Afterschool Matters

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased and excited to announce that the Afterschool Matters Initiative is moving to the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College. As you can see on page 45, the Afterschool Matters Initiative comprises not only this journal and its companion publication, the Occasional Paper Series, but also the Edmund A. Stanley, Jr., Research Grants and the Research Fellowships that support practitioner research on issues in out-of-school-time programming.

The Robert Bowne Foundation will continue to support the Afterschool Matters Initiative, working closely with NIOST to lead the growing field of out-of-school-time education. What's exciting to me about this transition is precisely that our partner is NIOST. NIOST has over 30 years of experience in leading, representing, and advocating for the OST field—since before we were even known as a field! NIOST has a national reputation and a national presence in the field that will enable us to expand the Afterschool Matters Initiative nationwide.

This expansion is particularly important when it comes to the Research Fellowships. As far as we know, it is the only program of its kind, in which mid-level OST practitioners—people who actually work in local programs with staff, children and families—participate in professional development that delves into their work "on the ground" in their programs, investigate their own practice according to professional research standards, and write about and otherwise disseminate their work for a national audience. You see the product of this work in *Afterschool Matters*, which regularly features the work of Research Fellows—in this issue, Jennifer Fuqua of Queens Community House. But to us at the Robert Bowne Foundation the process of developing practitioner-researchers and giving them a voice to help shape the field in which they work daily is by far the most exciting part of this work. It is also the most crucial in the development of a field that is shaped by practitioners, as the OST field should be.

One reason we're thrilled to partner with NIOST is that they are as excited as we are. The Robert Bowne Foundation and NIOST share a set of common values. We believe in professional development for practitioners who often have far too few opportunities to build on what they already know and do. We believe that the OST field needs to advocate more strongly and urgently for quality OST education for all children and families. We believe that our best work—whether in professional development, in advocacy, or in our programs with children and families—happens not in isolation but in community.

The other reason, then, that NIOST is the best possible organization to carry forward the Afterschool Matters Initiative is that it has the capacity to expand this community exponentially. NIOST has built local networks of afterschool providers and linked them together into the beginnings of a national network. Our dream is to disseminate the vision and work of the Afterschool Matters Initiative throughout the country. Already there are plans to host Research Fellowship groups not only in New York City, where we have operated for five years, but also in Berkeley and Philadelphia, where NIOST will be partnering with the National Writing Project. Sara Hill, who has ably led the Afterschool Matters Initiative since its inception, will continue to work with NIOST and build on the great work she has done. NIOST's experience with research and publishing, its national presence, and its reputation in the field will enable us to reach farther and do more and better work on behalf of children and families throughout the country.

LENA O. TOWNSEND
Executive Director
The Robert Bowne Foundation

when the divide isn't just digital

How Technology-Enriched Afterschool Programs Help Immigrant Youth Find a Voice, a Place, and a Future

by Rebecca A. London, Manuel Pastor, Jr., and Rachel Rosner

"Success is helping students to carry on skills… [and] feel they have a place in the community, and that it is within their power to change issues in their lives and community." —**Staff member, Bresee Foundation**

The so-called "digital divide"—unequal access to information technology—is one of many social inequalities faced by individuals who are low-income, ethnic minorities, or immigrants. Surprisingly, the digital divide is even larger for young people than it is for adults, with African-American and Latino young people, as well as immigrants of almost any non-Asian ethnicity, having considerably less access to computers and the Internet in the home than do their white, Asian, or native counterparts (Fairlie, 2006). Because information technology (IT) is increasingly necessary to participate in critical aspects of society, such as education, the labor market, and government, limited access to IT can further disadvantage those who are already on the margin.

Fifty-four percent of immigrant youth, for example, have a computer at home, compared to 75 per-

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cent of native youth (Figure 1). Similar disparities exist for home Internet access generally and for high-speed access specifically. Latino immigrants are especially disadvantaged relative to other immigrant and native groups, with just 36 percent having a computer at home. Even these statistics do not tell the whole story, as they mask important disparities within ethnic groups. For instance, Mexicans have even less access at home than do Latinos as a whole. Similarly, Cambodian and Laotian immigrants have lower home access rates than do other Asian groups. Though such disparities may be partly due to differences in education and income levels, research has found that digital inequality among immigrants persists even after controlling for income and education (Fairlie, London, Rosner, & Pastor, 2006).

Figure 1: Access to Information Technology Among Youth (Ages 5–25)

Source: Authors' tabulations from the October 2003 Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census. Black immigrant youth are not included due to small sample sizes.
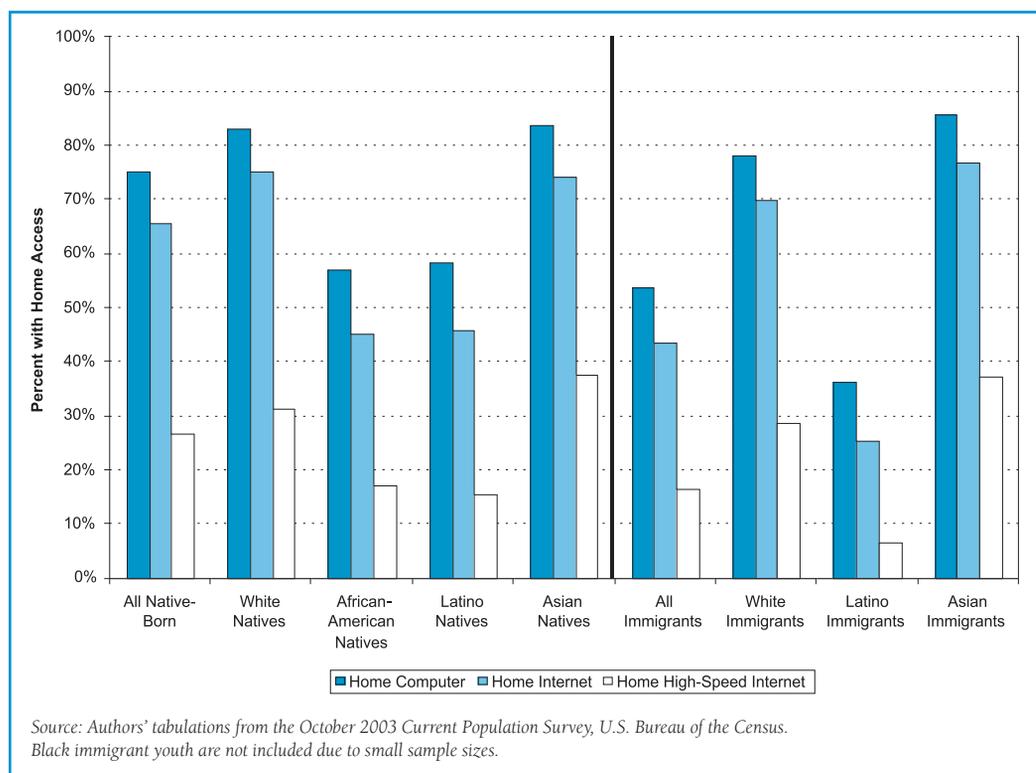
Because of these disparities, public places such as schools, libraries, and community centers have become important links to the cyberworld for disadvantaged young people. This public access—which many young people reported in our interviews that they needed and wanted—provides organizations that serve young people with an opportunity not only to address the digital divide, but also to embed a youth development focus in an IT framework. Our research indicates that pairing youth development activities with information technology can be tremendously effective in providing disadvantaged young people with skills that are valuable both in the labor market and in their overall development.

Community technology centers (CTCs) and other community centers not only offer computer and Internet access but also can provide a supportive environment in which young people can learn about different kinds of technology. CTCs also tend to place fewer restrictions on access than do school and library computer labs, which often place time limits on usage, require users to be enrolled in specific courses, restrict use to particular hardware and software configurations, or have limited hours of operation (London, Pastor, Servon, Rosner, & Wallace, 2006). Equally important, community centers play a vital role in helping youth during the afterschool hours, a period researchers have found to be critical to the development of youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). Because afterschool programs address the social, emotional, creative, and cognitive needs of youth, they are uniquely positioned to promote not only the acquisition of IT skills, but also other important proficiencies, including civic engagement and leadership (Goodman, 2003). Indeed, a recent synthesis by the Mott Foundation stated this goal for afterschool programs: "improved literacy and communication for all participants, including English language learners, in: reading, writing, speaking, listening, technology, foreign language" (C. S. Mott Foundation, 2005, p. 10). Creating opportunities for positive youth development through the lens of IT is a vital way to help youth, particularly immigrant youth, develop and express their voices.

For this article, we studied how six CTCs that work predominantly with immigrant populations serve immigrant youth in California. We focused on immigrant youth because they are increasing in number in California as well as throughout the entire U.S., because they are among the most disadvantaged youth in terms of financial resources and parents' levels of formal education, and because they

have the lowest levels of access to IT in the home and, therefore, the longest journey toward digital inclusion. We also focused on immigrant youth because the successful incorporation of such youth is one of the major challenges American institutions face in coming years. Therefore, institutions such as CTCs, which can provide support and mentoring in a holistic youth development framework, may be critical to our nation's future.

