood in relation to it. While GDT showed increased positive scores overall, it did not do so consistently for all survey questions pertaining to well-being, as defined from ecocultural and flow theory perspectives. The discussion utilizing qualitative evidence suggests why some of the differences may exist.

Other Lessons from GDT: "Freakin' Angel!"

It was mentioned when discussing the teacher study sample that there had been a high staff turnover rate the year my research took place, but this was not otherwise extensively discussed when the focus was on the program and the students. I will take a moment here to make the case that, in order to enact quality components of a successful program such as positive relationships and feelings of belonging, simple staff time spent with youth must be a valued, and funded, component of ASPs. Addie had described that when there are not enough teachers, all brain power is spent on just keeping the program running and some valuable components do get lost in that process despite actual "class" continuing fairly consistently. Here I will draw on two case examples: Sebastian and Belle.

Belle was one of the students who, by many definitions an "at-risk" students, had a lot to gain from continual attendance at GDT. In order to fully understand what GDT means to her, it is important to establish her as a student at school. While Belle enjoyed a few of her teachers and liked her friends at school, she was constantly at war with the structural power dynamics of schools: "Teachers… they don't really like me, because I'm very sassy! Like, you don't mess [with] me. I just give them attitude sometimes." However, the sense I got was not that she "gave attitude" for no apparent reasons, but in direct response to the hegemonic control exerted by teachers. When I visited school with her there was a vivid example in action that I got to witness.

Belle was sitting outside during "nutrition" (what I had known as snack when I was attending school) talking and sharing food with her friends. At that point Mr. T showed up and stops near Belle's table standing behind her.

Mr. T: Belle!

Belle: What? What just happened?

Mr. T: Belle. ((*he uses a direct, firm voice. Having stopped a couple of feet away from her round table with friends and instead of stepping closer he points in front of him to the spot where he wants her to stand*))

Belle: What. What did I do? ((*She slowly gets up and walks over to him, eyes rolling towards her friends when her back is turned to Mr. T*))

Mr. T: What does 'No privileges mean?'

Belle: ((*to the table/herself*)) What just happened?! ((*She raises her hands in a half-hearted confused shrug*))

As it turned out, Belle had gotten in trouble for something else a while ago and therefore had 'no privileges,' which meant she was not allowed to wear her class shirt instead of the normal uniform shirt on Fridays. Both shirts were still grey. Normally on Fridays, the dress code was slightly alleviated for a few permitted items, such as college sweatshirts.

Belle: You never told me that. I didn't know.

Mr. T: Yes, I did. You can't wear it

Belle: Ugh. Fine. I won't wear it next week.

Mr. T: Go get yourself another shirt ((he points towards the office)).

Belle: I didn't know! I know now.

Mr. T: Belle. Get another shirt.

Belle: ((*sitting back down at her table*)) I'm eating my waffle! ((*mumbling*)) Let
me finish my waffle.

Mr. T: Belle! Now.

Belle: YA VOY! [*I'm going!*]

*Before Belle can walk off another teacher stops her, grabbing her by both
shoulders and leans down so his face is fairly close to hers.*

Teacher: Belle. Clam down. It's Friday. You get two days off after this, just suck
it up.

Belle: ((*to me as we walk towards the office*)) He's my favorite. He looks out for
us… Ugh. I hate this school! I've been wearing this shirt for weeks and all
of a sudden he decides to pick on me. I mean, whatever. You [Mr.T] look
like an idiot anyways. It's just fucked up.

