



THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF  
ART  
PROGRAMMING  
FOR  
UNDERSERVED  
YOUTH

By: Aja Delgado

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# **THE IMPORTANCE OF ART PROGRAMMING FOR UNDERSERVED YOUTH**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts (MA) Art + Design Education  
in the Department of Teaching + Learning in  
Art + Design  
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Providence, Rhode Island**

**By Aja Delgado, 2024**

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# Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to all underserved youth, to all young artists craving a better art education. Your resilience, creativity, and determination inspire me everyday. May this work contribute to the ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access to quality arts programming for all, empowering you to unleash your boundless potential and shape a brighter future for yourselves and your communities.

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# ABSTRACT

Arts programming for underserved youth holds great significance in fostering holistic development, empowerment, and a creative outlet for students.

This thesis dives into the importance of such initiatives by addressing the multifaceted needs of marginalized communities. The arts serve as a catalyst for self-expression, creativity, and emotional well-being, offering a platform for individuals to explore their identities and narratives.

For underserved youth facing socio-economic challenges, access to arts programming can be transformative, providing avenues for personal growth, and empowerment. Through collaboration, exploration and experimentation I've investigated the ways in which underserved youth can benefit

from artmaking, through a collaborative workshop titled “Collaborative Quilting.” I also look at what ways youth are affected by the lack of arts resources and where they face challenges and limitations.

Furthermore, community arts-based programs play an important role in offering students access to arts education. Through creative expression and collaboration, young people can make discoveries about their own creative voices, build confidence, and envision hopeful futures.

However, despite its proven benefits, access to quality arts programming remains at a disadvantage, with underserved communities disproportionately lacking resources and opportunities. Addressing these disparities requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educators, and community

stakeholders to prioritize and invest in arts education and cultural enrichment.

In conclusion, arts programming for underserved youth is a crucial part of their access to art education. By nurturing creativity, fostering self exploration, and promoting experimentation, underserved youth have the potential to unlock their full potential. We must acknowledge the ways in which underserved students are not considered, and reflect upon the areas we continue to serve and the ones that are neglected.

# **PART ONE**

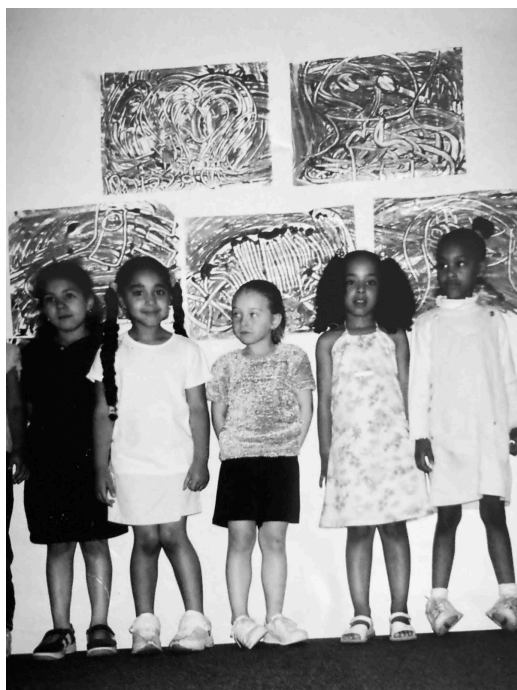
## **INTRODUCTION**

## Introduction

They say every path leads us to our destination, our purpose some would call it. I know every path I've taken has brought me a step closer to who I am, and what I want to do in this world. I started off very shy and timid as a young girl. Although I was quiet, once comfortable I had so much to say. So much I wanted to share. I always loved art, it always made sense to me. It was the most fascinating thing to me - that I could take a blank page and fill it with so much color and life. I knew it was always going to be a part of me, something I'd always love. I learned at a young age I was different. School work bored me, it was something that never stuck. It seemed to make so much sense for everyone else but I could never get it. I was too shy to ask for

help, and I was scared to admit I didn't know. I then grew up to feel shameful, and disappointed in myself for not being smarter. I was so angry with who I was.

Growing up I was lucky enough to attend a charter school where we were taught another language: Portuguese. Portuguese is very similar to my parents' native language, Cape Verdean creole. Although similar, this made learning more confusing for me. I loved my school, and I grew up with the same students each year. We all shared similar backgrounds and witnessed each other grow. I eventually had to move to a different school a year before graduating, and this hurt me. The same group of kids I grew up with, I had to leave behind.



**Figure 1**

*Kindergarten Graduation, 2003*

In my fifth grade year I relocated to a public school in Central Falls, Rhode Island. Rhode Island is the smallest state in the U.S, and Central Falls is the smallest city in the state of Rhode Island. The

population consists of a tight knit community of marginalized groups. According to Data USA Central falls consists of a population of 22.2k residents that reside in Central Falls. With a majority of their population being Latinax, making up 71.5% of Central Falls. 5.37k out of 21.6k people) live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 12.6%. The largest demographic living in poverty are females(Datausa.io, 2021). This large poverty rate plays a role in the lack of school resources. There is only one high school in Central Falls and one middle school. A lot of the schools do not receive proper funding. Moving from a charter school to a public school was an extreme adjustment for me. I was the new girl. I went from a group that felt like siblings, to classmates I didn't fit in with. I was so



behind in my learning development that I hardly spent time in class to complete class work with my peers, I had to work one on one with my teachers to get caught up. I wasn't at the same level as my classmates so I was forced to work independently. This quickly turned into bullying. I was called dumb, and was made fun of for not being smart enough. This stuck with me for a long time, and made me feel very insecure. I developed a fear of being unintelligent which ultimately turned into toxic perfectionism. Throughout my life I was scared to do anything wrong. I had to be perfect in every way, with how I looked, how I acted, and the work I did. If I'm being truthful with myself, this fear still lives within me.

After completing the fifth grade I learned so much. I felt stronger and smarter. I worked so hard that year just to get caught up. I truly thank the educators who worked closely with me, and helped me get through. I was now ready for middle school. I moved to Providence, Rhode Island and started at a brand new school, Nathan Bishop Middle School. I loved my new neighborhood and made a lot of new friends. I was doing better in school, but still struggling. I still seemed to be falling short within my studies. After careful investigation and lots of testing, I was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder. Although I didn't quite know what this meant, it was a full circle moment for me. The older I become, the more I've come to terms with who I am - that I learn differently, but I'm not dumb. This made me focus on my strengths more, which was

my art and my creativity. I stopped trying to fit into this box of who I should be, and embraced who I really was.

I never felt like I belonged in an academic setting. I always felt that there was only one way to be a great student in those environments, which was to get good grades, and do what you're told. My art experiences were different though. In art settings there were no limitations on what I could do. My art educators always encouraged self-expression, and creativity. I had the freedom to explore and do what worked for me. This inspired me to believe in myself as an artist, and because of this I had the courage to take art seriously. If it weren't for my educators, I wouldn't have applied to art school. I

wouldn't have made the discoveries and taken the steps into my career.

I grew up in underserved neighborhoods all my life. I had to rely on my after-school programs, like The Boys and Girls Club, New Urban Arts, and After Zone. The Boys and Girls Club is a program that you'd attend to engage in activities, like swimming, games, arts, and sports. They offer an after school hangout, as well as a summer camp program. When my mother was a single parent we used to go to the Boys and Girls Club while she was at work. New Urban Arts is a free after school arts program for high school students. I started attending New Urban Arts as a junior in high school. After Zone was also an after school program similar to the Boys and Girls Club they had multiple programs to engage in

and try out. These were some of the only resources and access to art that I had growing up. If I hadn't moved to Providence I would have never discovered New Urban Arts or After Zone. Most of the schools I went to didn't make space for art teachers, or prioritize art education. The budget for art supplies was hardly enough to keep art within educational settings. I've only had two art teachers throughout my entire K -12 academic education. I also only had both of these teachers for a year or so. I had no choice but to rely on my afterschool programs and myself for inspiration. This has made me think deeply about students from small cities all over Rhode Island that love art. They don't have any art programs within their neighborhood. It has made me think about the barriers working class families may face to provide access for their

children to participate in afterschool arts programs.

What do these youth do in order to get an art education?.

Reflecting back on these experiences and circumstances, and thinking about my artist mentors, leads me to this topic, or my “purpose”: the importance of access to art resources and art programs to underserved *populations*. What is the importance of having access to these programs? What are the positive effects of having access to arts programming? How are students negatively impacted when they do not have access?

I remember all the educators who have supported my artistic endeavors even in the smallest ways.

When I was younger the Boys and Girls Club had

an art room where we got to create all sorts of things. I used to go there after school and for summer camp while my mom worked. I wanted to spend all my time there. Although there were a variety of activities to choose from, I picked art every time. They taught me how to sew at six years old. I made my own teddy bear. We made paper mâché sculptures which I had never seen or heard of before. I also remember my first art teacher Miss Alison. She was the only art teacher I had in elementary school. This was the first time my school hired an art teacher; I was in third grade. I always thought she was so cool, and dressed unique. She introduced scratchboard art to me - a technique where you fill your entire paper with color, then add a completely black layer over it, and then scratch away to reveal the color underneath. I remember my

second art teacher in seventh grade, although I forget her name, she was very memorable. She was the first openly queer teacher I ever had. She was also the first art teacher to introduce me to photography. I'll never forget - we were given digital cameras and got to explore around our school. We then got to edit our photographs and print them out on photo paper. She was also the first person to take me to an art museum, which happened to be the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum. That was my last art teacher and experience with art education until I got to high school.