Data and Methods

We conducted case studies of six CTCs from fall 2004 to winter 2006. For each case study, a team of two or more researchers spent one to two days visiting the center. During the visits, we interviewed CTC staff and instructors, youth participants, and community partners. We observed CTC activities, reviewed key program documents, and surveyed the projects created by the participants using the technology they learned at the CTC. We conducted in-person interviews, individually or in groups of two or three, with youth participants, specifically seeking out those involved in technology-driven projects.

Though we know that understanding immigrant youth requires an examination of the entire family, for brevity's sake we focus in this article specifically on youth-centered programming and outcomes. For information regarding parental involvement, youth recruitment and retention, and statistics on immigrant youth and the digital divide, see *Crossing the Divide: Immigrant Youth and Digital Disparity in California* (Fairlie et al., 2006).

Selection Criteria

We used five main criteria to select the CTCs we studied:
- All of the CTCs had established youth programs or served youth in a meaningful way.
- All served a predominantly immigrant population, either first or second generation. Although not necessarily by design, all of the CTCs we visited were located in disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- The sites represented different immigrant groups, including Korean, Latino (primarily Mexican, but also South American), and Southeast Asian (primarily Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian). Some CTCs served mainly one of these groups and others served a mix.
- The sites were located in various regions of California: two in San Francisco, two in Los Angeles, one in the Central Valley, and one on the Mexican border.

- The programs were recommended to us as being unique or outstanding in some way. We looked for exemplary programs in order to best identify how CTCs can improve the lives of immigrant youth.

Because the CTCs were selected in this fashion, results from this study cannot necessarily be used to form conclusions about CTCs generally or even about all CTCs serving immigrant communities. However, in this article we draw out consistent messages indicated by our analysis that can be relevant for other youth-serving CTCs or community centers.

> Institutions such as CTCs, which can provide support and mentoring in a holistic youth development framework, may be critical to our nation's future.

Context: The CTC Sites

The six CTCs we visited had much in common, but each also offered a unique set of supports for the immigrant community it served.

The Bresee Foundation, located in Los Angeles, was a faith-based community center that offered a variety of technology, educational, health, and other supportive services. The center's main target group was young people, particularly during the afterschool hours when Bresee offered homework assistance and tutoring. The center had a computer lab designated specifically for youth, where young people took classes or learned by experimenting on their own, with assistance as necessary. Bresee also offered an Arts and Multimedia Production program, where high school students learned filmmaking and editing skills by creating their own social documentaries.

Casa Familiar, a non-profit community-based organization, was located in San Ysidro, just across the U.S.-Mexico border from Tijuana. Casa Familiar offered more than 50 programs in the areas of human services, community development, recreation, technology, arts and culture, and education. Options for youth included the C3 Café computer lab, where students received homework help or explored computer technology, and the Young Leaders Program, which taught leadership skills and the value of community involvement to youth ages 12–21. Casa Familiar also offered a fitness center, game room, and youth basketball league.

Firebaugh Computer Learning Center (FCLC) was located in California's Central Valley about 40 miles north of Fresno, in a housing project where many Mexican families lived who were employed in the area's agricultural industry. FCLC offered computer access and basic skills courses for adults and youth, as well as

opportunities to become involved in community activities and advocacy efforts. It did not operate a separate youth program, though many young people used the computers for schoolwork.

The Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) was a non-profit community-based organization in Los Angeles. KYCC provided programs and services to improve academic performance and increase community engagement among youth in Koreatown and surrounding communities. Its SEEK-LA Drop-In Center provided after-school tutoring, college preparation, computer access, and employment training for students. KYCC also provided opportunities for youth leadership development and community service through programs such as the Korean Coalition of Students in California, Youth Employment Service, and Youth Drug Abuse Prevention. The center integrated technology by offering computer access and training. KYCC served students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, not only Korean students.

The Richmond Village Beacon Center (RVBC), one of eight Beacon centers in the San Francisco Bay area, was the only Beacon located in a high school. RVBC provided a safe, accessible, and supportive youth and community center in the Richmond District, a culturally and socio-economically diverse community. Youth services included afterschool tutoring, homework help, performing arts, multimedia arts and technology (animation, digital photography, video-making, website design), cartooning, 'zine-making, cooking, recreation, martial arts, and leadership programming. Staff members supported collaboration among agencies, schools, and other neighborhood organizations. Most of the students were of Asian background; however, the center also served a significant number of Latino and African-American youth.

The Vietnamese Youth Development Center (VYDC) was a non-profit agency in San Francisco's Tenderloin District. VYDC provided neighborhood youth—mainly Southeast Asian young people ages 10–21—with urgently needed support and practical assistance as they adjusted to their new lives in the U.S. VYDC offered a variety of programming, including delinquency prevention, academic support, substance abuse counseling, computer technology, and digital arts and media. VYDC also offered an arts and technology program, in which students worked collaboratively with center staff to create project-based films. A goal of VYDC was to bring neighborhood youth together in the spirit of personal responsibility and commitment to the community.

Each site offered an array of experiences for youth, as shown in Figure 2. Providing access to computers and the Internet was a critical aspect of programming for Bresee, Casa Familiar, FCLC, and RVBC; however, all of the centers had open-access computer labs that participating youth were allowed to use. Each site also offered a variety of other services and programs geared toward youth with various needs.

CTC Benefits to Immigrant Youth

"It is the people that drive the technology." —*Executive Director, Firebaugh Computer Learning Center*

While the immigrant-based CTCs we visited offered a variety of programs for youth, technology was often the "hook"

Figure 2 (part 1): Characteristics of Case Study CTCs

GOALS	Bresee Foundation	Casa Familiar	Firebaugh Computer Learning Center	Richmond District Beacon	Koreatown Youth and Community Center	Vietnamese Youth Development Center
	Los Angeles	San Ysidro	Central Valley	San Francisco	Los Angeles	San Francisco
	Provided access to technological resources often out of reach to low-income community members, taught marketable skills, and enhanced job placement opportunities.	Holistic approach focused on unique challenges faced by border communities. Included a range of services for immigrant youth, including technology, human services, leadership, recreation, education, and arts.	Provided social, economic, and educational advancement opportunities through technology training and programs.	Provided a safe, fun, and supportive environment for youth to explore and reach their full potential in a school-based setting. Focused on self-determination, cultural and economic diversity, and community building.	Provided immigrant youth and families with tools and skills that lead to academic success; developed youth leaders by building character and encouraging community engagement.	Supported immigrant youth as they adjusted to American life; encouraged and empowered youth to participate actively in the development of their community.

	Bresee Foundation	Casa Familiar	Firebaugh Computer Learning Center	Richmond District Beacon	Koreatown Youth and Community Center	Vietnamese Youth Development Center
	Los Angeles	San Ysidro	Central Valley	San Francisco	Los Angeles	San Francisco
Open computer access for youth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Open computer access for adults	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Multimedia program	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Homework help	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic computer skills classes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Technical skills classes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Internships/employment	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Leadership program	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
College prep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Adult mentors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figure 2 (part 2): Characteristics of Case Study CTCs

that brought the young people into the centers. As one participant reported, "The schools have slow computers…. [Here] I practice and play with the computer." However, the main goal of many of the programs was not to teach technology but to promote leadership and civic engagement and to provide youth with the skills needed to survive their challenging circumstances. Indeed, as fascinated as the young people were by technology, they frequently said it was the staff, who they often saw as mentors and friends, who kept them coming back. As one young person stated, "The kind of people here…you can talk to them." Another put it more strongly: "If these organizations weren't here, we'd be lost." CTC staff members echoed this priority, with one executive director stating, "When you work with these youth, you have to prove to them that you care for real." In short, helping youth to view and experience their communities through a digital framework facilitated discussions and an understanding of the many issues immigrant youth face in their everyday lives, such as racism, stress, peer pressure, and school demands. Four broad themes regarding the benefits of CTC participation for immigrant youth surfaced from our research:
• Using technology as a means for self-expression
• Creating a safe, supportive, and culturally comfortable environment

• Providing support and mentoring for learning and academic achievement
• Offering leadership training and opportunities for civic engagement

Using Technology as a Means for Self-Expression

"[The goal is to] get people to tell stories, teach them how to tell a story, and help them tell their own stories from their own neighborhoods."—*Staff member, Casa Familiar*

The opportunity to express their identity was another reason the young people commonly reported that they continued to attend most of the centers. Youth are drawn to the instant and ongoing communication information technology offers; many are also enticed by arts and media programs. Immigrant youth face many pressures, especially balancing parental and peer expectations. By providing young people with an environment that offers tools and supports to express themselves, CTCs are meeting a real and important need.

At the centers we visited, a primary way in which youth used technology to express themselves was through digital stories. Digital storytelling, like traditional narrative, links the author to others in his or her cultural context. Yet digital storytelling differs from written narrative in that it is visual (Davis, 2005); its similarity to television and movies and its connection with computers can make it appealing to youth. Digital storytelling has only recently become available to young people—especially low-income young people—as a way to tell their own stories in their own voices. This novelty is part of the attraction: Digital storytelling is not the medium their parents used, and the portrayal of themselves is not what they have seen in traditional media. As a fresh and contemporary way to tell their stories, digital storytelling was immensely appealing to the youth we interviewed.

Three of the six CTCs we visited had explicit arts and media programs that trained young people to use filmmaking equipment and software to create their own films and documentaries. Youth came to these programs for a

variety of reasons, but mostly for the opportunity to learn something "cool" that they would not have been able to access. However, the process of creating films became an excellent and entertaining tool for probing and expressing cultural diversity. The goals of these programs were to encourage creative expression and critical thinking, build self-esteem and skills, and encourage career exploration. Many of the participating youth said they were interested in pursuing careers in technology-related fields.