Based on her other descriptions and things I saw, this really was not an unusual

occurrence for Belle. In comparison, she felt extremely "herself" at GDT and loved the

environment, the class, and the teachers. Anything she ever said about the theater was

positive. However, she had stopped coming for a while, admitting that she started

hanging out with friends that may not have been the best influence for her: "I prioritized

them and I stopped going to programs. I started ditching my tutoring classes. Which is

[when] everything went downhill." It was then that she got a call from Benno at the

theater (he was one of the staff members who quit during my research year). Belle goes

on to describe:

> Belle: And then, when this semester was going to start Benno calls me, he's like:
> "Hey. So I was wondering if you were still interested. You missed [GDT] last
> semester, but we're starting again. So this could be a new thing, your fresh start."
> And then um, and then, um, it's like 'yeah!' So, I came back. Like I felt w-wanted.
> 'Cuz at that point, um, I- just- things weren't going well and then, like out of
> nowhere! Freakin angel! I get this phone call saying "Hey, we want 'cha back.
> We enjoy your company. Come back to us if you're interested. Let us know and
> call."

To Belle, having Benno call and reaffirm a positive demeanor in relation to her was a

tremendous moment, one that she describes as what she needed. Unfortunately, after Benno left,

there was no one to fill that position; even making a simple phone call like the one Belle received

did not occur after that to my knowledge. The following year Belle stopped coming again for

similar reasons, but a new person to fill Benno's shoes had not been hired until half way through

the year. While Belle returned on one occasion after I told her I'd like to meet up with her, she

did not maintain attendance. I suppose her "angel" was not there to push her and make her feel

truly wanted. However, I would argue that youth such as Belle, who constantly felt at odds with

her school environment, really needed to feel welcomed back into a community that made her

feel so at ease and part of a family (she used those terms). Programs such as GDT need paid

workers who are there just for these purposes, such as staying in touch with youth and making

them feel *wanted* , which is, perhaps, as important as the classes themselves for some students.

In another case, Sebastian who had been coming because he needed service-hours for

having gotten into trouble, actually ended up enjoying theater classes. He described Addie in the

following way: "[She's] crazy, but in a good way, you know? You can learn - I learned a lot

from her. She always gives, like, constructive criticism. Like, 'you can do this…'" Sebastian goes on to mention that, while he feels his part in the show is very small, "I feel happy to be a part of this," and that he would come back the next year. Sebastian ended up missing the end-of-year performance – something Addie takes extremely seriously as being there for the show is at the heart of "commitment" and "responsibility" for her. I was never able to find out why, but he did come back to the theater the following week when programming had ended for the year and asked Dana if he could sign up for the next year. Being in the back with Addie, I did not hear this conversation, but Dana came to the back to report back to Addie:

Dana: So, Sebastian just showed up.

Addie: What was his excuse for not being in the show?

Dana: He just said he had stuff to do. And he goes, "Can I sign up for next year?"

And I was, like, "I'm not sure, you need to figure this out."

Addie: He missed the whole part of leadership. Leadership is a sense of responsibility. None of these kids are professional. But the idea of it is, if you have a team then your team needs you. That you're in the tribe- if you're not in the tribe, then you're not in the tribe.

Dana: They [the youth] didn't have a core person and we're telling them they need to make a commitment. [Losing] Gaby and Benno. Both people who were in charge of their program. So, it's not comple- I don't put it all on them, I put it a lot on-

Addie: No, I can't blame the kid- it's really where did I fail?

While Addie and Dana clearly found it unacceptable that Sebastian did not come for the end-of-year performance, they understand that the year had been complicated and that no one

had been there to really keep the youth accountable. Under the circumstances, as far as I know, Sebastian and Belle never received further calls or follow-ups and both ended up not coming to the program anymore. The program needs a "Benno" who is there for these purposes, so that youth such as Sebastian and Belle can get their second chances. Both had shown engagement, but both needed the extra support for various reasons to follow through on attendance. For ASPs in general, having a person whose function is solely to keep you in the program like these staff had been, may make the program's influence broaden to more youth that might otherwise drop out. While I have never filled out a funding application for an ASP, I can imagine that convincing the funders that what may seem a tangential job description such as the one Benno filled, as compared to the actual teaching artist, could be difficult to defend. However, what I have seen at GDT points to anything but it being tangential.