This is when I started going to New Urban Arts. At the time I had let go of art. I didn't think I was a good enough artist to be successful. I also was told

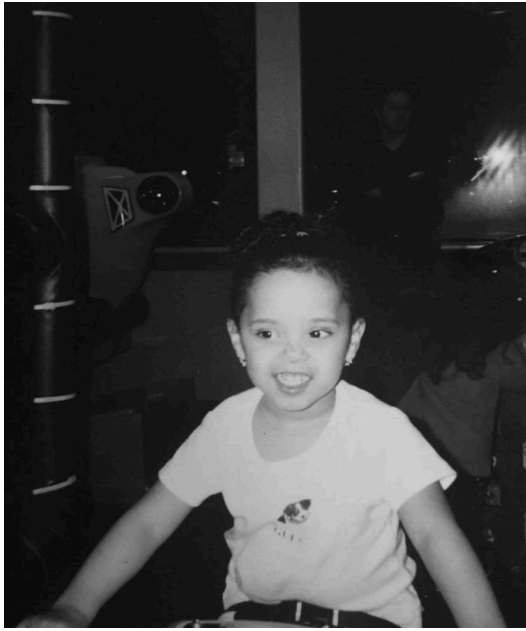


all my life that art wasn't practical, I wouldn't make any money. When I started going to New Urban Arts, I was inspired all over again. Seeing so many people like me, people of color, people who were unique in their own way, introverted - passionate about what they're doing, applying to art schools - gave me the hope to try again. I only had a month left in my junior year to apply to schools and get my art portfolio together. I didn't have anything really strong enough for an art portfolio. Luckily one of the artist mentors (Mara) at New Urban Arts worked vigorously with me everyday, and on weekends to help strengthen my application. If It wasn't for Mara I wouldn't have gotten accepted into The Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Being a first-generation graduate, and seeing how valuable our art educators are through my own

experience, really moved me to pursue a career in art education. I'm the only person in my family to complete higher education, and that said something to me.

My parents didn't finish high school. They originally immigrated from Africa, making me a first generation American. So for someone like me, I never thought college was even a possibility - especially pursuing a degree in art and struggling with a disability. Everyone in my family had practical jobs, my parents were always supportive but didn't know much about college or art. My artist mentors gave me the hope that I could create a life through art. This is exactly why I want to inspire, and give students the hope to go after their passions. I want to create an environment where

creative expression is encouraged, and resources are available, so that students don't feel at a disadvantage, and they have spaces to explore their dreams. For students like myself, art may be what they have. Youth need to know they can strive for more, strive for what they really want, despite the fact that their surroundings may say otherwise. A disability, social class, status, or systematic oppression should not be the reason why students cannot pursue their dreams. Everyone deserves an education that personally suits them, not just the ones who can afford it. My own path has led me towards creating spaces that support all young artists from all backgrounds. Especially the ones that need it.



**Figure 2**

*Me in my purest form, 2002*

## Research Questions

Throughout my research there are some key questions I want to consider: *What role does community art based programs play within underserved communities?* This question is the foundation for the research I'm pursuing. When we think about smaller communities there's often something within the community that ties everyone together. Whether it be a local park, a familiar convenience store, a staple restaurant within the community, or an actual community center.

Whatever it may be, it is the foundation for a lot of neighborhoods. Art programs can be the same thing for a lot of people. Art is often a safe space for community members, an escape, a means of freedom and expression. For those in the margins,

creative exploration can be an outlet for them to feel a sense of freedom and belonging.

***How are students affected by the lack of art resources and opportunities?***

This is important for me to think about because I've experienced a lack of art education and resources throughout my own upbringing. It wasn't until I began this research, that I made this realization. I began thinking about what if I had access to more opportunities, would I have had the courage earlier on to pursue my passions? It also made me consider my achievements now as a fine arts college graduate. If I wasn't placed in a city that had numerous opportunities, would I still have accomplished all that I have accomplished? I can say through my own experience I've seen the

effects of having access to art resources, and not having the access. I'll be assessing this by interviewing and discussing with my students. To get insight on what their art education has been like, where they reside and how distance plays a role in their access. As well as what ways they have to seek out art resources and opportunities.

***What role does art making play in self-expression and identity?***

When thinking about marginalized youth and how important art can be within their personal development, I think it's also important to consider how this connects to their self-expression and identity. As I mentioned before, art is an outlet, an escape for many of us. So I think it's likely that

students might lean into the opportunity to connect their identity to their art. We use art as a way to represent our sense of style and fashion. We also use art in our works to tell our stories and depict our emotions. For a lot of us art is a form of self-discovery - figuring out what we like, what art disciplines speak to us, what our favorite colors are, and what clothing makes us feel good. As a student in the margins or someone with less resources, students often rely on their creativity and imagination. For example, maybe youth get creative with how they style themselves because they can't afford expensive name brand clothing. They get creative with the art they're making and where because they don't have access to a space or art supplies. I think these students rely on their creative expression and use this as an outlet for their identity



because they have less options to work with. So in turn, they fall back on creativity to explore their sense of self, even when they don't have many resources to do so.

***How can collaboration through community engaged projects contribute to student***

***Engagement?*** I believe that through collaboration or even community-based projects students are able to draw inspiration from one another. As someone who has always been motivated by what my peers are doing I think working together can be a great means for engagement and self development. When we see someone else we know and respect do something, it can inspire us to do the same. I think this could be great to explore within an art context because often students who aren't into art can find

self discoveries about their own creativity when collaborating with others. Working on a project as a community can also create new opportunities to work in different ways, and teach students how to work with others. I think it's also a great way to be uplifted and encouraged by your peers.

## **Research Project and Methodology**

Through my research project I've investigated these questions by working directly with youth to explore my theories further. Through teaching a five-week workshop titled "Collaborative Quilting" where I was able to closely observe and work with high school students. I did this workshop for students that attend the Met High School in Providence, Rhode Island through Project Open Door. I chose to

work with students from the Met specifically because I am a Met alumni. The Met allows students from all over Rhode Island to attend school there. This is of great significance to my research because I specifically want to work with students that live in smaller communities outside of Providence. The Met's motto is "one student at a time." They focus on real world learning experiences, where students are able to engage in internships. This is so that students can try out what it's like working in different fields before making a decision. They also get one on one support from their advisor and obtain networking skills. Working with these students helped me investigate further into the lack of art resources in their communities and how they've been affected by it. It is also important when thinking about my own experience

as a youth attending the Met, to consider the ways our experiences were similar and evolved and changed. Project Open Door (POD) is an arts based after school program in Providence. They offer drop in hours for students to explore art, as well as run a Saturday program for college portfolio preparation. POD also gives education students like myself the opportunity to build experience by teaching our own classes with students there. Thanks to Project Open Door I was able to gather students from the Met highschool and teach this workshop as a POD program, which gave me access to an art space with a variety of materials.

Within collaborative quilting we engaged in exploration through identity and creative expression. Each student got to work and develop a

total of three quilting patches throughout the extent of our workshop. Students created three patches, but only used one to contribute to our final collaborative quilt. This workshop occupied 8-10 students at most and we met once a week, for two hours a week. Week one was an introduction to the course and myself. We spent this time getting to know each other and learned about ourselves and interests. I showed students examples of artists that explore identity within their own work like Kerry James Marshall, Tanya Aguiniga, and Nicholas Hlobo. Students were then given a worksheet to brainstorm and formulate their ideas and imagery for their quilt patches.

We continued through our workshop exploring different art disciplines. Week two we got to dye

our quilt patches and think about how color can play a role in mood, and how we interpret it. Week three we focused on drawing and actually formulating our designs. Students were encouraged to experiment with fabric paint, fabric markers, embroidery, and collaging with fabric. That way students were able to explore different materials and combine new techniques and mediums together. Week four students were introduced to monoprinting and got to print on one of their quilt patches, and print on paper to get a feel for the medium. Lastly, week five was our final workshop day, we spent class reflecting on the work we completed over the course of our workshop. Students then get to sew their fabric patches and decide which one they would like to contribute to our collaborative quilt. After receiving each

student's patch I then sewed them all to contribute to our collaborative quilt.

Working on this collaborative quilt was a great way to investigate the importance of working collaboratively within a community engaged setting. Students were able to create something together while also working individually. By giving students the opportunity to explore their own identity through a variety of art disciplines. This workshop created an outlet for the youth to practice experimentation while engaging in self discovery. Many students weren't artists or wanted to pursue art, they were able to try something new and make discoveries about what they liked and didn't like. Through observation and experimentation I was

able to assess how students benefited from these practices. In the end did they gain new skills, Learn to work collaboratively, or make any self discoveries as an artist? The answer is Yes!

In between our workshop I also took time aside to talk with students one on one and ask them a series of questions. Prior to the interview process all students were given the option to participate in this portion of my thesis. Students that wished to participate were required to sign a consent form and so were the parent or guardian of each student, this is because most students were under the age of eighteen which required assent from their guardians. The form explicitly states that we would not use any personal information, like names, and addresses. Students provided additional context



through these conversations, some of these questions were, what city do they live in? What is their race/ethnicity and how does that play a role within their art exposure? What is their artistic experience? Are there any art programs they engage in outside of school? Do they find it difficult to find resources? Aside from interviewing students I also paid close attention and made note of students' interest. What art practices were they interested in, what designs are they creating, and what is their process for creating like.

The research methods I've been utilizing throughout my thesis are autoethnography, interviewing, and teacher | researcher based research. The use of autoethnography was an essential research method for me because it allowed me to connect my own

experiences to the research I'm exploring. Through the use of autoethnography I've been able to use my knowledge as a way to explore the bigger issues relating to the lack of art resources in marginalized communities. As Tom Anderson (2014) noted, "autoethnography is about writing one's self into culture, but it is also about writing about one's personal experience in relation to larger issues in society" (p.89). The purpose of using this method is to create a connected dialogue using my experiences to support the work I've been doing within my research project. It is so the reader can understand the difficulties of youth who have little to no access when it comes to art resources; to empathize with this disadvantage while still seeing this issue on a larger scale. As stated by Gubrium and Holstein (2009), "Through telling the big story,

narrative and autoethnographic research attend to both the outer life and inner life of the participants” ( as cited in Anderson, 2014, p.85).

I also incorporated a discussion/interview research method because it assisted me in getting to know the art experiences of my students and understand what access to art resources they had. This gave me insight into how they felt, and if they felt at a disadvantage. This also helped me collect data by keeping track of commonalities and recurring patterns that I notice within each interview. I paid close attention to common themes shared, and also saw if there were similarities to my own experience. I found myself connecting to each student in some way. I felt like I knew them so much better and understood them. In turn I felt they were also more

comfortable with me as well. As Fontana and Frey (1998), as cited in Dumay, Qu 2011 p.242) , “The interview becomes a ‘moral peak’ because it treats interviewees and interviewers as equals, with each expressing their feelings, thus presenting a more realistic picture.”

The key research method I’ve utilized is authentic inquiry and teacher| researcher method. As an art education graduate student, this work is in dialogue with the research I’m doing in support of my teaching practices. This not only contributes to my thesis investigation but it also assists in my growth as an educator. Konstantinos Alexakos (2015) argued that “researching our own practices as teachers contributes to our learning, understanding, and the growth of ourselves and our students” (p.