More than exposing participants to high-tech equipment and cutting-edge software, the multimedia programming was about self-expression. As one CTC staff member stated, "The hard part is the storytelling, not necessarily the technology." Youth who participated in multimedia programs brought their heritage to their projects. In Bresee's Arts and Media Program (AMP), young people, with assistance from adult staff members, learned to make social documentaries that reflected their own views and experiences. Youth had complete creative control and used their films to portray images of themselves and their communities that they felt were more representative than what is often shown in the media. One youth participant created a documentary about free speech; another documented his journey to his home country to deliver shoes to poor children there. A former AMP student stated, "Bresee has given me a way to show my story to other people, give them knowledge of a different way of thinking, viewing the world, viewing indigenous people."

At the Richmond Village Beacon Center, youth engaged in community filmmaking, working together on projects that they designed. Students began by writing their own short film scripts. As a group, they decided how to integrate their work and then collectively produced a film. One video, "Life as We Know It," touched on issues of racism and peer pressure: In their own voices, the students shared with the audience their role models, the importance of relationships, and their likes and dislikes.

At the Vietnamese Youth Development Center (VYDC), participants worked in small groups with award-winning filmmakers to create films and documentaries. At the time of our visit, students were making a documentary on a Cambodian rapper from Long Beach. VYCD students committed to working on the project for a specified period of time; staff expectations of this commitment were high. In the summer, youth worked together to produce shorter films on topics they selected.

Through these individual and shared processes, youth at the CTCs we visited not only explored their own iden-

> Youth who participated in multimedia programs brought their heritage to their projects.

tities but also learned about and related to the experiences of others, who may have been different in terms of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic class. The whole experience built a sense of team, a sense of identity, and a sense of responsibility.

Staff members spoke specifically of the historical inequality, prejudice, and discrimination that their students faced, issues that were very much present in the content and themes of the multimedia projects. One CTC arts and media staff member reported that historical inequalities can lead to a lack of self-esteem, and that a "lack of confidence leads to hopelessness… We try to make them feel empowered." While the youth themselves did not articulate this issue, staff perceptions were that many immigrants come to this country feeling like disadvantaged minorities. According to Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995), many immigrants were more advantaged or more connected to the mainstream in their countries of origin. The change in status brought about by their immigration affected their identity and their views of the world. One program director emphasized that, given some of the negative depictions of immigrant youth in the media, providing young people with the opportunity for self-expression is especially important. He believed that the only way for these young people to be represented truthfully is for them to document their lives themselves. A staff member at another CTC reported, "Success is helping students to…feel they have a place in the community, and that it is within their power to change issues in their lives and community." When youth, especially those straddling multiple cultures, become more confident about their identity, they can express themselves more freely.

In addition, tackling complex, multi-step projects, and staying with them from start to finish, keeps youth challenged and engaged while preparing them for the future. They learn important life skills, such as working cooperatively in groups, following through on assignments, thinking through long-term projects, and pushing themselves to reach higher expectations. CTC staff noted that these skills are vital for college-bound youth and that they cultivate the self-esteem needed to stay in school and sustain a quality education. Students at RVBC talked specifically about learning teamwork skills, with one capturing the sentiment: "We are learning teamwork, and a lot of other people don't know how to work in teams." Another said, "It's not a one-man team; you need to work together."

Creating a Safe, Supportive, and Culturally Comfortable Environment

"[Staff] nurture you to get a dream." —*Participant, Vietnamese Youth Development Center*

Adolescence is a period marked by many changes. Adapting to a new culture—a large adjustment in and of itself—can make this developmental stage even more difficult. Immigrant youth benefit from interacting with people who have been through similar experiences and are willing to share those experiences. Nurturing shared identities can create powerful bonds. The CTCs we visited had programs aimed at teaching youth about their own cultural heritage as well as exposing them to the traditions of others. Although IT was often the reason youth came to the centers we visited, they reported that they also benefited from the cultural activities. The CTCs focused on this aspect of youth development in order to help immigrant youth acculturate to the U.S. while retaining the importance of their own heritage.

> An inclusive environment, where students feel they belong, is important for immigrant youth, who may feel marginalized due to their immigrant or socioeconomic status.

Because traditions from their home countries are generally not included in American classrooms, immigrant youth can feel alienated and outside of the mainstream. One way CTCs can address this sense of alienation is to celebrate important cultural events, such as Chinese New Year or the Mexican *Dia de los Muertos*. These celebrations not only bridge generation gaps by helping youth relate to the cultural values of their parents, but also encourage parents to participate in center activities. CTC staff members play the role of cultural brokers between students from different backgrounds, and, in some cases, between students and schools and even between students and their families.

Exploring shared cultural identities was a key reason youth said they attended the centers we visited. An inclusive environment, where students feel they belong, is important for immigrant youth, who may feel marginalized due to their immigrant or socioeconomic status. The youth we interviewed reported that the friends with whom they wanted to spend time were at the center. Such connections may be the CTCs' strongest retention strategy. One youth reported, "I come here to stay out of trouble…[and] to meet new people." When parents are relatively unavailable because they are working two jobs or otherwise dealing with economic stresses, a space where immigrant youth can find social support from adults and peers is particularly important. A Spanish-speaking parent

with two children attending the Firebaugh Computer Learning Center said that the center "involves children in the community and helps them to gain social skills as well as learning to approach and complete projects."

All of the centers we visited helped connect students to their cultural heritage through a variety of activities. The Vietnamese Youth Development Center had an explicit mission of helping young people adapt to U.S. culture by linking them with youth of the same ethnicity who had already acclimated. Weekly activities such as native dancing and karaoke kept youth connected to the cultures of their home countries and engaged with one another. The Koreatown Youth and Community Center worked with both immigrant and native youth of the same ethnic background, which helped immigrant youth adapt to American culture and exposed native youth to the cultural values and heritages of their parents. At Casa Familiar, because of its proximity to the Mexican border, the young people were interested in both U.S. and Mexican cultures. The community was dominated by traditional Mexican values and culture, but U.S. issues had also taken root. At the time of our visit, center youth were involved in promoting an event to bring Latinos together to oppose the war in Iraq.

Newcomers to the U.S. have acute needs focused on language acquisition—needs that schools in the disadvantaged areas we visited were not always able to meet. A young person at VYDC told us, "The hardest part is the new language," and said that having role models at the center was critical for language acquisition. CTC staff tried to help young people overcome feelings of isolation due to language and cultural differences. The centers encouraged communication through multimedia projects, support groups, and mentoring. Peers also played an important role, introducing one another to and participating in social networking websites, such as MySpace, that are popular among youth. Some centers we visited offered computer programs in multiple languages or with translation services.

Indeed, forging relationships with supportive adults was a key reason many youth said they continued to spend time at the centers. One former youth participant at the Richmond Village Beacon Center was frustrated that the school administration did not have a grievance system for students. An RVBC staff member helped bring together several other students to form a support group

called Revolutionary Minds, which successfully approached the administration to get its collective voice heard. At another CTC, a young person said that the staff "really do help you with your goals and future…they have the references all down pat." In many cases, students referred to the CTC staff as "family" and the CTC space as a "second home." The powerful relationships forged between the young people and the adult staff members were at the core of much of the CTCs' work. According to Hirsch (2005), such relationships are essential to creating an effective afterschool program. One student encapsulated the dynamic: "The kind of people here…you can talk to them…they will listen to you."

Supporting Learning and Academic Achievement

"Technology is the great equalizer for those who don't have degrees." —*Executive Director, Casa Familiar*

Each CTC we visited offered support for education and academic achievement. Each also provided students with homework assistance and one-on-one tutoring. At most of the centers, students had the opportunity to work with tutors who spoke their primary language. Because education is so important to immigrant families (Fuligini & Hardway, 2004), this homework assistance was critical to many of the students with whom we spoke. Staff members echoed the importance of academic assistance, with one stating, "My job is not only to help with the immediate problems they are facing, but to also…spark an interest for a lifetime of learning." This sentiment resonated with students. One said that participating in center activities "gives you more confidence. [The staff] will push you."

At the Vietnamese Youth Development Center, nearly every student we interviewed said that he or she first came to the center for help with homework. At SEEK LA, the Koreatown Youth and Community Center's collaboration with L.A. High School and other partners, homework assistance and tutoring were two central features of the afterschool drop-in program. At Casa Familiar, the C3 Café was a hub for homework assistance. Richmond Village Beacon Center offered a tutoring program that provided academic support. Staff members from each of the locations mentioned using computers and the Internet in conjunction with homework support. The use of technology was seen by some as transcending language; the language of technology is accessible to youth and can be an equalizer, creating opportunities that might not otherwise be available. Youth whose English skills are still developing can learn to use digital film or recording equipment and editing software. These skills are transferable to a host of applications, including the workplace.