The "Opt-In" Confound

It has not been discussed yet in this dissertation, but a blatant confound to the research is that the youth present at GDT chose to be there. That is, there may be something about the youth, their families, or another contextual factor that makes them more likely to choose GDT as an ASP in the first place, or ASPs as a suitable activity at all. A resulting consequence is that we may not see as much contention as there could be if youth were randomly assigned to the program, since youth who conflicted with the context may have already self-selected out. I have tried, despite this inherent bias, to document at least some of the points of contention between teachers and youth that nonetheless remained as was the case in Chapter 7.

What I can report, is that focal youth attribute various factors as initiating their enrollment at GDT. Table 8.1 depicts how many times a certain category came up when youth described how/why they started at GDT during interviews. The heavy skew towards their own

desire/volition to be in the program ("Self"), their parents either encouraging or enrolling them, and their friends getting involved does indeed point to a possible predisposition that they themselves and their social networks had that preempted joining the program.

Reason Category	Percentage
Self	33%
Friend(s)	23%
Parent	23%
Service Hours	13%
Sibling	3%
Teacher	3%

Table 8.1: Percentages of reasons for joining GDT. Percentages were taken by number of times a category was mentioned devided by the total number of reasons given during interviews (N=30).

However, most also mentioned that they continued attendance because they wanted to, felt personal commitment towards the program, and genuinely enjoyed being a part of the community. It is also important to note that, of the youth who stated getting their required service hours fulfilled was the main reason for joining, all stayed after their hours had been completed. So while there does seem to be a confounding factor in what got them in the door or enrolled, GDT to some extent was eliciting future participation and engagement. However, this still does not preclude the initial issue of a pre-existing confounding factor that influences program participation. While I did not focus on it in this study, future research could aim to carefully document the "how, why, and when" reasons for joining and reasons for staying long term may alter or change and, importantly in relation to what. Especially considering the youths' perspectives would be important here to uncover more about confounds.

Final Thoughts

Through my continual check-ins at the program over the two years following the bulk of fieldwork, I witnessed the youth group becoming more cohesive. Programming, most probably,

will always wax and wane to a certain extent with youth graduating out of the program and teachers/staff changing. A few of the students during casual conversations admitted that they felt more connected to the theater then the previous year. I can only assume that time was a main ingredient here as well as the group having re-stabilized after the high teacher turnover during my fieldwork. Even in my time, I witnessed students go through visible changes in their demeanors at GDT such as speaking louder on stage, using their bodies more elaborately, or hanging out for longer periods of time in the lobby.

Despite contentiousness between students and teachers at times, and the issues I just presented regarding follow-through and calls to students, I have witnessed a community that creates, in general, positive experiences for youth. GDT has been able to successfully create an ASP that provides creative outlets and alternative learning environments that the youth's schools could not always do. While some of the youth did have a drama class in school, these were described as different – artistic creations were framed by a testing and standardized learning environment. Through my examination of some of the micro, everyday processes at GDT I have identified a few mechanisms that produce quality programing. These include the community and activities allowing youth to find well-being through different forms of experience, an active and flexible co-construction of the space in which the teaching artist gives and takes control, and programing being shaped by a micro temporal arc thereby encouraging engagement on a day-to-day basis.

I have also addressed how GDT compares to the youth's experience of school to further our understanding of how the ASP fits into the youth's broader everyday lives. Considering that youth spend their time in increasingly diverse contexts in the United States, these relationships between "microcosms" should be even further explored. Research should continue to explore

mirco mechanisms that may or may not produce quality components of programing and positive

outcomes and do so with diverse populations and age groups. Since ASP contexts are part of

child and youth development realities, their influence continues to be pertinent to understand.

They are, after all, spaces in which youth can experience engaged participation in activities that

are meaningful to the community surrounding them.

Figure 8.1: Taking a bow at the end-of-year performance.

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