1). They also noted that “research on teaching poses as objective and has a professional detachment, teacher research is subjective and personally involved, as human interactions cannot be value-free” (p. 26). This method is important when thinking about my research because it gives me the opportunity to investigate my theories directly through the involvement of working with my students. By using teacher | researcher, I can utilize authentic inquiry research to observe my students closely, pay attention to their techniques and their interests in art. I can practice “authentic inquiry” to utilize my experience as part of my investigations while also considering the experiences of those involved. As Alexakos (2015) noted, “authentic inquiry is a process that is framed by the experience, the interactions, interpretations,

interests, and the curiosity of those involved. It is not linear, but socially constructed, hermeneutic, emergent and contingent on expected and unexpected events, interactions, and contradictions” (p. 28).

## **Scope and Limitations**

With every project there are limitations especially when thinking about the scope of the work you're engaging in. Some key limitations to consider are the scale of this project. It was hard to know and guarantee if I'd get the information I was looking for. The targeted audience I was hoping to work with in order to support my research theories were students in smaller cities outside of Providence. A

limitation for me was the lack of students who live in those areas that attend the Met classes I'm working with. Although the Met is located in Providence and has students that attend and live outside of there, it wasn't guaranteed that students from those outside cities would sign up for the workshop. Most of the student's I worked with lived in Providence, So I wasn't able to reach the target audience I was hoping for. I did have one student that lived in Pawtucket, and one student in Johnston. Although it didn't go as planned, the information I gathered was still in support of my theory.

Other considerations I had was the consent to use information shared by students and the work we were doing. I predicted that ethical reasoning could

get in the way of executing this project in the way I'd need to in order to support my ideas. Since the students I worked with are minors, I needed consent from their parents to allow me to use their work and documentation throughout this project. I was aware that this would possibly be a huge limitation if students decided not to participate in the interview process or did not get their consent forms signed. I wouldn't have been able to use any of their documentation or use their information to contribute to data. Luckily all of the students and their guardians were cooperative and agreed to the consent forms and participated. Though I didn't have the exact targeted audience, having everyone's participation really helped support my research.



The timing and length of this research project has been a limitation as well - our workshop was only five weeks long meeting two hours a week. This didn't give me much time to do extensive research, while also executing a collaborative project. Often research projects are produced months or even years at a time. I only had about a month to collect the data I needed, and five months to write and document my research. Realistically this would have been more successful if I had a longer timeline to work with other students, in smaller cities like Pawtucket and Central Falls. I also think if the length of the workshop was more extensive it would have supported the data I collected better. I believe with more time I would have been able to observe the artistic progress of each participant, and obtain more information through additional interviews.

## Thesis Structure

The structure of my thesis has a digital formatted copy, that's divided into chapters. This is so that it can be easily accessible and easy to read when needed. Aside from that, my thesis contains a second version that is commercially printed. That way the thesis book can be experienced and read in a more standard traditional way. I don't only want this book to be a source of knowledge and information, but also an artwork that people can interact with.

The digital version can be accessed online in the RISD Fleet library's archive. For the art component of the book I'll be designing my book cover digitally and screen printing it to then have it

commercially printed. The design of my book cover is a culmination of various organic shapes layering over each other, with the title of my thesis over it in large text. I'll also have my book stored inside a book sleeve that I also designed. The sleeve is screen printed as well and has a design similar to the cover of my book.

I want the physical portion to reflect the art skills I've obtained over the course of this year. Aside from the knowledge I've gained as an art educator, I also gained knowledge in different art practices. Throughout my studies this year I've learned a lot about textile methods, like dyeing, weaving, and I also learned a lot more about silk screen printing. My BFA background is in printmaking so incorporating these methods into my book design

was essential for me. Structuring my thesis book in this way, is a combination of all the art practices I've engaged in and truly enjoy, wrapped into one final component. It is a representation of me and the knowledge I've taken with me along my journey as an artist and future educator.

# **PART TWO**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

## Literature Review

In my literature review I am first going to define some terms that are integral to my project, and then explore ideas related to the importance of art resources, and programs in marginalized neighborhoods. The role of Identity and Representation Within these underserved Communities, and in what ways collaboration and community engaged projects contribute to student development. I'm investigating these ideas in relation to personal development. In what ways are these objectives contributing to the growth of students? For me art is an outlet for self discovery, through creative exploration you can find out so much about yourself. I believe with access to art making students can find their own sense of identity

and self development. I theorize this can be achieved when they have an outlet to explore their identity and feel represented. When youth get to work with each other and create something together. To me self development is self discovery, it's finding something new about yourself, its self improvement. For this section I'll be focusing on literature in these areas: (and then list the sections in the order that they appear in your lit review)

### **Marginalization and “undeservedness”**

Marginalization is a key component when discussing the lack of resources and opportunities within underserved populations. These are often the people struggling to obtain equal advantages throughout all areas of their lives. Marginalized

people are underserved people. Marginalization exists in multiple forms, and against many groups of people. But there are three main types of marginalization: social marginalization, economic marginalization and political marginalization. (LibertiesEu, 2021). Socially marginalized groups are usually the ones who don't have access to opportunities. They are usually in segregated neighborhoods and displaced, these folks are often from black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) groups. Economic marginalization are groups that don't get to contribute or benefit from the economy, like going to college, getting a high salary job and excelling financially. Lastly, political marginalization is those who can't contribute democratically, these folks don't get any decision making privileges within society. For



example, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has argued that marginality is the state of being considered unwanted, undesirable and insignificant, which results in inequity, unfair-ness, deprivation and enforced lack of access to power and resources.(M.J Venod, S.Y Surendra Kumar, 2021). Nevertheless whatever category one falls under, being marginalized is a universal disadvantage. Without these privileges one has less access to opportunities, and might experience more displacement, causing feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. I argue that this is why access to explore vocational passions and skills is so crucial for the underserved populations.

## **Where are the Art Programs in Marginalized communities?**

In Providence, Rhode Island there are many art programs and community spaces for the youth. This is great when considering the students that are benefitting from these programs, but the question is why aren't there any outside of Providence?

Providence is the state's capital with some of the country's most prestigious schools located within the city like Brown University, and the Rhode Island School of Design. These factors might be one reason why most of the school funding is centered on this part of the state. However, the smaller inner cities surrounding Providence (like Woonsocket, Central Falls, and Pawtucket) are often neglected. This often leaves the students in those marginalized communities even more vulnerable to the lack of resources they don't have. As a member of this

community and future educator I feel that it is important to consider what groups are being excluded when thinking about who has access to a proper education and who doesn't. Students should not be at a disadvantage because of the neighborhood they live in - all students deserve equal access and opportunities.

In *Defencing With Youth: From the Margins to the Center*, Anne Tobey and Kate Jellinghaus (2012) dive into what it feels like to be a youth within the margins and what ways these youth are affected. They note, “for an individual, a feeling that I am on the margins (regardless of the context or reference) implies that I am powerless, that I have little value, and/or that I don't really belong” ( p. 129). Marginalized students are often left feeling out of place in their circumstances and

conditioned to being left out, and we see this within their displacement and the lack of opportunities available to them.

One reason why art programs for marginalized communities are so important is because they are supporting youth and creating a space that contributes to their artistic growth. Additionally, having access doesn't just mean that a program exists, but that they also offer resources and support that can help guide students' developmental goals. Tobey and Jellinghaus (2012) state that:

Youth are often undervalued and objectified at a great cost to their growth and to society (Delgado & Staples, 2008).

Groups of teens are often seen as problems, and even among those who tend to see teens in a more positive light, there has been a tendency to think about them in terms of what they need, thereby positioning them as the recipients of services or teaching (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). More recently, young people are being acknowledged as powerful resources (Curtis, 2008; Delgado, 2006): they are makers, knowers, and teachers themselves - each with valuable ideas and abilities.

(p.129)

Tobey and Jellinghaus (2012) suggest that by giving these students in the margins an opportunity to embrace their own power as individuals and encourage them, they are able to find the confidence within themselves to thrive. Through

positive and supportive programming, students' specific needs are able to be met. They are acknowledged as powerful and capable of dictating their own developmental needs. This is especially important for students on the margins since they are often seen as at-risk, troubled, or disregarded in the system.

Sibyl O'Thearling and Cynthia Bickley-Green (1996) address the importance of art education for at-risk youth, in *Art Education and At-Risk Youth: Enabling Factors of Visual Expression*. They argue that art making can be used as a tool for self-esteem building for youth, and even more so with at-risk Youth. O'Thearling and Bickley-Green (1996) state:

Two main areas in art education speak directly to the troubled youth. First, if a child creates an object that he considers to be valuable, he often transfers that value to himself. He begins seeing himself as the maker of worthwhile things. He can think, "If this is good and I made it, I must, therefore, be good also." The second area is the power to imagine and then make one's own. (p. 23)

Within this approach youth are able to see themselves as capable and recognize their own unique potential. With this sort of encouragement we see how each student can not only believe in themselves in the way that non marginalized groups do, but also see themselves as someone who feels

more comfortable taking risks. O'Thearling and Bickley-Green (1996) continue that,

Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, T. S. Eliot, Martha Graham, and Mahatma Gandhi all experienced some degree of marginalization in their relationships to society, yet each has contributed significantly to the shape of twentieth century life (Gardner, 1993). Thus an optimistic art teacher can visualize the at-risk as having great potential. (p. 21)

Marginalized underserved students need the support and the resources to flourish into their true potential, perhaps more so than other young people.



The question isn't if they are capable but if we believe in them. Are we willing to put students in a position to gain higher knowledge in what they are passionate about? If we give students the chance, they can achieve great success within their self development. There is great promise in what students can achieve when given the tools and the support. We also have seen the downfalls of the students who don't have those same opportunities. With direct guidance and positive reinforcement students on the margins are just as capable.

Within each of these resources, we see first-hand how beneficial accessibility to art programs and art education is to the personal development of youth. It is essential that all students receive an education that supports them, but this is especially true for marginalized young people. We often see how these

groups are affected by circumstances that are out of their control. When considering creating art based programs, we need to pay attention to the locations that do and do not have access to art programs. We should not be contributing additional programs in already rich art areas, but instead focus on the surrounding communities where students need access to art organizations and opportunities. We must also ask ourselves why programs continue to be developed in the same communities who have access already, and how can we create a more supportive inclusive environment for those who need it.