Students who are new to the U. S. face a catch-up period in which they require language and academic support. Native speakers of the various languages of the centers who were also fluent in English created a welcoming environment and helped newcomers with schoolwork. Research shows that this model of learning, in which peers who have become bilingual assist newcomers, is an important way to create a non-intimidating learning environment (Bregendahl & Flora, 2005). Some center staff members visited the public schools, not only to recruit new students, but also to advocate for center students in ways that their immigrant parents were often unable to do because of language barriers, cultural differences, or work schedules. For example, at RVBC, if students came to the center during school hours, staff members would speak with their teachers to make sure they were aware of the situation. At VYDC, case managers were linked to the school referral system and visited the schools regularly, interacting with teachers and acting as student advocates.

Encouraging students to apply to college and assisting with the application processes for admissions, financial aid, and scholarships—processes that can be difficult and alienating even for native English speakers—was another common and integral feature of the CTCs we visited. Each CTC offered mentoring about educational opportunities, as well as financial aid workshops and college tours. CTC staff reported that although immigrant parents are highly supportive of free public education through high school, they are often less supportive about sending their children to college, in part because they want their children to stay close to home. Nearly all of the staff members we interviewed said that success for youth included higher education. The young people we interviewed also expressed a desire to go to college.

Unfortunately, the odds were often stacked against them. One counselor—who grew up in the CTC's neighborhood, went to Harvard, and then returned to work in the community—pointed out, "They always knew about college and that they have to do well to get into college, but they don't do well." Part of the problem was that the

> The powerful relationships forged between the young people and the adult staff members were at the core of much of the CTCs' work.

high schools in these disadvantaged communities did not always provide adequate college counseling, especially for the immigrant and low-income students who attended the CTCs we visited. One high school student said, "[Counselors] don't care about us; [they] only care about top straight-A students." CTC staff members at all sites tried to make up for the lack of attention through various activities, including steering students to take the classes needed for college, helping young people fill out financial aid forms, providing information about field trips to colleges outside the immediate community, and connecting youth to adults in institutions of higher education who could help with the admissions process. These activities are not about digital technology, but they are about the futures of young people—and CTC programming sometimes played a critical role in the trajectory toward college and the transition to college life.

Offering Leadership Training and Opportunities for Civic Engagement

"We are a place that supports education, workforce development, and community empowerment through proactive leadership training for youth and adults." —*Executive Director, Firebaugh Computer Learning Center*

CTC staff members saw young people as potential leaders of their communities whose talents could be harnessed by involving them in the programs. By conducting leadership training sessions and helping youth to understand the importance of community building, the programs deepened youth engagement while building practical skills. CTC staff also realized the importance of linking these youth development goals to information technology. For instance, a Bresee staff member reported, "[We] use video as a tool to change lives… digital media as a tool of community action."

The Richmond Village Beacon Center, the Vietnamese Youth Development Center, and Casa Familiar all had separate leadership programs that gathered young people with the explicit goal of creating homegrown leaders. The RVBC committees and advisory boards encouraged taking responsibility and created opportunities to develop leadership roles by, for example, participating in the Beacon Teen Advisory Board, which provided leadership and direction for campus-wide events and for the

Beacon. The Vietnamese Youth Development Center organized an effort to get neighborhood corner stores to take down liquor and cigarette signs and replace them with healthier advertisements. At Casa Familiar, the youth leaders group canvassed the neighborhood to organize for their events. Youth also formed committees for community-based activities; for instance, one committee helped plan a cultural center that was under development in the neighborhood. Information technology supported this type of work when another committee used the center's computers to design a new logo for the group.

Firebaugh Computer Learning Center sponsored *Grupo Unido en Acción*, which offered immigrant leadership training for Spanish-speaking residents. The group facilitated a community forum that was attended by 200 residents, including the mayor. While this group was focused on adults, at the time of our visit FCLC was also leading an internship program where young people went door-to-door surveying residents about computer access in the housing projects. The interns organized their findings into presentations, which allowed them to practice their public speaking skills. This kind of community mobilization encourages youth to find their voice and fosters their capacity to be leaders.

CTCs and Immigrant Youth Development

The six CTCs we visited created spaces for immigrant youth to connect with one another and with supportive adult mentors, to express themselves freely, and to be comfortable in compatible cultural settings. These characteristics are consistent with those that research has identified as promoting positive youth development and providing meaningful out-of-school-time experiences (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000). Beyond this, our case studies shed light on the diverse needs of immigrant groups, even within ethnicities, and the necessity to address a wide variety of challenges faced by these groups. On the surface, it may seem that these centers are primarily about bridging the digital divide—a topic that is important in its own right. However, the CTCs also provided excellent examples of ways to incorporate immigrant youth in their broader communities by providing leadership education and other means of empowerment.

Having CTC staff act as cultural, educational, and generational brokers is an important support for immi-

> These activities are not about digital technology, but they are about the futures of young people— and CTC programming sometimes played a critical role in the trajectory toward college and the transition to college life.

grant youth, who are especially at risk of disenfranchisement. According to Harris (2004), afterschool programs for immigrant youth must account for the specific cultural needs of the community and address the task of weaving young peoples' existing ethnic identities with their new American identities. By employing staff who understand youth in the context of their families and heritage and by offering programs based on an awareness of and respect for the cultures of immigrant families, the CTCs we studied incorporated some of the best practices among non-school settings. Furthermore, by integrating technology into their services and programming, the centers not only advanced the computer skills of young people, but also connected their families to valuable information and opportunities. To be prepared for the future, immigrant youth require academic and English language skills—but they also need the confidence and self-awareness to believe they can make it in this country. For immigrant youth who are being pulled between worlds, CTCs are places to sort it out among friends.

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growth in motion
Supporting Young Women's Embodied Identity and Cognitive Development through Dance After School

by Mira-Lisa Katz

Dance is many things to many people. It can be a discipline, a practice, a ritual, an exercise, a form of prayer or meditation, a kind of storytelling or seduction, or a medium for artistic expression. In addition to being a powerful means of knowing oneself and communicating with others, dance can also be a way to develop cognition and support identity formation.

I began considering all this when, in response to a friend's whimsical suggestion in 1977, I started taking classes in modern dance, ballet, and a form of classical Indian storytelling dance called *kathak*. Having come to dance as a late teen, I later became intrigued with how activities outside of school can inform classroom-based learning. Given the number of choices young people have for how to spend their time outside of school, I wanted to learn more about what motivated the young women with whom I dance regularly to dedicate several days each week to their art.

As a language and literacy educator since 1991, I have worked with adolescents and adults in a variety of school, college, workplace, and community settings. Several years ago, in an effort to weave my dance and academic universes together, I began to explore the world of dance as an educational researcher, hoping to unveil the distinctive dimensions of *embodied learning,* that is, how we learn and know through our bodies. My forays into embodied teaching and learning have fortuitously coincided with a surge in scholarship on multimodality in education. Being involved in both dance and educational

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research has helped me to make sense of embodied learning and development—*growth in motion*—at two community-based dance studios serving children, youth, and adults, ages 3–85.

This article highlights the perspectives of young women who have participated in dance for many years. Their viewpoints reveal the unique multimodal nature of embodied learning; in dance classes, teachers and learners communicate through a variety of modes: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, spatial, musical, tactile, gestural, and linguistic. I employed ethnographic, multimodal, and discourse analyses to investigate how dance fosters the cognitive and attitudinal benefits documented in the literature on arts learning in out-of-school-time programs.

Cognitive and Attitudinal Benefits of Arts After School

A substantial body of scholarship on the effects of the arts and after-school activities has shown that when young people are allowed to determine social networks around self-defined areas of interest, and when young women in particular are involved in physical activities such as sports and dance, they tend to perform better academically; build more constructive relationships with peers and adults; learn to collaborate, think critically, and solve problems; and develop more confidence and self-esteem (Deasy, 2002; Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Fiske, 1999). While critics have often suggested that popular cultural forms offer little more than shallow outlets for personal expression, there is ample evidence that popular culture and the arts can offer youth a sense of self, voice, and place in broader artistic, cultural, and communal conversations (Bresler, 2004, Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Flood, Heath, & Lapp, 1997; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004; Morrell, 2004).[1] The experiences of the young women in my study confirm these findings.

Embodied Cognition and Multimodal Learning

In Western thought, as dance anthropologist Farnell (1995) humorously writes, "[w]hen attention has been paid to a moving body it often seems to have lost its mind" (p. 8). However, as scholars from many disci-

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plines have challenged mind-centered notions of cognition and individually based conceptions of development, theories of embodiment have increasingly begun to inform educational research (Bresler, 2004; Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Cheville, 2001; Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001). Gardner's (1999) theory of "multiple intelligences" has garnered significant public attention, helping a broad audience widen their notions of what it means to "be smart." Yet, helpful as this has been, Cheville (2001) cautions that distinctions between one intelligence and another "risk reducing learners to labels without disrupting the significant philosophical divide between mind and body that has long stymied accounts of what it means to learn and know" (p. 11). Our difficulty in acknowledging the extent to which our bodies mediate cognition reflects, at least in part, our reluctance as Westerners to perceive cognition or emotion as *embodied* (Bresler, 2004; Damasio, 1994; Finnegan, 2002). Recent anthropological studies (Urciuoli, 1995) suggest that we convey messages and self-representations differently depending on whether we are talking, singing, writing, or dancing. In my research, I examine learning and knowing in the situated physical context of dance, where cognition, self, and emotion are consciously filtered through muscle and movement as well as through mind, language, and social interaction.

Self and Identity

In recent years, the concept of *identity* has come under scrutiny by scholars in many fields (Hall, 1996; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Hull & Zacher, 2004). Many of these discussions have challenged the static nature of conventional, psychologically based notions of self—what anthropologist Kondo (1990) calls "seemingly incorrigible Western assumptions about the 'primacy' of the individual and the boundedness and fixity of personal identity" (p. 26). Following recent research on identity and agency (Holland et al., 1998), my study treats both in more fluid terms: Identity is ever-changing in response to social contexts. As Hull and Katz (2006) put it, "We enact the selves we want to become in rela-

tion to others—sometimes in concert with them, sometimes in opposition to them, but always in relation to them" (p. 47). Our sense of self-determination or *agency* at any given moment is constrained by specific social, cultural, and historical contexts, yet people can develop their agentive selves using the unique repertoire of cultural resources, relationships, and artifacts available. Afterschool programs of many different kinds seem to be especially good at helping young people gain access to such resources.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, author of *The Primacy of Movement* (1998), extends the notion of agency into the bodily realm. "Movement," she claims, "is at the root of our sense of agency…it is the generative source of our notions of space and time. …[M]oving is a way of knowing" (p. xv). If she is correct, how might we expand our understandings of self and social connections to include our moving bodies? How are corporeal learning and knowing unique? Might such learning support development in ways that other forms of learning cannot?

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Studying Dance as an Educational Context

For this study, I was interested in the following questions:
- In what ways is participation in dance connected to the development of young women's identities?
- How does dance contribute to the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of the young women I studied?
- How might the nature of learning in dance help us rethink the organization of learning both in and out of school?

Methods

I researched these questions by combining ethnographic, multimodal, and discourse analytic strategies (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dyson & Genishi, 2006; Kress et al., 2001) to explore a rich range of data sources: informal conversations, focus groups, interviews, student dance journals, photographs, artists' statements, field notes, and over two hundred hours of videotaped classroom observations. Together, these research methods and data provide access to how young participants viewed the self

through dance, offering insights into their perceptions of the connections between dance and everyday life.

Context

My original study, conducted from 2002 to 2005, focused on nine high school-age women who had been learning dance together at the Oakland Dance Center[2] since preschool. "The teens," as they were referred to by their teachers, welcomed opportunities to reflect on dance together. They enthusiastically engaged in informal conversations in hallways and dressing rooms, in focus groups and individual interviews, and in videotaped classes and rehearsals. They also kept dance journals, writing candidly about what dance meant to them and what it taught them about themselves and others. They explained how dance classes and rehearsals helped them negotiate multiple social worlds by creating habits of mind and body that filtered favorably—and seamlessly—into their public and academic worlds.

In 2006, with the support of a grant from the Robert Bowne Foundation, I expanded my research to include 21 young women of diverse sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds who participated in a Teen Summer Dance Intensive at the Berkeley Center for Dance. The Summer Intensive, then in its fifth year, hosted teens from over a dozen public and private schools in the Bay Area. Several dancers had attended every Summer Intensive since 2002.

As arts education researchers have frequently pointed out, participation in the arts—while potentially beneficial to students of all backgrounds—is particularly helpful to young people considered "at risk" due to factors associated with low socioeconomic status: challenging home situations, low academic performance, dropping out, or asocial or unsafe behaviors (Catterall, 1998; Fiske, 1999; Heath, 1999; McCarthy et al., 2004). Some, though not all, of the teen participants at the Oakland and Berkeley dance studios might be considered "at risk" in these ways. A number of them contended with difficult circumstances at home, such as chronically ill siblings or complex living arrangements.

The dancers at the Oakland Center came primarily from middle and working class families, and seven of the

nine dancers attended public schools. While several of the 21 dancers at the Berkeley studio's Teen Summer Dance Intensive attended private schools, the majority attended public schools serving high numbers of students from low-income neighborhoods. In 2006, one-third of these young women received partial or total scholarships to the dance program based on financial need.

How Dance Shapes Lives

The 30 young women in this study have repeatedly identified the following benefits of learning through dance:

• A chance to develop a sense of control over their bodies, emotions, intellects, and interactions
• An unusual capacity to take the long view of their own development
• An opportunity to participate in a supportive, communal learning environment
• Multiple, multimodal entry points for learning dance skills and for expanding social, physical, and intellectual repertoires
• A constructive conception of "mistakes" that underscores how risk-taking fosters learning and development

Developing a Sense of Control

The young women in my study said that learning dance gave them greater control over both their bodies and minds. Not only did this control shape how they felt physically and mentally, but it also allowed them to monitor their feelings and manage their actions in other contexts. "I feel like more than anything dance has…taught me that I can control my body... and I sort of have some control over how I feel because…dancing makes me feel so much better. It's a way of channeling my emotions and understanding them," said 15-year-old Maddy (focus group, June 18, 2003).

Jamaica, from the Berkeley studio, said that dance helped her concentrate. "It takes your mind off [problems]…. You're in the moment and you're not thinking about anything else that's going on. To me dancing is my form of therapy" (focus group, August 3, 2006). Aurelia, a fellow Berkeley dancer, similarly acknowledged the power of dance to make her feel safe: "Dance to me is like an emergency exit—say like you were in a building and it was burning, you would use an emergency exit to get out of it. It's sort of like the world is—

> For these young women, their continued involvement in dance seems to have given them an unusual capacity to take stock of their own growth across time.

it's like full of all these brutal realities, and dance to me is like a different world, it's safe." Aurelia also described how she learned self-confidence through dance, becoming more patient with herself. "I used to be really insecure before dance," she said. "[Now] it gives me confidence just being able to look at myself in the mirror and say hey…if I can't do that, then I can't do it, you know, and I can work on it" (focus group, August 3, 2006).

Maddy, from Oakland, noted how the effects of dance transferred to other contexts of her life. "Like if I have to write a big paper right after I've been to dance, it's easier than if I'm just stressing out about it for a whole evening," she said. "You sort of have to be balanced and keep yourself in check a little bit. Not all the time, but you do have to have self-control... Like, if you're all over the place inside your head…you can't focus. After dancing…I can manage [my emotions] better…" (focus group, June 18, 2003). The dancers' sense of control and their capacity to use dance to construct safe spaces were powerful tools for developing a sense of agency and self-efficacy outside the studio.

Taking the Long View of Their Own Development

Researchers have noted that sustained involvement in the arts leads to habits of mind and body that permeate other domains of life. For these young women, their continued involvement in dance seems to have given them an unusual capacity to take stock of their own growth across time.

For example, Jena, a middle teen who by 2004 had been studying at the Oakland studio since 1990, said that she appreciated the shifts she observed in herself over the years: "[Dancing] makes me feel good about myself…. And it makes me feel proud…because I know that even if I don't feel it in my body, a year ago I was different" (interview, February 1, 2004). Working hard at something over time fosters a sense of pride. A rare long view of her own development is evident in Jena's sense that significant shifts were taking place even when she was not fully aware of them. Jena continued, "…I think one of the effects of having done it for so long is it's like *your body is home*…so doing a *plié* feels right to me, it's like walking in my front door; I start to relax and get centered…. And so when it feels

that good inside your body it starts to make the rest of you feel good…" Echoing Aurelia's claim that "dance is like an emergency exit," Jena's metaphor of "body as home" implies that through dance the body itself can become a safe haven—a rare notion for women, young or old, in present times.

While Jena viewed beauty as something one is "born with," she saw dance as a powerful medium for *instigating* beauty. "Just making pretty shapes makes me feel beautiful…. And it's not even *me* that's gorgeous—I'm *making* something gorgeous which is even more rewarding because you have no role in being gorgeous—that's how you were born, but to make something gorgeous is your creation" (interview, February 1, 2004). Redefining *beauty* through participation in dance allowed Jena to construct the notion of beauty in ways that fell outside of societally sanctioned norms, and, in so doing, to shape a sense of self that embodied beauty.

The young women also claimed that dance helped them develop patience with themselves. Jena said, "I've come to be patient when I'm dancing in a long-term sense of the word…patient in the sense that important change can come over time. Just because you don't see it doesn't mean [you're] not growing and changing" (interview, February 1, 2004). Physical or intellectual development and self-crafting are simultaneous processes; as we learn to dance or paint or play music, we also begin to define ourselves as artists. Over time, involvement in dance and other embodied activities can allow young people to build nuanced and changing portraits of themselves as movers, learners, thinkers, actors, and human beings.

Such an understanding of one's own development requires opportunities for reflection, which students in many traditional learning environments rarely have. Perhaps learning time during afterschool hours could be more meaningful and effective if students were given more opportunities to reflect on their own development.

A Supportive, Communal Learning Environment

Unlike many formal instructional contexts where students privately receive grades based on individual performance, learning to dance is a highly communal activity. During a dance class, each dancer's performance is visible to anyone interested in assessing it;

> Unlike many formal instructional contexts where students privately receive grades based on individual performance, learning to dance is a highly communal activity.

students witness the corrections and feedback their classmates receive. Even dancers who are not the direct recipients of a teacher's comment often physically try out corrections intended for others. Receiving feedback involves not only listening and making mental notes, but also incorporating the new information; internalizing it through the body's senses, intellect, and musculature; and then externalizing the gestalt as strategic motion through space. Feedback is also frequently offered to the class as a whole. A teacher might say, "As I look around the room, I'm getting the sense that you're not sure where your arms should be; in this particular movement the path of the arms looks like this," accompanying her words with gestures and movements to demonstrate the trajectory in question.