### **Identity and Representation Within Marginalized Communities**

When addressing the importance of art resources

and programming, I think it is also important to consider the role identity plays within artmaking for these groups. Often those of marginalized populations are displaced. By allowing open dialogue, creating space for student representation, and creative exploration, it can help these students feel more empowered. Especially when thinking about the displacement and injustices of marginalized people, it is important for students to be socially conscious when thinking about their place in society and how they are being represented. Due to lack of resources these groups are often misrepresented and have to fight and advocate more for themselves than others. Especially as an artist of minority, it can be difficult to understand your worth and know when it's appropriate to advocate for yourself. When given the space to explore your creativity and express yourself you're able to feel

more confident within who you are as a person and an artist. We see how this approach is implemented throughout the Children of the Future (COTF) art program located at the Sawyer recreation center, in Poindexter Village in Columbus, Ohio. Adejumbo (2010) notes:

Through critical pedagogy and community service, Sawyer art instructors sought to facilitate social awareness and activism as imperatives of self-empowerment in a democratic society. Learning activities in the program were characterized by open dialogue and structured reflection. This approach enhanced thoughtfulness and self-expression among youth participants.

(p. 23)

Not only is it crucial for marginalized youth to get more access to art programs and resources, it is also important to create space where these individuals are represented. These students need an outlet where they create and dictate their own narratives as artists. We should promote more emphasis on letting students decide what direction they'd like to go in. With this approach we can help students engage in more critical dialogues through their artwork. By creating an environment where students can tie their identity to the work they are doing, it will give them the confidence to explore their passions further. Through exploration comes self discovery, and though self discovery lies self awareness, and with self awareness students within the margins can accomplish anything. We must learn to “decentralize” ourselves as educators and

allow the youth to lead their own path. Adejumbo (2010) notes:

I characterized this approach to art instruction as "decentralization," explaining that "(in a decentralized classroom, the teacher becomes a partner who initiates learning and provides support as needed, but does not inhibit intuitive knowledge and innovative thinking in the process of performing these duties. (p. 23)

We must think about the ways in which students on the margins are affected within all aspects of life. As future artists but also as young individuals wanting a better life for themselves. Marginalized students are not only disregarded, at a disadvantage

with little to no access, but they are also at a disadvantage when it comes to the lack of representation within their education and environment. We have to consider new strategies overall on how to create a more culturally diverse creative space. We need to think about how we can provide students on the margins with an equally charged art education, and equal opportunity and access as those who do.

### **How can arts programming be beneficial to underserved youth**

Every student can benefit from art making and a creative education, but for underserved populations this can contribute to them in a massive way, more so than others when considering their lack of

resources. Most underserved students don't have art programs within their schools or extra curricular activities. This is when art programming can play a significant role in students' education and personal development. These students heavily rely on their outside programs to give them the knowledge they sometimes can not obtain within their schools. A great example of this is the "Engaging and Empowering Youth"(E2Y) program, the Community Asset Mapping Project. These students did not have much access to creative resources but, through this program were able to learn and develop new skills, as well as take on new leadership roles. Lin and Bruce (2015) observed,

Initially these teenagers felt their neighborhood had nothing to offer; they did



not see opportunities for jobs, or even for volunteer activities, especially for youth. The teenagers first interviewed their friends and took notes on the needs and known resources. They developed an interview protocol and spoke with key members in each organization. They learned a broad set of digital literacy skills, interviewing and public presentation skills, and the significance of community engagement through their community asset mapping. Beyond these obvious outcomes, the E2Y teenagers became more confident over time by reaching out to others. They co-presented their work with youth from Virginia High School (Virginia, IL) to adult professionals at both the Conference 2009 and the

Dialogues in Methods of Education meeting. They led the adults in GIS/GPS mapping activities, led discussions about the benefits and challenges of campus/community engagement, and spoke to students in two graduate courses. At these events, they were educators of those adults, not simply youth displaying their own learning. (p.342)

Although underserved youth can benefit greatly from art based community programs, and education due to such displacement this can affect their willingness to engage and try something outside their norm. As well as knowing where to seek and obtain new opportunities. With little exposure to art resources some students may not think they are skilled enough or creative enough to do so, or just

not exposed to enough assets that would motivate them too. One would say underserved youth need the extra support and encouragement to pursue more opportunities and reap the full benefits of them. As Hogan (2008) noted:

Many "at risk" young people are blocked from following education or employment pathways by a range of environmental, social and personal factors. Futures can be limited due to young people's lack of resources, restricted opportunity and networks, negative experiences of past schooling or work, personal trauma and emotional or social barriers. Participation in arts-based programs has been suggested as an effective intervention strategy to

re-engage the marginalized. However, it could be argued that "at risk" young People require more scaffolding to bridge these barriers. (p.123)

Benefits to outside school programming is it is often more focused on a community-based education, which gives students the ability to center creatively on what they are passionate about. With outside programming there are also often less restrictions on creative direction. Students have more freedom to address socially challenging topics, and have more creative freedom overall. This can be extremely beneficial to underserved students because it gives them an opportunity to voice their experiences in spaces they may not otherwise. It also gives them the space to work with like minded

peers and feel more supported in their creative endeavors. whereas in school programming isn't always open, or geared toward every student's individual experiences. As Lin and Bruce (2015) noted:

Educating underserved youth through art has provided an approach to foster engaged citizens by encouraging youth to see how social, cultural, and political forces shape their experiences (Bastos, 2003; Desai, 2002; Pearse, 1997). Arts learning experiences occurring outside of school (e.g., in libraries, museums, community organizations, and after-school programs)—defined as community-based art education—have long served as method-

ologies and strategies for community development and youth engagement with a focus on fostering dialogic encounters as spaces for social change (Bastos, 2012; Congdon, Blandy, & Bolin, 2001; Ulbricht, 2005). (p.336).

### **How can we support students in art and design in outside school programming**

In order to support underserved students through art programs outside of schooling, we must continue to provide the resources and support they need. We must debunk stigmas surrounding art education and consider what art education looks like for the underserved youth. We need to question why underserved populations are lacking equal

opportunities, and what can be done to change that. Throughout these questions the underlying answer is change. We need to change the way we approach art education and make sure students are being provided with a culturally diverse and supportive education. While also making programs accessible to students within their schools and neighborhoods. We also must change the way we teach art and approach it in a way that is addressing each student's needs. Kraehe and Acuff (2015) continued,

Art education scholars need to first recognize and acknowledge how “underserved” groups have become the underserved groups. Certain knowledge and ways of knowing have been accepted and universalized (Helfand, 2009). Therefore,

undoubtedly, those whose cultural knowledge has been least revered will continue to maintain the position of underserved, as they will consistently have to work within the confines of the established, dominant knowledge paradigm that is different from their own. By continuously disseminating myopic historical renderings of art education, we have played an active role in writing minority groups out of the development of our field. In order to address the concept of underserved in art education theory and practice, we should recognize and challenge the oppressive positioning of certain groups of people and their knowledge. Critical multicultural education guides art education



research in moving toward such a goal. (p. 301)

When thinking about the ways in which we can support marginalized and underserved youth we must take away the assumptions and stereotypes that we place on them. The negative connotations we project onto these populations creates an environment where students don't feel safe and supported. As well as not determining a student's worth based on achievements. With the odds already against these populations this approach feeds more into the ideology that they cannot. Creating false narratives and also discriminatory behavior by composing false assumptions. We instead must create room for dialogue and social

change, support students in ways that liberate and empower them. As Lin and Bruce (2015) noted:

Moreover, viewing underserved youth merely in terms of their deficits or problems reflects a political ideology of neo-liberalism that promotes a market-driven educational reform focusing on competitiveness, individualism, and standardized testing (Doherty, 2007; Giroux, 2009, 2011).<sup>4</sup> This perspective identifies youth in disadvantaged communities as part of a social class outside neo-liberal values (Harvey, 2010), one that is often portrayed as “needy and problematic” (Bunyan, 2012, p. 5). This argument indicates a myopic understanding of the complexity of such

communities and their potential for social engagement and pedagogical practices (Giroux, 2011; Williamson, Imbroscio, & Alperovitz, 2002). (p.336)

Aside from theoretical and educational approaches of supporting youth we must also consider what physical ways we can create a space and environment that the youth feels supported in. Creating an environment students feel supported in is crucial to the development and participation of the program they're engaging in. We want to create spaces people feel invited into, and feel safe and confident enough to share and voice their opinions. As well as creating room for open dialogue and experimentation. As Taylor and Murphy (2013) noted:

Programs need a reliable structure in order to go deep—a skeleton that holds everything in place and guides the journey. The repetition of elements increases certainty; structure allows people to feel safe enough to delve deeper into their experience. We call these the elements of a program.

1. A warm welcome: preparing a beautiful, inviting space.
2. A creative invitation: an activity that invites the imagination into the room.
3. Goals and agreements: coming together on what we're here to do and how we can work together to optimize success.
4. Content activities: interactive learning that addresses the program's theme.

5. Reflection: articulating what we've learned and how we'll use it in our lives outside of the program.

6. Closing: consciously acknowledging that the group energy is coming to an end. (p.34)

As expressed previously, youth that are underserved and within the margins are at great disadvantage. It is important that we have opportunities and spaces for these groups to thrive in. We must consider the displacement of these young people and what ways to support their overall artistic and personal development. What areas are we continuing to serve and why.? How can we create opportunities for the underserved to obtain equal advantages? I argue that with more art programing and resources within

access there's great potential for supporting these populations in creative and personal development.

**PART THREE**

**METHODOLOGY +**

**RESEARCH**

## Methodology and Research

Throughout my research and methodology, I have divided it up into three sections. First addressing my research methods and research project, then discussing my data, and finally reflecting on my data through my analysis. I am first going to go over the research methods I've utilized within my research and how it connects to my investigations. I'll then go into depth about the organizations and groups I've worked with, that helped support my research findings and the data I collected. I'll also give some insight into my research project and break down what each component entailed. My research project consisted of a Five week workshop, as I briefly addressed earlier, called collaborative quilting. In this section I will also be revisiting my



research questions to follow up with what I discovered. I'll dive a bit deeper into my data and show some examples of lesson plans, images, and questions I've asked throughout my research project. As well as address the key components and connections I discovered throughout my analysis.