Aurelia, Livy, and Hannah, who attended a large public high school in San Francisco and commuted each day by train to participate in the Summer Intensive, shared their insights about the camaraderie that builds through dancing with others. Having been involved in dance for several years, they described the advantages of shared learning spaces. Hannah described how, when dancing with other people, "In case you're insecure about it, you can just work off their movement and trade information. I think in dance class you can make better bonds and relationships with people…because you automatically have something to share…[so] you can, like, learn and vibe off them" (focus group, August 10, 2006). Embodied learning allowed these young dancers to support one another's learning and growth by sharing information not only through language but also through their bodies.

Dance also helped Livy to trust others. "In partnering…what really makes the bond is that you have to trust that person…to hold your body, so then you automatically kind of trust them emotionally and mentally," she said (focus group, August 10, 2006). Though it is impossible to trace the precise path along which trust travels between the dance floor and other parts of the girls' lives, they put forward a convincing case for its journey between domains.

In 2005, three years into the study and approximately 15 years into her dance experience, Jena described how safety grows from the vulnerability of learning dance in a group:

I think in dancing there's a comfort in watching other people learn…and a safety in [seeing] another person's uncertainty…. You know, you learn something *with* someone when you dance in a way that you can't really learn something *with* someone in an academic way…. The gears and the whole mechanism is exposed in a way that it's not when you're learning something academically—you both start at the starting line and you end at the finish line together but you don't run together. In dancing you get to *go* together, which is great…. It makes you feel confident in your ability, you have camaraderie, you can help someone in the learning process…. And I think it's sort of community or relationship building also…and that demands a certain amount of safety in the room, you know, otherwise no one would ever go in. (interview, October 23, 2005)

Jena's metaphor for academic learning evokes an image of individual runners moving toward a finish line. In contrast, her vision of learning dance is rooted in community— "you get to go together." The young women in this study clearly benefited from regular participation in the complex social and kinesthetic practices of dance classes, in which youth and adults jointly crafted a community. For these young women, the social organization of learning dance not only promoted physical skills, but also broadened their social, emotional, and intellectual repertoires for engaging with others in the many social worlds they encountered outside the studio.

Multimodal Teaching and Learning

Teacher feedback in dance tends to be highly imagistic, metaphorical, and, above all, multimodal. The verbal cues, metaphors, and vocalizations that indicate movement quality are accompanied by gestures and demonstrations of the movement phrase or transition in question. Similarly, "taking feedback"—whether offered to oneself, a peer, or the whole class—involves not only listening and making mental notes, but also in*corp*orating new information, internalizing and digesting it in the body through the senses and muscles. Dancers are then able, for example, to more competently execute a revised version of a movement. They externalize the whole of what they have learned as organized expressive movement. Such structures of interaction between teachers and learners in dance classes can support young women in developing skills, forming their identities, and developing agency.

The following exchange, transcribed from approximately one minute of video, took place during an intermediate level modern dance class during the 2006 Teen Summer Dance Intensive. As is typical of student-teacher interactions in dance classes, the process of guidance was also one of negotiation, clarification, and discovery for both teacher and learner. The teacher, Nadia, was helping a student named Angela perform a turn initiated by a *rond de jambe* (a circular sweep of the extended leg), followed by a circular sweep of the head. As they worked together in front of the mirrors and the class, Nadia demonstrated and explained, while Angela watched, listened, and attempted the movement phrase several more times. Fellow dancers looked on, some listening and observing intently, others trying out the movement in their own bodies. (In the excerpt below, a double asterisk ** indicates times when other students can be seen in the video emulating the demonstration.) Still others moved their bodies almost imperceptibly in sub-gestural response as they too absorbed Nadia's feedback and demonstrations and studied Angela's repeated attempts at the movement.

As a group of dancers completed a combination across the floor, Nadia shouted words of encouragement over the music, first to Angela, and then to the group.

Nadia: {*to Angela*} YES, Angela. {*to the group as a whole*} All right! Good. Good. Hey Angela, {*walking toward the girls*} you can drop your head more on this place. I know that you don't wanna kick somebody but {*begins demonstration of turn and continues talking*} once your leg is around, you're home free. {*makes an auditory gesture[3]— "foooosh"— as she turns, suggesting the lyrical quality the movement should embody*} Yeah? Let me see you do that. Come on out. {*Nadia gestures with her hand, inviting Angela to come toward the center of the dance floor.*}

Angela: {*steps tentatively out without saying anything*}

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Nadia: Really drop your head. {*notices Angela's reluctance and speaks in a high voice*} You can do it!

Angela: {*laughs nervously*}

Nadia: {*in a high voice*} We love you! {*As Nadia demonstrates the movement again to help Angela get started, she simultaneously talks Angela through it.*} Alright, so you're here.** {*Nadia begins the movement.*} You're gonna do that *rond de jambe*…

Angela: {*emulates Nadia doing the movement*}

Nadia: {*While Angela is moving, Nadia continues to vocalize.*} Um hm, uh huh.

Angela: {*completes movement and turns expectantly to Nadia*}

Nadia: Okay. So you got to about here… {*places her body in the approximate position of Angela's body during the turn*}

Angela: Uh huh.

Nadia: And I want you to get to {*vocalizes "fooosh" as she demonstrates the turn again*} get your head down below right around your knees.

PORTION OMITTED

Nadia: Like hug a big beach ball between your knees. {*gestures as she speaks, mimicking holding a giant beach ball*}

Angela: {*As Nadia is demonstrating, Angela experiments some more with the movement.*}

Nadia: Try it one more time.

Angela: {*steps into position next to Nadia and attempts the turn again*}

Nadia: {*As Angela is finishing the turn, Nadia begins to talk.*} Better. Yeah! {*addresses the class*} See now you can really see that Angela's initiating the movement with her head.

Angela: {*tries the movement again*}

Nadia: {*to Angela as she completes the turn*} Did you feel the difference?

Angela: {*says something inaudible as she presses her hands around her lower back, curving it as Nadia had instructed, then laughs lightly*}

Nadia: Yeah. Yeah. {*moves into place for another demonstration of the movement as she talks*} You know where it starts is here.** {*stays in position, allowing time for the body image to register*} The head movement starts here.

Angela: {*initiates the turn again after revising the beginning position in her own body*}

Nadia: There ya go!! {*addressing the whole class with both gaze and voice*} See what a difference that makes? {*demonstrates the movement again, break-*

ing it down even more} So the head doesn't start HERE, {*Nadia demonstrates what the movement is not, and then what it is. Angela tries it again.*} the head starts HERE. To the side.** {*Nadia continues talking and demonstrating. As she finishes, she turns to see Angela finishing her most recent attempt.*} THAT is GORGEOUS.**

This episode illustrates the multiple modes of communication regularly used in teaching and learning dance. Nadia switched from physical demonstration to verbal instruction, which included the beach ball metaphor. She added vocal intonation that suggested the quality of the movement she was teaching, as well as verbal content and physical gestures.

Meanwhile, Angela was connecting new information to her existing base of knowledge and integrating her physical and mental understanding multimodally—watching and listening, but also embodying her learning through her own movements. By using several modalities simultaneously, Angela increased her capacity to learn. Angela was also monitoring her own learning process and responding intellectually and corporeally to moment-by-moment feedback. As she was absorbing the movement, she was also "learning how to learn"—which is, according to some, "perhaps the most important instrumental benefit of arts education" (McCarthy et al., 2004, p. 27).

Finally, in this supportive environment, peers and teacher are intimate witnesses to the learning process. As Jena said earlier, "The whole mechanism is exposed." Angela was learning to challenge as well as to trust herself. The episode not only demonstrates how multimodal entry points can enhance learning, but also highlights the importance of feeling safe enough to take risks.

Taking Chances

In a focus group exchange (August 4, 2006), Berkeley teens Angela and Mara took turns comparing learning at school versus learning dance.

Angela: Although it's not as much memorization [in school] as it used to be, it's a lot of, like, just having information being thrown at you…and I think there's a lot less risk…a lot less putting yourself out there and going with it even if you're wrong in school. And in dancing there's still a lot being thrown at you, but it's more about your confidence and…

Mara: how far you're willing to go…

Angela: yeah, and what risks you're willing to take because you're not going to be right 100 percent of the time, where on a test, that's your goal.

Mara: Generally in dance if you make a mistake it just brings you *closer* to what you're actually trying to get…whereas if you make a mistake in school it's considered to be bad, and people who make a lot of mistakes get bad grades—that's not what you want. In dance it's more about *feeling* it and understanding *how to get to the right place*, and *getting there* is really important, but *it's not the ultimate goal.*

Angela and Mara emphasized the "one-time-chance" nature of measures such as grades and exams, where the consequences of "messing up" are sometimes brutal. By comparison, in the context of their community-based dance program, they understood that taking risks was fundamental to developing new levels of expertise and gaining confidence in their developing abilities.

How can we realistically ask young people to become intellectual risk takers—to play with ideas, images, language, movement—if the consequences for doing so put them at such an obvious disadvantage? What might learning look like—both during and after school—if, instead of measuring what learners have yet to master, we used multiple modes to support students in constructing knowledge? Angela and Mara clearly understood that discovery and growth require taking risks, yet taking risks in school often feels too dangerous. What would it take for young people to feel that they have permission to experiment and play? For youth to learn and grow and change, they need spaces that are emotionally and psychologically safe, where they can work at the edges of their evolving abilities. Taking risks means making mistakes. In school, mistakes are frequently punished with reprimands or low scores, rather than serving as rich launching points for learning and growth, as in the case of Nadia's instructions to Angela. Rather than interpreting mistakes as measures of a student's inadequacies, why not approach them as road maps for teaching and learning? Such an orientation toward development raises the bar by simultaneously encouraging risk while maintaining rigor. It communicates to young people that we have

> What might learning look like—both during and after school—if, instead of measuring what learners have yet to master, we used multiple modes to support students in constructing knowledge?

faith in their abilities to exceed expectations—their own and others'. It rewards rather than punishes risk-taking and vulnerability.

Mara and Angela wisely suggested that end products—one-time shots demonstrating what students know—should not be our only goals. The high-stakes tests and other assessment measures so prevalent these days stunt the very capacities education in our democratic society aims to promote: independence, critical thinking, reflection, respect for others, negotiation, and confidence. By rewarding end performance almost exclusively, the design of formal education and the measures of student success on which we currently rely are at cross-purposes with some of our most deeply held convictions about the development of young people. It is striking that dance, a performing art, should turn out to accord these young women more occasions than their schools did to take the intellectual risks and exploratory chances necessary to achieve real growth. Such risk-taking also helps young people develop a durable sense of identity—one that is not fixed but that shifts in nuanced and thoughtful ways, responding spontaneously to the inevitably unpredictable nature of life.

Multiple Modes, Trust, and Education

Strategically designed afterschool programs can support youth with interactional and multimodal opportunities for positive identity formation and cognitive growth. Out-of-school multimodal learning contexts like those I investigated provide space for a powerful kind of learning that we know far too little about. As school-based and out-of-school curricula are being narrowed in the current age of testing and accountability, I fear that we are failing to pay adequate attention to the promise of multimodal learning. In doing so, we are forfeiting significant resources for constructing positive educational experiences.

Educators, both in and out of schools, can cultivate environments where young people are encouraged to use their minds and their bodies to experiment without fear of failure. Respectful, self-reflective learning spaces can help young people develop self-awareness, confidence, and a sense of control over their bodies, minds, emotions, and social interactions. Learners of all ages, but especially youth, deserve such spaces where, if they

lose their sense of balance or perspective from time to time, there are no negative consequences.

Such havens are no small accomplishment. They can broaden our understanding of identity formation and cognitive development. Combining use of multiple modes of communication with supportive social relationships and varied opportunities for participation can offer young people potent environments for cultivating agency. If selves have their roots "not in words but in corporeal consciousness," as Sheets-Johnstone (1998, p. xx) suggested, then opportunities to enact a self through dance after school may help us imagine educational practices that could more successfully support youth development both on and off the dance floor.

For the young women I worked with, dance enabled them to become the people they aspired to be. Hall (1996) suggested that identities are about reinvention: We utilize "the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming" (p. 4). As these women suggested, the "resources of history, language, and culture" are experienced through our bodies as well as our minds. If identity is indeed about reinvention, and education is, broadly speaking, about nurturing our changing (moving) selves, we would do well to broaden our notions of development. We should treat all communicative modes and educational spaces—in the classroom or garden, on the dance floor or basketball court—as places to invite one another to engage more fully in the multiple and multimodal processes of becoming.

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Notes

[1] In keeping with the research of these educators, in particular the work of Bresler (2004) and her colleagues, I believe the arts and popular media provide unusually rich opportunities "to explore what embodiment means for educational researchers and practitioners" (p. 9).

[2] All names of organizations and individuals are pseudonyms.

[3] I borrowed the term "auditory gesture" from UC Berkeley Linguistics Professor Eve Sweetser (personal communication).

media gangs of social resistance

Urban Adolescents Take Back Their Images and Their Streets through Media Production

by Linda Charmaraman

"The more people that has their hands on the media, the more truth that's going to be out there. Media won't have such a strong influence. It won't be in the hands of a small few. Maybe if enough youth start showing what they like, then MTV won't have such a strong influence… airing what we shoot instead of what mainstream producers or whatever they think that we like."

—Victor, Youthscapes participant

In these words, Victor,[1] an African-American senior at one of the lowest-performing high schools in California, made a strong case for young people becoming active participants in the ongoing struggle to counter negative perceptions of urban youth. Understanding that a power struggle is necessary to counterbalance media images of young people—and particularly of minority youth—Victor joined Youthscapes, a media

production apprenticeship program. Victor was frustrated that his sense of self was not solely in his own hands but also packaged and consumed by external audiences. Just as Bakhtin believed that the self is "socially and historically construed, yet creative" (quoted in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 34), the participants of Youthscapes also imaginatively fashioned their selves using their knowledge of how historical, political, and social complexities complicated their ideas of personhood. In Victor's case, spending four years of his adolescent life devoted to exploring urban youth identity through

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the process of media production often meant confronting issues of racism, prejudice, and general public distrust—whether it was on the grounds of his school, at a local park, on the streets of his neighborhood, or at the Sundance Film Festival, where he experienced being outside his immediate community for the very first time.

Located in the San Francisco East Bay Area, Youthscapes, a year-round afterschool program, offered urban youth the opportunity to use technology to reconstruct their identities, as described by Strasburger and Wilson (2002). Youthscapes accomplished this identity construction in at least two ways: 1) by encouraging its apprentices to create media content that directly counteracted stereotypes about urban youth and 2) by creating group cohesiveness within the apprentice program, which also facilitated meaningful interactions with members of various communities. In the short term, Youthscapes helped its participants create alternative "families" in the program, which provided them with a safe haven where they could explore their identity against the backdrop of adults' generally negative images. In the long term, Youthscapes empowered urban youth of color to engage actively in reclaiming the representations of their experiences, both in the adult-controlled landscape of their media worlds and on their streets.

> When adults control the media, young people may very well absorb the negative perceptions adults often have of them.

Powerless and Overlooked in the Media

Even though creative self-expression is an essential right, many adults feel that teenagers are not fully entitled or responsible enough to make meaningful use of this creative freedom. In a nationwide poll of 2000 adults, 71 percent used negative words such as "rude," "irresponsible," and "wild" to describe teens (Farkas & Johnson, 1997). These findings were replicated later with a different sample of adults (Duffet, Johnson, & Farkas, 1999). Using racially diverse samples from a large urban northeastern city and several small to midsized midwestern cities, Zeldin (2002) concluded that adults from urban areas hold a more negative image of teenagers than those from smaller cities. Zeldin found this negative view to be related to a relatively weak sense of community among adults living in large cities. Giroux (1996) warned that the media culture can fuel "degrading visual depictions of youth as criminal, sexually decadent, drug crazed, and illiterate. In short, youth are viewed as a growing threat to the public order" (p. 218).

Bronfenbrenner (1989) pointed out that the perceptions of adults provide an important cultural frame of reference for adolescent development. When adults control the media, young people may very well absorb the negative perceptions adults often have of them.

In addition to perpetuating negative images, the media often keep members of minority groups relatively invisible. This invisibility, which signals an absence of social power, can perpetuate the perception held by many urban young people that they are not important members of society (Greenberg & Brand, 1994). In prime-time television programs, ethnic minorities, women, and girls are often depicted as victims or as having low social status; adolescents of these groups may thus feel alienated and invisible (Van Evra, 2004). In a nationwide poll, children of all colors believed that it was important to see images of their own race on television; children of color believed this more strongly than did white children (Children Now, 1998). Media images can present a powerful message of implicit and explicit exclusion to a watchful adolescent audience.

Several researchers have demonstrated that youth media production empowers and encourages youth to listen to and incorporate one another's viewpoints, forging a bond among youth and between youth and their communities (Buckingham & Harvey, 2001; Goodman, 2003; Niesyto, Buckingham, & Fisherkeller, 2003; Poyntz, 2006; Soep & Chávez, 2005). By harnessing the youth development tool of media production to address personal and community identity issues, youth media programs inform teens about media manipulation and about how to work toward altering negative stereotypes by taking personal and collective action.

Stepping Inside a Protected Space

Youthscapes offered free media production classes designed to tap youth voices through music and video. The video program provided youth with the opportunity to produce stories including commentary on school life and social dilemmas, resulting in radio broadcasts, public service announcements (PSAs), and videos. Youthscapes offered training in media literacy and taught participants to use professional media software to produce live action videos, still sequences, and animated creations. Youth learned how to script, shoot, and edit films; employ advanced camera, sound, and lighting

techniques; cast, rehearse, and direct actors; and use special effects, graphics, title design, and storyboarding. The classes were supported through community and foundation grants, as well as in-kind resources from a local high school. In developing scripts, the writer/director of a project teamed up with other apprentices for help with specific aspects of the project. Some apprentices were sought after because of their sound design skills. Others were good at handling actors and keeping the production running on schedule. Still others focused on the visual design components, including lighting, props, costumes, and proper camera angles. To showcase and share their work with other young people as well as the larger community, the apprentices teamed up with community partners, such as Youth Radio and local radio and television stations.