### ***Research Methods***

The research methods I've utilized throughout my thesis are autoethnography and authentic inquiry research (Alexakos, 2015). I took on the role of being a Teacher | Researcher (Alexakos, 2015), reflecting on my own experiences while also interviewing students. In the section below I will define these terms and address how and why I applied these methods to my research.

## *Autoethnography*

The use of autoethnography was an essential research method for me because it allowed me to connect my own experiences to the research I'm exploring. Through the use of autoethnography I've been able to use my knowledge as a way to explore the bigger issues relating to the lack of art resources in marginalized communities. As Tom Anderson (2014) noted, "autoethnography is about writing one's self into culture, but it is also about writing about one's personal experience in relation to larger issues in society" (p.89). The purpose of using this method is to create a connected dialogue using my experiences to support the work I've been doing within my research project. This method allows me

to touch base on my personal experience along with what is happening for many others as well. As noted by Gubrium and Holstein (2009), “Through telling the big story, narrative and autoethnographic research attend to both the outer life and inner life of the participants” (as cited Anderson, 2014, p.85) It allowed me to share my story as a young youth growing up in an underserved community and share the ways it affected me internally and externally. Whether that be my lack of confidence as an artist growing up or the lack of opportunities in reach. By sharing my challenges and discovering the ways in which others were affected by similar obstacles as well.

### ***Authentic Inquiry Research***

Interviewing, and teacher-researcher based research, expand on authentic inquiry by adopting the practice of Teacher | Researcher

The key research method I've utilized is the teacher/researcher method. As an art education graduate student, this work is in dialogue with the research I'm doing in support of my teaching practices. This not only contributes to my thesis investigation but it also assists in my growth as an educator. Konstantinos Alexakos (2015) argued that "researching our own practices as teachers contributes to our learning, understanding, and the growth of ourselves and our students" (p. 1). They also noted that "research on teaching poses as objective and has a professional detachment, teacher research is subjective and personally involved, as human interactions cannot be

value-free” (p. 26). This method is important when thinking about my research because it gives me the opportunity to investigate my theories directly through the involvement of working with my students. By using teacher research, I can practice “authentic inquiry” to utilize my experience as part of my investigations while also considering the experiences of those involved. As Alexakos (2015) noted, “authentic inquiry is a process that is framed by the experience, the interactions, interpretations, interests, and the curiosity of those involved. It is not linear, but socially constructed, hermeneutic, emergent and contingent on expected and unexpected events, interactions, and contradictions” (p. 28). It is so the reader can understand the difficulties of youth who have little to no access when it comes to art resources; to empathize with

this disadvantage while still seeing this issue on a larger scale.

### ***Discussions/ Interviews***

I also incorporated a discussion/interview component because it assisted me in getting to know the art experiences of my students and understand what access to art resources they had. This gave me insight into how they felt, and if they felt at a disadvantage. This also helped me collect data by keeping track of commonalities and recurring patterns that I notice within each interview. I paid close attention to common themes shared, and also saw if there were similarities to my own experience. I found myself connecting to each student in some way. I felt like I knew them so much better and understood them. In turn I felt they

were also more comfortable with me as well.

(Fontana and Frey 1998, as cited Dumay, Qu 2011 p.242) noted that “The interview becomes a "moral peak" because it treats interviewees and interviewers as equals, with each expressing their feelings, thus presenting a more realistic picture.”This approach informed my research and was important to me because I shared a similar experience and perspective as these students when I was a youth. As someone who grew up in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls, while also attending the same high school as them. I wanted them to see me as their equal, because I am. I wanted them to understand I was in their shoes at a point in time. Through this approach it allowed us to have a mutual discussion instead of it feeling like an interrogation. Giving students comfort in truly

opening up about their experiences, and how they feel.

### ***Introduction to my Research Project***

Through my research project I've investigated these questions by working directly with youth to explore my theories further. Teaching a five-week workshop titled "Collaborative Quilting" I was able to closely observe and work with high school students. This workshop was developed for students that attend the Met High School through Project Open Door (POD). As discussed earlier I chose to work with students from the Met specifically because I am a Met alumna, and when I attended the Met I lived in Central Falls. Considering the lack of resources within Central Falls and their poverty rate along with other communities in Rhode Island, working



with students from The Met allowed me to work with a range of students from different cities, in and outside of Providence because they allow students from all over the state to attend school there. This is of great significance to my research because I specifically wanted to work with students that live in smaller communities outside of Providence.

### ***The Met High School & Project Open Door***

The Met's motto is "one student at a time"(Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, n.d). They focus on real world learning experiences, where students are able to engage in internships. This is so that students can try out what it's like working in different fields before making a decision. They also get one on one support from

their advisor to obtain networking skills. The Met is structured differently from most schools. Students are in school three days a week where they're getting their school work done. While the other two days are internship days, students spend their days at whatever internship site they're enrolled in. Internship days are split into two sections Tuesdays, and Thursdays, or Wednesdays and Fridays. The Met also doesn't have class periods or different classes in their schedule that students normally would attend in a regular high school. You are assigned an advisory and advisor from the start of your high school year and stay with that group until the end of your senior year. Advisories are usually sixteen students maximum and you get to vote on a name for your advisory. You all stay in the same classroom and get work done together or

independently there. Your advisor is seen as your mentor, you call them by their first name, and exchange numbers with each other, almost like your second guardian while at school or at your internship site. They help you find internships and initiate opportunities, and conversations with your future internship mentors. The way The Met is structured is to help students build close relationships with each other, with outside resources, and people in the career field they are interested in. This is why the school is also open to every student in the state, to allow equal opportunities for all.

Working with students from the Met helped me investigate further into the lack of art resources in their communities and how they've been affected

by it. It is also important when thinking about my own experience as a youth attending the Met, to consider the ways our experiences were similar and evolved or changed.

Project Open Door (POD) is an arts based after school program in Providence. They offer drop in hours for students to explore art, as well as run a Saturday program for college portfolio preparation. This program is a nonprofit organization made to help students build their career as artists. It also is a great resource for students to explore their creativity and have a safe space to hang out and feel supported. POD also gives education students like myself the opportunity to build experience by teaching our own classes with students there. Thanks to Project Open Door I was able to gather

students from the Met High School and teach this workshop as a POD program, which gave me access to an art space with a variety of materials.

### ***Collaborative Quilting***

Within collaborative quilting we engaged in exploration through identity and creative expression. Each student had the opportunity to design and develop a total of three quilting patches throughout the extent of our workshop. Students created three patches to design, but were only asked to select one minimum to contribute to our final collaborative quilt. This workshop involved 8-10 students and we met once a week, for two hours. I structured the workshop so that each week we were exploring something new. I wanted to offer a variety of art methods so that students were able to make

discoveries on what they were drawn to, and what happened when they tried something new. Week one consisted of an introduction and brainstorming session. Week two was the start of our first exploration, we were able to work with resist dye technique and think about color. In week three we got to explore a variety of materials, like fabric paint, fabric collaging, fabric markers, and see how it was like to make imagery over fabric. Week four we experimented with monotype printing, and week five was to reflect and sew it all together. My purpose for structuring our workshop in this way was to see if students were impacted in any way by having the opportunity to explore their identity through art. In between our workshops I spent time observing student work, I asked questions to see

what students liked, and interviewed them to conduct my research further.

## **Data**

When addressing the data I've collected it's important for me to break down the process of my workshop and what each week looked like. The artists we've glanced at, the art practices we've engaged in, and what we created plays a huge role in the research I've conducted, and the data I've collected. I'll first address the workshop timeline and go over what we did each week. I'll also touch base on my approach to collecting my data and how I went about collecting it for each each week. I'll then show some examples of the lesson plan I

utilized, images, and questions I've asked students to support my investigations.

### ***Week One***

Week one was an introduction to the course and myself. We spent this time getting to know each other and learned about ourselves and interests. I showed students examples of artists that explore identity within their own work like Kerry James Marshall, Tanya Aguiniga, and Nicholas Hlobo. Students were then given a worksheet template to brainstorm and formulate their ideas and imagery for their quilt patches. We continued through our workshop exploring different art disciplines.

### ***Week Two***



Week two we began the first process of our project, which involved experimenting with the technique of resist dye. I started off class with introducing students to practiced quilting artists like, Bisa Butler. Bisa Butler is an educator and fiber artist who creates unique and intricate quilting works. She has introduced an innovative style to quilting by creating quilts that mimic the style of paintings. We also took a look at a local quilting artist Veronica Mays who was an advisor at The Met when I attended high school there. Veronica Mays now resides in Ohio and does quilting in the form of clothing, portraits, storytelling and craft. Veronica was an important connection being that she was a prominent figure throughout my highschool years and a local artist that creates art in dialogue to our practice. After reviewing these artists' examples I

then gave students a demo on different resist techniques and encouraged students to think about how color plays a role in mood, and the way we interpret it.

### ***Week Three***

Week three we focused on drawing and actually formulating our designs. We looked at artist Jori Minaya and analyzed how she uses pattern and color throughout her work in relation to her experience and identity. We also looked at Trenton Doyle and the way he utilizes storytelling, drawing, and collaging to create his own self narrative. With this inspiration in mind I wanted to challenge students to take on some approaches similar to Jori, and Trenton. Thinking about what ways they can create patterns throughout their own work,

experiment with mixed media. How can they tell stories or create dialogue within their work? I encouraged students to experiment using methods of painting on fabric, drawing on fabric with fabric markers, and collaging with fabric pieces. I wanted to introduce different mediums that students may have not used before, or challenge them to use these mediums in a different way by mixing these materials together.

### ***Week Four***

Week four students were introduced to monoprinting and got to print on one of their quilt patches, and print on paper to get a feel for the medium. We took a look at artist, printmaker, and social justice activist Favianna Rodriguez. Favianna works primarily with monoprinting and

silkscreen printing techniques. Within her work she touches base on a lot of social justice topics that she's passionate about, while also exploring color, layering, shape and different approaches to her technique. I wanted my students to experiment with monoprinting, because the majority of them have never tried it before. Looking at Favianna's work was a great example of the different approaches they could use.

### ***Week Five***

Lastly, week five was our final workshop day, we spent class reflecting on the work we completed over the course of our workshop. We celebrated with a pizza party while students sewed their fabric patches and decided which one they would like to contribute to our collaborative quilt. After receiving

each student's patch I then sewed them all to contribute to our collaborative quilt.

### ***Data Collection***

Throughout the five weeks of this workshop I spent time mostly observing my students. Taking a look at their interests and paying attention to what art practices they were most engaged in. By week three I began the interview/ brief discussion process.

During our class time I asked students who would like to meet with me first. I reminded students that this would only be a brief ten minute conversation and asked each student six questions in relation to their experiences with art education and neighborhood access. I continued these discussions until the next week (week four). I've found that

most students have had similar experiences with art education. Most students didn't have art programs nearby or did not have many art teachers in school growing up. Only 1-2 students wanted to pursue art seriously. Remaining students were interested in art but did not see themselves as artists.

Our reflection consisted of a very brief conversation of what students enjoyed most about the workshop. Almost all students really enjoyed the resist dying lesson which we did week Two, and our mixed media image making lesson which was week three. Through this reflection and observing what students seemed most engaged in, this helped to inform my research. Considering most students didn't see themselves as artists, I believe they enjoyed week two and three the most because it was the most

experimental and explorative. This gave students, especially those who don't often have an opportunity to create, learn and discover hidden skills. This also helped inform my research by supporting my claim that students benefit from art that is freeing and experimental. As well as students who do not have the access and resources to experiment with art, are unable to make these self discoveries.

***(Full Lesson Plan: Collaborative Quilting)***

## Collaborative Quilting Workshop January 9th - February 6th (2024)

<p>Name</p> <p>School/Site + Grade Level OR Course:</p>	<p>Aja Delgado, Workshop program for Met Students in Pod (High School 9-12)</p>
<p>Lesson Title:</p>	<p>Collaborative Quilting: Who am I?</p>
<p>Overview:</p> <p>Big Idea:</p>	<p>In this Lesson students will be given 2-3 8x8 fabric squares to create a piece of art that they feel represents their Identity. Students will get to explore different mediums, and choose from a variety of materials to create their garment. I challenge students to think conceptually, and critically about how they want to represent themselves through this project. Thinking about how we can use shape, color, pattern, language, and materials to convey our big idea(Identity). Once completed we will attach and sew each garment to create one collaborative quilt.</p>



<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Cultural Responsiveness:</p>	<p>By allowing students the creative freedom to explore their Identities, gives them the opportunity to develop and play an active role within themselves and their community. Through this assignment students will be able to practice reconnection and reestablishment within the relationship to the self. As well as practicing critical and conceptual thinking, looking at deeper and more enriching ways to get their point across. Students will also be able to learn to work collaboratively and gain knowledge through the experiences and backgrounds of their peers. Creative practices we will be exploring are dyeing experimentation, fabric painting, embroidery, sewing, printmaking, and drawing.</p> <p>This project supports each student's unique cultural background by allowing them the freedom to express their identity within any dialogue they see fit. It gives them the chance to show how they want to be represented and practices principles of diversity and inclusion, and thinking forward in that. Combining our pieces into one quilt is a display of respect and gain from one another, and how we come as we are. I'll also be providing students with examples of artists that explore concepts of identity within their work. Like Kerry James Marshall, Doric Salcedo, Nicholas Hlobo, and Tanya Aguiniga. That way students can gain a variety of inspiration and insight from artists with different cultural backgrounds, to instill in their own practice.</p>
<p>Objectives:</p>	<p>At the end of this lessons students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Walk away with team building/collaborative skills.</li> <li>● Develop personal growth within artmaking in relation to identity.</li> <li>● <b>Be exposed to new concepts, artists, and mediums.</b></li> </ul>

<p>Assessment Strategies (formative + summative)</p>	<p>I will be using a more formative assessment approach to assess my students. Through observation I'll be paying attention to engagement in the art practices we explore and how students are showing up for themselves. Student's will be assessed on participation and the effort they are putting in to engage in our projects. At the end of our workshop I will further assess by asking students what they think they've learned and what they enjoyed throughout this workshop. Allowing students to reflect on their own progress and growth.</p>
<p>NCVA Standards:</p>	<p>Visual Arts- Creating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HS Proficient VA:Cr2.1.1a</li> <li>● HS Proficient VA: Cr1.1.1a</li> <li>● HS Accomplished VA:C/2.1.1a</li> </ul> <p>Visual Arts- Connecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HS Proficient VA: Cn11.1.1a</li> <li>● HS Accomplished VA:Cn11.1.1a</li> </ul>
<p>Differentiated Instruction:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breaking down instructions into smaller parts.</li> <li>● Going over instructions one on one.</li> <li>● Sharing instructions prior to class meeting.</li> <li>● Providing extra time to work on assignments.</li> <li>● Provide visual and verbal instructions.</li> </ul>
<p>Safety Procedures:</p>	<p>Potential Safety Hazards to be Aware of:</p> <p>Dye: We will be working with dye, so proper mask wear will be provided so students are not</p>

	<p>ingesting those chemicals from the dye. In any case of emergency and dye gets in the eyes we will go over how to properly rinse and wash the eyes.</p> <p>Printmaking: We will be doing some printmaking and working with carving tools which can be sharp and cause some stubs and cuts. We will be going over proper carving precautions to assure students avoid any injuries.</p> <p>Sewing: We will also be doing some sewing and embroidery, which can also cause minor cuts and pokes. I will be demonstrating proper use of sewing needles and how to avoid getting cut.</p> <p>To Note: With any safety hazards I'll be sure to always have a first aid kit in the classroom space.</p>
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Number of Sessions	Instruction Details + Minutes: Hook/Intro Exploration/Making Closure	Visual References	Materials Needed
Class 1 (2 Hours) Class Intro, project planning	Hook/Intro: I'll start off introducing myself and my background. We'll give students the opportunity to go around introducing themselves and what art medium they're interested in exploring. This will be our Ice Breaker. I'll then open up about the workshop, Introduce the project, and share information on what we will be working on throughout the course of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kerry James Marshall in "Identity" Video on Art21.org</li> <li>● Crafting Lineage Tanya Aguiniga Video on Art21.org</li> <li>● Nicholas Hlobo in "Johannesburg"</li> </ul>	<p>-Powerpoint slide</p> <p>-Brainstorm Worksheet</p> <p>-Writing/Drawing utensils. Markers, color pencils, pencils, pens</p>

	<p>workshop. Lastly we'll watch some short videos by Kerry James Marshall, Tanya Aguina, and Nicholas Hlobo to inspire and help students brainstorm some ideas about their own Identity.</p> <p>Exploration/ Making: I'll be passing out an activity sheet for brainstorming Ideas. This is when students will fill the sheet out and start planning and thinking about what they want to make for their quilting patch. This essentially will be the start of their rough draft.</p> <p>Closure: At the end of class students will share their Ideas and be encouraged to think more about it over the week. I'll also give students a heads up on our dyeing assignment for the following week, so they can dress accordingly.</p>	<p>Video on Art21.org</p>	<p>etc.</p>
<p>Class 2 (2 hours) Intro to Dyeing</p>	<p>Hook/ Intro: To start off class we'll do a quick check in. Then revisit the ideas we formulated from last class. I'll then show some quilting examples by artist's Bisa Butler, and Veronica Mays. I'll also show some examples of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bisa Butler's "Forever Quilt" (2020)</li> <li>● Bisa Butler's "Broom Jumpers" (2019)</li> <li>● Bisa Butler's</li> </ul>	<p>-Powerpoint Slides</p> <p>-Squeeze Bottles for dye solutions</p>

	<p>dyeing techniques, and bring in some examples of the fabrics I've dyed for students to look at.</p> <p>Exploration/Making: I'll be going over safety precautions and giving a demo on dyeing and different techniques that can be used. Students will then get started and dye their own fabric squares, fabric will sit overnight and be dry and ready for use the following week.</p> <p>Closure: We'll briefly go over next week's prompt so that students are prepared.</p>	<p>"Southside Sunday Morning" (2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veronica Mays "Mom and Dad Moyo"</li> <li>• Veronica Mays "From African Kings to American Kings"</li> </ul> <p>-Her website "Conakysquilts.com"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of fabric samples I've made (Aja Delgado)</li> </ul>	<p>-Elastics, scrap materials like, popsicle sticks, marble balls, ect..</p> <p>-Mx procion dye, yellow, red, blue, green, and magenta</p> <p>-Buckets for fabric dye application.</p> <p>-Muslim cotton fabric squares</p> <p>-Gloves</p> <p>-Masks</p> <p>-Aprons</p> <p>-Ziploc Bags</p>
<p>Class 3 (2 hours) Fabric Drawing, Painting, collage, or embroidery</p>	<p>Hook/Intro: Check in with Students, Introduce lesson prompt. I'll share some examples of fabric painting I've done, and share a short video on Artist Jori Minaya's work with patternmaking and fabric printing. As well as a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jori Minaya's "Pattern Making" Video on Art21.org</li> <li>• Trenton Doyle "Stories" Video on Art21.org</li> </ul>	<p>-Powerpoint Slides</p> <p>-Fabric scraps</p> <p>-Fabric glue</p>

	<p>short video on Trenton Doyle, and his artmaking process. We'll then take a look at the fabrics student's dyed last week and see how they turned out.</p> <p>Exploration/ Making: Once we take a look at our fabrics. I'll give a quick embroidery demo, and I'll give students time to develop their fabrics further by using either fabric paint, fabric markers, collaging, or embroidery techniques. Students will be encouraged to try mixing different mediums and techniques together.</p> <p>Closure: We will reflect on the work we made, and go over next week's activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of my own work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Embroidery threads</li> <li>-Embroidery needles</li> <li>-Fabric paint</li> <li>-Fabric Markers</li> <li>-Scissors</li> </ul>
<p>Class 4 (2 hours) Linocut/ Monotype</p>	<p>Hook/Intro: Check in with students. I'll introduce printmaking and give an overview of what printmaking is and its different categories. I'll show some examples of my printmaking work and show examples of artwork by Favianna Rodriguez. I'll go over the printmaking techniques we'll be working with (Monotype)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favianna Rodriguez "Printmaking with Favianna Rodriguez I KQED Arts" Video on Youtube.com</li> <li>• Favianna's Website "Favianna.com"</li> <li>• A quick look at my own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Powerpoint Slides</li> <li>-Printmaking inks</li> <li>-Brayers</li> <li>-Baren tools</li> <li>-Paper</li> <li>-Paint brushes</li> </ul>

	<p>Exploration/ Making: I'll begin with a short demo and examples of how to do a Monotype print. Students will then dive into the activity and create their own prints using this technique. They will be encouraged to print on their fabric but also on paper to get a feel for printing on different materials.</p> <p>Closure: To end class we will review what we worked on and how we felt about printmaking. And I'll inform students to come ready for our last class and go over what that'll look like. I'll also have students write down what their favorite snacks are to bring in for our final class celebration.</p> <p>Notes: Be mindful of student's allergies and dietary restrictions when bringing snacks for next class. Be sure to make note of that.</p>	<p>printmaking work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Newsprint paper</li> <li>-Scissors</li> <li>-Jelly plates</li> <li>-Ink spatulas</li> </ul>
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<p>Class 5 (2 hours) Sewing Patches/ workshop reflection and celebration</p>	<p>Intro/ Hook: Student's will come into class and enjoy some treats and snacks that I brought in. After students are settled in I'll have them pick out 1 of the fabrics we've worked on over the course of the workshop, to be used in our collaborative quilt. Student's can choose whatever one they are most proud of or want to contribute. I'll then play a short video by Kim Sooja mending traditional Korean bed covers.</p> <p>Exploration/Making: The majority of class will be a chill workday. I will give a quick demo on how to sew their quilt patches together. Students will then spend class time sewing and adding any finishing touches to the quilt patch they've selected. What students don't finish sewing I'll take to sew together for them. The extra patches students can take home to work on and keep.</p> <p>Closure: To end our workshop we will reflect and look at the work we did together as a class. Students will have the opportunity to talk about their favorite parts of the class, what they most enjoyed or didn't</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Art in the Everyday Life" by: Kimsoojah</li> </ul> <p>Video on Art21.org</p>	<p>-Sewing needles</p> <p>-Sewing thread</p> <p>-Quilt Batting</p> <p>-Sewing pins</p> <p>-Scissors</p>
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	enjoy. Students will later get to see their patches all together on the completed collaborative quilt displayed at their highschool(The Met).		
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Working as a collective on this quilt was a great way to investigate the importance of working collaboratively within a community setting. Each student contributed their own element to this project while still being able to work individually. This gave students the opportunity to explore their identity, and experiment through a variety of art disciplines. This workshop created an outlet for the youth to practice experimentation while engaging in self discovery. Many students did not consider themselves artists or wanted to pursue art, they were able to try something new and make discoveries about what they liked and didn't like. Through

observation and experimentation I was able to assess how students benefited from these practices. In the end did they gain new skills, learn to work collaboratively, or make any self discoveries as an artist? The answer is yes!

During each session I asked students if they had any experience or tried any of the mediums we were working with. Most of the students had experience with drawing, painting, tie dyeing and collaging, but almost all of the student's had never used fabric paint or worked with fabric as a canvas. None of the students had used fabric as a medium for collaging, and all but one student had tried monoprinting before. Many students made self discoveries through these processes as well, alot of them realized that they didn't need to be professional

artists in order to make something they were proud of. By introducing approaches like tie dye, pattern making, and printmaking allowed more freedom and exploration. Students also made self discoveries by figuring out what mediums they were drawn to. The majority of youth loved tie dyeing, while a couple of students really loved the craft side of it like the fabric collaging and painting. By asking students how they felt about each practice and observing how much effort they put into what they were working on showed me what they took away from each lesson.

In between our workshops I also set aside time to discuss with each student and ask them all a series of questions (see Figure 3).

How would you describe yourself?
Where did you grow up? What city/ Neighborhood?
What's your art education experience like? (This includes art programs)
What interests you most about art?
Would you like to pursue a career in art?
Why did you sign up for this workshop?

**Figure 3**

*Interview Questions*

I started off by first getting some insight on each student, by having them tell me about themselves and their personality. A handful of the students described themselves as introverted, shy, chill, creative and artistic. While some described themselves as athletic, into fashion and hardworking. A smaller group of students described

themselves as extroverted and funny as well. The reason for asking this and getting familiar with the students first was to see if there were any connections to creative pursuits and artistic talent.

The following part of my interview process was collecting information about student's upbringing and what neighborhoods and cities they grew up in. This is in relation to the art resources in the areas they live in. I'm looking at the challenges students could face by being at a distance from art programs. Almost all of my students are first generation students with families that have migrated from outside the U.S. Most of these students also live in smaller inner city neighborhoods, majority living in Providence and very few living in surrounding areas like Johnston, and Pawtucket. The greater number

of students live in the city limits of Providence which places them in a better position to access arts programs compared to those that live in surrounding areas

I follow up those questions by diving a little deeper into students' art experiences and education. This helped me to get a better understanding of what access to art resources and programs that students have. With this I found that the majority of students didn't have a prominent art education. Only two students described having several arts experiences, more so because they pursued and sought out these creative opportunities through after school programs, summer programs, and other workshops that they've found and attended on their own. The remaining students described having an art teacher

in elementary school, but no art classes in middle school or currently in high school. Three students attend an art after school program, New Urban Arts(NUA) and one student attends Project Open Door(POD), while the rest did not engage in any outside art courses or programming. I found that one youth attended CityArts as a preteen. Similar to NUA and POD, City Arts is an art program for kids ages 8-14 located In Providence as well. They offered after school programs for pre-teens and summer programs as well. Unfortunately this student stopped attending City Arts. She expressed always loving art and volunteering there, but stopped because she was too old to attend that program. This student hadn't participated in any art programs prior to this workshop. They stated, "Doing this program makes me miss being at

CityArts and makes me want to start making more art again.” This student along with a few others sought out most of their art resources through non profit youth programs in Providence. Through these programs students were able to work with and learn a variety of mediums like pottery, painting, drawing, collaging, zine making, clothing design, and printmaking.

After investigating students' history and background in art I wanted to know what about why art interests them and why they enjoy art making.

Unsurprisingly, most students expressed interest in making art as a way to express themselves. Some students also described it as fun and they liked being able to explore new things within art



making. While others see themselves as creative and just find joy in creating overall.

I carried out this conversation by asking students if they'd like to pursue a career in art. Only two students have plans to pursue a career in an art field. One student was interested in community based work and art education, they hope to attend school for illustration or sculpture. The other student wants to pursue a career in art therapy. Another student expressed interest in starting their own clothing brand although they did not have a strong interest in art initially. The remaining students, although interested in art, don't have plans in pursuing an art career. Some of these students conveyed that they aren't pursuing a career in art

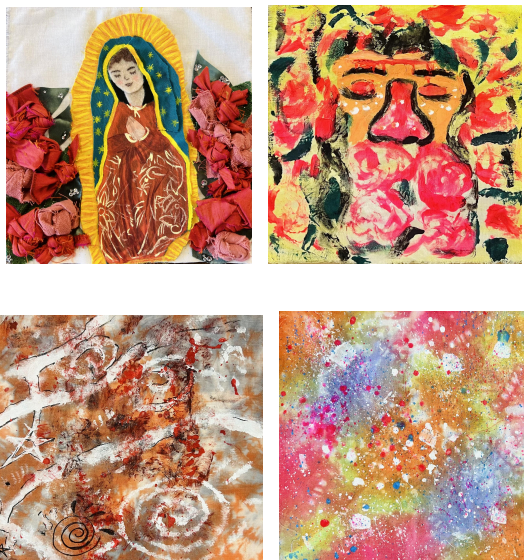
due to the lack of job opportunities and being at a disadvantage.

When I asked students why they signed up for this workshop, surprisingly a majority of the students had no interest in signing up, most students were told or encouraged to. This was a shock considering how many of the students have been interested in art in some way. Although most didn't take an interest prior, so many students really enjoyed it in the end. For some it reignited their creative fire, for others it was an outlet for unlocking creative potential.

Aside from interviewing students I also paid close attention and made note of students' interests - what art practices they were interested in, what designs

they were creating, and their artistic process. I noticed a majority of students were most interested in apparel design elements, working with resist dyeing, and collaging with fabric was a great way for students to create garment-like pieces for their quilt patches. They also took an interest in working abstractly; they loved being able to work freely and intuitively instead of planning out their art pieces. I also noticed almost all students were doing research, actively looking for inspiration for the pieces they were making. Students always selected their materials and decided on what mediums they'd work with first, then thought about the imagery they'd create. They loved engaging in explorative free handed mediums like the resist dye, but did not enjoy tedious work as much, like hand sewing. All in all every student's approach to creating was

similar but their designs of course were unique to their interests. (See Figure 4)



**Figure 4**

*Student work from Collaborative Quilting*

## Analysis

In this portion of my research I'll be revisiting my research questions and address the ways in which these questions informed the research I have found. I'll be addressing what I predicted and what ways did it align with the data I've collected. As well as unexpected challenges and limitations that came up throughout my research.

### ***Lack of Access and Reliance on Community Art Programs***

I asked the question ***What role does community art based programs play within underserved communities?*** Through this workshop I was able to investigate what ways students are affected or can

benefit from having an arts program. Some challenges I faced were being able to investigate this question further, because our workshop was only five weeks long, it was hard to collect the amount of data that could have supported this claim further. I have found that most students do not have art teachers or hardly had any art educators in school growing up. This is important when considering the role community art programs play in all this. Since most students do not have a lot of art experiences in school, how else are students getting an art education? Most times it is through an outside school program. This was the case for most students. The 2-3 students that took an interest in art had to rely on their art programs outside of school, Like NUA, POD, and City Arts, as mentioned in previous chapters. There aren't many community

art programs within smaller cities which only allows students to attend these programs located in Providence. While those who did not participate in art often although interested only really got those experiences through school. This tells me that most of the students I worked with really count on community based art programs because their schools aren't prioritizing art education. For underserved populations, who often don't have art within schools, and don't have art programs in their neighborhood. Are left with nowhere to go in order to obtain these experiences. Although schools should prioritize art education they often don't always, as Kraehe and Acuff (2015) noted,

students in schools that are most challenged and serving the highest need student populations often have the fewest arts

opportunities (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 2011, p. 32). This statement reflected the Obama administration's increasing awareness and recognition of the negative effects that curriculum and budget compression have had on arts education for many public school students, especially underserved populations. (p. 295)

This is where community art based programs come into play. Without art education in schools students are seeking outlets to create and these programs can be a major contributing factor in helping students artistic development. We see how art programs have been a great asset for students in this workshop because they weren't given an art education in school. Their only access or resources to art were



either what they've learned on their own, or through the community programs they were enrolled in.

## ***Lack of Artistic Development and Creative***

### ***Outlet***

I've also imposed the question of ***How are students affected by the lack of art resources and opportunities?*** With the timeline of this project I think this question needed more time to be answered. Throughout the five weeks of this workshop I have discovered some ways students are affected by this. Also as someone who experienced living in small communities and knowing my own struggles with access to art resources, I predicted what ways students can be affected. Some things I learned were that most students felt like they had to put in more effort to travel to, or find art

opportunities. The one student that lived in Johnston expressed having to take two buses just to get to the POD or NUA studio. Other students expressed not knowing where to find opportunities and not having a bus pass or ride to attend them. Transportation played a big role in students being more present in art programs, which in turn affected their ability to get more art experiences. On a greater scale I believe a lot of students were affected by not having more experiences with art making in general. Most students were interested in art, that's why most enrolled in the workshop, but they didn't see themselves as artists or doing art professionally. I think this is because they weren't exposed to art more, or had the mentorship and access to art making. As someone who always loved art I didn't take it seriously until I was inspired by NUA as a

junior in high school. This is because I didn't have enough art experiences or art educators around me to help me see my potential as an artist. If you aren't given the resources to explore your creativity how are you going to know what you're capable of as an artist. How are you able to unlock potential or see yourself as an artist if you don't have the support and encouragement to grow into one. I've found that most students are affected just by not having, because without having it's just, what could have been or what if. How would that outlook have changed for them if they did have more support and resources for art?

### ***Encouraging Confidence and Optimism***

When thinking about underserved youth I was really interested in how Identity and self expression

played a part in students creativity, I asked *What role does art making play in self-expression and identity?* As mentioned earlier, art is an outlet for most of us to express ourselves, our feelings, and what we like. Throughout our workshop I really wanted to center the workshop around creative exploration and working around the themes of identity. I wanted to make this workshop very open so that students were able to express themselves and have the opportunity to make discoveries of their own capability as an artist. I found that students felt more confident creating and experimenting with the art practices they were engaging in. Can I say students found themselves as an artist through this workshop, no not quite. I will say students began to exude more confidence with creating, especially those who did not see themselves as artists, because

they had an opportunity to experiment with new mediums and make discoveries about themselves. For example one student did not really consider themselves creative but through experimentation within the workshop they realized they were more drawn to abstract ways of working. They were so impressed and proud with what they created, they kept saying how “tough” their work was. The term tough is used to describe something that's great, or remarkable. I also saw this through one student that attended City Arts as a youth, through the workshop she expressed how much it made her miss creating, and how she wants to start creating again. I can't guarantee that this workshop changed everyone's lives, but it did give students an outlet to try something new, and make new discoveries about themselves which did contribute to them personally.

This is important because since underserved youth don't always have access to art resources, that means they don't always have spaces to explore their creativity and identity through art. When given the opportunities to do so students can learn new things about themselves and what they like. They can see themselves as good artists even if they didn't think they were before.

***Art Practices that are Explorative can Promote Engagement***

Lastly I was curious about ***How can collaboration through community engaged projects contribute to student Engagement?*** I predicted that students being able to work with each other on a project could help inspire one another and in turn could encourage student engagement. Although I found

that students did get inspired from one another, what really promoted student engagement was interest in the subject. Most students loved week two and three of the workshop, which were the resist dye lesson and the image making lesson. I believe this is because they had explorative freedom to work and experiment with these mediums.

Whereas hand sewing and collaging with fabric were more tedious, and required more patience. Week two and three were also when I noticed students were having the most fun and more creative. Students were engaged when working together and I noticed this was because they got to do something together and as friends which made it more fun for them. I could see this because almost all students were all in a friend group throughout the workshop. I also know from my own experience

that I always wanted to try and do something if my friends were participating in it also. All in all I believe collaboration does play a role in student engagement but if the subject is fun and interesting to the student that will in fact promote student engagement.

Throughout the research I've investigated and data I collected I have made some discoveries and learned some things along the way. For future research I would change the timeline and expand on this research a bit more. Allowing myself more time to collect data and working with different groups could benefit my research findings. I would also like to try out different lesson plans and see what ways students are engaging in them, or how they are able to make further discoveries within themselves.



Some other ideas to consider would be meeting with different age groups as well, discussing with folks who are my age or older to get some more insight on their experiences when they were a youth could offer a different perspective.

# **PART FOUR**

# **CONCLUSIONS**

## Conclusion

Through exploration and investigation I was able to uncover some answers to my research questions.

*How can collaboration through community engaged projects contribute to student*

*Engagement? What role does art making play in*

*self-expression and identity? How are students*

*affected by the lack of art resources and*

*opportunities? What role does community art*

*based programs play within underserved*

*communities?*

Was the research I found as I predicted? In some ways yes, in other ways no. I knew that a more longitudinal research project might have provided more extensive results, but the lack of time played a role in the restrictions of the data I collected. I had

five workshop sessions to collect my data, with only three of those sessions being used for discussion/interviews. This gave me a very short time frame to collect information on each student's art education experience. I predicted that the students I worked with or youth in general could indeed benefit from community art based programs, and creating overall. Considering the role art making plays within self-expression and identity for youth. I found that the students I worked with were able to make self discoveries and develop a sense of confidence as artists. Having an outlet to experiment their artistic practices helped them learn new ways of working and develop their own techniques as artists. I also discovered that these benefits can be more effective after an extensive period of time. Some key takeaways from my

research is that students really thrive in spaces that provide opportunities for self expression and exploration, as well as working with fewer restrictions . I also found that encouragement, and collaboration helped engagement as well.

During our collaborative quilting project, my intention was to observe students' engagement and effort throughout the course of our workshop. What ways did students seem more confident about what they were creating, what projects were they more engaged in than others, how did this workshop benefit their personal development? I came to the conclusion that students were making self discoveries through these projects, like when we got to explore with resist dyeing, fabric painting, and collaging with fabric. Most students have never

worked with these mediums and through them learned something new. Reflecting on working with one student that did not really consider themselves creative, through experimentation in the workshop they realized they were more drawn to abstract ways of working. They were so impressed and proud with what they created, that they were even surprised and excited by what they could do.

Students were also looking at what their peers were creating and sharing ideas, taking inspiration from one another and from our artist examples. This allowed them to feel more comfortable with searching and looking for inspiration outside of the classroom, which in turn seemed to help them feel more comfortable with experimentation and art making, and less worried about making mistakes.

Students were excited to create, even those who did

not consider themselves artists. When given the opportunity to create something collectively, it motivated students which contributed to their engagement in the subject matter.

There were projects students were more engaged in than others, like resist dyeing, painting, drawing, and printmaking. I noticed that students put in less effort and were less engaged in hand sewing and some were less interested in fabric collaging. I believe this is because those mediums are a bit more tedious, requiring a little more attention to detail. Also considering the time constraint this perhaps didn't give students adequate time to thoroughly develop the skills to their full capacity. I think with a bit more practice and time working with these

techniques, students would have been more engaged in the subjects.

In summary, I found that with my students, working in community with each other collaboratively on our projects contributed to higher student engagement but this did not guarantee that students would automatically be engaged in every subject matter we worked on. Additionally, I found that student engagement increased with projects that students were interested in and could connect personally to. Likewise, students responded to projects that offered a sense of freedom and exploration: for example, students loved dyeing because it was something they could have fun with, and did not require a lot of prior knowledge about dyeing to do so. When projects are explorative and



fun this can contribute more to student engagement, just as working collaboratively can.

Things I also discovered during my research, as predicted, were the lack of art resources for youth in underserved communities, and the ways students were underserved by their schools or their community resources. A majority of the students I worked with at The Met didn't have art education in school or any community art programs within their area. I believe this played a role in their confidence to pursue art. Due to a lack of art resources and artist mentors available, most students didn't see a career in art as a possibility. Those who didn't see themselves as artists didn't know they were creative or could make what they considered "good" art. This led me to conclude that de-investment in the

arts in communities and schools have a negative impact on arts fields as well as a negative impact on the people living in those communities.. Most people don't even know what they are creatively capable of until they have opportunities to experiment with art making

I also found that art making can contribute to self expression and identity. Art is a strong outlet for self expression. Students were able to create connections for themselves and make new discoveries about their abilities. Students were able to make connections to their identities by creating work that inspired them; through artists they admired; games or characters they liked; thinking about activities and hobbies they enjoyed; or patterns and colors they were drawn to. While the construction of identity is a complex and lifelong

process (not captured fully by a five week workshop), I can say with some confidence that students were given space to learn new things about themselves that they may have not known before.

In conclusion I believe that we as art educators should prioritize supportive, collaborative environments for youths' creative exploration. Allowing space for them to explore their abilities and encourage them to take more risks can push youth to discover more of what they can do. One implication of this research project is the critical need for arts funding in schools, regardless of the community. I believe that the arts are essential to student growth and development. All students should have the opportunity to tap into their

creativity and unlock their potential as artists or creative thinkers.

Things I would like to consider for future research would be to conduct a project with a longer timeline, spending more time on the data that's being collected, as well as expanding on the location and the number of youth I work with. I believe this research could really benefit from hearing from other student experiences, especially within smaller underserved communities, outside of Providence and within other communities outside of Rhode Island.

Lastly, and most importantly, we must consider the effects and the lack of resources of underserved communities as a whole. What ways can we support

and elevate the experiences of underserved populations? How can we prioritize art education throughout these environments? We must offer more art programs within these communities and prioritize art education as a whole within all schools. How can we expect folks to thrive without the proper support and resources to do so? Also, we must continue thinking about the kind of art education we are creating for youth. Allowing self expression and creative freedom, while encouraging experimentation is crucial to the creative outlet of underserved students. What can the world look like if every student has equal opportunity? Just imagine the ways in which underserved students can reach all of their goals, have the confidence to go after what they desire. Achieve success in ways they

never deemed possible. This is a world I hope to see  
one day: a world where the underserved are served.

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