I decided to study Youthscapes because I was interested in studying how it accomplished the mission advertised in program grant documents: to promote youth development by encouraging personal transformations for "positive personal and community change." I began to "case the joint," as Dyson and Genishi (2005) put it, by "deliberately amass[ing] information about the configuration of time and space, of people, and of activity in their physical spaces" (p. 19). My role as a participant-observer reflects the idea that the social world takes on subjective meanings constructed by participants in a particular setting, so that, in order to interpret these experiences, one must on some level participate with those involved (Robson, 1993). While in the midst of taking notes or videotaping interactions, I was sometimes invited to participate actively by, for instance, giving feedback, lending a helping hand on a film shoot, or serving as a chaperone for a field trip. Toward the end of the program cycle, I conducted formal interviews lasting 30 to 45 minutes, which were videotaped, transcribed, and coded.

The nineteen students I observed in the video apprenticeship class were diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic class. The majority of the youth were from African-American or Asian-American backgrounds, while the rest were Chicano, Caucasian,

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and Middle Eastern. Forty percent of the apprentices were female. The average family income was about $45,000, below the county median of $55,946. Participants came from three different schools in the East Bay, ranging from the lowest performing school in the state to moderately low-performing schools. None of them had much funding to support arts education.

Throughout my field observations, I observed technical training in media literacy and in the use of video design software, camera equipment, and sound equipment. This training typically took place indoors at a downtown office location. I also went into the field with the students as they interacted with their local community by researching and asking for permission to film in various locations, borrowing costumes and props to stay within the budget for each project, casting and directing local actors, utilizing and sharing public space with community members, and publicizing screenings to their community audiences.

The completed video works were broadcast on public television, sent to film festivals for consideration, and screened at local schools and community centers. Each video piece was branded with the Youthscapes logo, which gave the apprentices an opportunity to experience pride in their collective group identity.

Several of the program objectives paralleled those of other youth media programs (Tyner & Mokund, 2003): *youth voice* through projects conceived, produced, and edited by youth with guidance from adults; *career development* by increasing technical expertise and exposing participants to film festivals; *youth development* by providing a safe place to express ideas, give and receive constructive criticism, and explore new worlds; *media literacy* by offering the opportunity to dispel myths and stereotypes about urban youth; and *production problem solving* by managing time and resource constraints and coordinating individuals to accomplish the group's goals.

In Youthscapes, all of this added up to two broad program objectives:
• Encouraging creative media production, with the potential of counteracting negative stereotypes

- Creating a safe haven for youth self-expression so that the apprentices formed family-like alliances

Identity and Agency through Responsible Media Production

One of the primary objectives of Youthscapes was to enable personal and community change by increasing the capacity of young people to transform their individual experiences into media products. The program channeled the voice and identity of urban youth through digital storytelling, with special emphasis on storylines and themes focused on the resolution of conflict and personal growth. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) wrote that human agency is the power of individuals to act with purpose and reflection and to reiterate and shape the world they live in, both as social producers and as social products. Research has demonstrated ways in which youth media participants exercise agency by illustrating the personal details of their multi-layered internal and external worlds (Charmaraman, 2006; Hull & Katz, 2006). In the Youthscapes apprenticeship program, the students exercised their agency by writing and producing multiple forms of media.

> Kristine, a Chinese-American high school junior, used both spoken-word and visual elements to critique a superficial world that makes assumptions about who people are based on how they look.

Topics That Matter

One form of media Youthscapes participants produced was public service announcements (PSAs) that explored themes relevant to their personal experiences as adolescents, such as campaigns to encourage safe sex or discourage domestic violence or smoking. The young people also explored their racial and ethnic identities by developing PSAs concerning anti-violence in African-American communities, Latino health awareness, and Asian attitudes about voting.

One PSA tackled racial profiling by the media. In this PSA, a news crew chases an African-American teenager through the streets of Oakland. He tries to lose them, hopping over a wire fence. He finally confronts them and demands to know why they are chasing him. A female reporter asks, "Excuse me, sir, did you just…*vote*?!?" The man confirms that he did vote, as is his right. The reporters then barrage the man with questions about this "unusual" act. As the man leaves the bewildered crew, shaking his head, they spot another voter and charge after their next "victim." The piece ends with a voiceover: "If you can, you should." This PSA does double duty: It encourages youth to vote and dispels media stereotypes about why a young urban black male might be fleeing from media authority figures.

The students were encouraged to write not only reality-based pieces such as PSAs and documentaries, but also fictional narratives. The fictional works focused on controversial topics, such as suicide, intelligence, and Western imperialism. Patricia, a Chinese-American high school senior, set her fictional piece in her own school. The seven-minute piece starts with a definition of the word *inertia*. The camera pans to images of an urban public school. We overhear students muttering, "This is so stupid. I'm so bored!" The rest of the film is mainly nonverbal, a choreographed dance of gestures between the droning white male math teacher and his classroom of multicultural students, who initially sit slumped over their desks with their eyes down. All of a sudden, one female student stands up to the teacher, challenging his rigid rules. Other students, through heartfelt dance movements, stand up for their right to be heard. The teacher's eyes grow wider, as if he fears losing control of his classroom, but then the students' energy becomes infectious. Eventually he joins the dancing, learning the students' unique styles of expression. Then the students willingly return to their desks, the teacher picks up the textbook with more animation, and the students start raising their hands to ask questions. As the video ends, the camera moves out of the classroom to show the "Quiet" sign falling off the door. Attempting to break stereotypes of disinterested urban learners of color and their jaded teachers, Patricia created an alternate world in which a confrontation between an adult teacher and his students has a rejuvenating effect.

In another piece that tackled stereotyping, Kristine, a Chinese-American high school junior, used both spoken-word and visual elements to critique a superficial world that makes assumptions about who people are based on how they look. The four-minute piece begins with an Asian-American teenage boy sitting next to an Asian-American teenage girl at a bus stop. At first the young man tries to act cool, though it is obvious that he is trying to get the girl's attention through

furtive, sideways glances. A poem written by a local award-winning spoken-word artist is threaded as a voiceover, capturing the young man's hopes and fears as he awkwardly attempts to impress the girl. As the guy blurts out flirtatious lines, the girl is noticeably uncomfortable and gives him dirty looks. In a last-ditch effort, he asks, "What is your ethnic make-up?" She glares and begins to "school" the guy about issues of gender and race. Ethnic make-up, she explains, is a colonizing concept that her sisters of color have to put up with. In a flow of spoken word and illustrative visuals that keep to lightning fast rhythms, the young woman complains about the female struggle to attain an unnatural ideal of beauty. As she tells the boy that this ideal "isn't real to begin with," we are shown images of her changing shirts over and over again in front of a mirror and flipping through beauty magazines. She says—to images of her family album—that she knows where her indigenous roots are. She admits that, in the past, her traditional culture kept her lips shut (we see an image of an elderly Chinese man sitting at a restaurant), but now she has found the freedom to vocalize (we see images of her ability to go anywhere). As the heart-racing piece comes to a climax, the spoken word reveals her ethnic make-up: "I don't have any, because your ethnicity isn't something that you just make up. As far as that shit that my sisters put on their faces, that's not make-up, it's make *believe*."

Developing these kinds of story lines was empowering for the young people. Their unique depictions of the world, whether autobiographical or imaginary, were given a community audience. At the final showcase screenings, audiences saw a recurrent pattern in which urban youth explored their identities and broke down stereotypes so that their often-overlooked perspectives might be better understood.

Audience and Agency to Communicate Authenticity

Youthscapes productions were publicly screened at schools, community centers, and film festivals, with friends, classmates, and family members typically attending the screenings. However, some screenings took place in less familiar settings. At one screening, which took

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place at an academic conference, Hank, an African-American high school senior, and Heather, a senior of mixed Japanese and European ancestry, spoke before a daunting audience of researchers, teachers, and youth media organizers from around the country. When an audience member asked the young panelists why they felt the need to air their perspectives, Hank remarked, "I never agreed with what was on TV. It would be a different world if every kid could afford [professional digital video equipment]. You can be creative with pen and paper, but if we could access this equipment we'd have … more to work with. Kids can do so much with music and movies."

Hank was recommending the power of individual youth agency—that young people be not only consumers but also producers of media. Instead of treating the apprentices as convenient sources of labor for adult-initiated media projects, as Fleetwood (2005) cautions, Youthscapes gave apprentices the "aesthetic safety zone" (Jocson, 2006; McCormick, 2000) to write in their own voice, a voice that was not filtered through explicit institutional or societal restrictions. During her year-end interview, Lynn, a Chinese-American senior, believed that she had had very little opportunity to voice her concerns about the world and be taken seriously until she joined the program:

> I love working here because I've always felt that there is a weird relationship between youth and adults at times.… Young people feel as though adults don't really understand.… They do understand me here, but in general I feel that sometimes adults don't give young people a chance to speak, and I think that's what this program allows: youth literacy or being able to communicate our ideas effectively through film.

Creative Alliances, Alternative Families

Afterschool youth programs often serve to ease a community's concern about unmotivated teenagers wandering about the neighborhood and causing mischief (Chung, 2000). Programs can also be designed as physical barriers, separating the responsible local residents from the neighborhood teenagers who have yet to gain the trust of the community to be left on their own. The boundaries erected to "protect" the commu-

nity, however, simultaneously fence off the young people, preventing them from actively engaging with their own communities.

In contrast, within the last decade, a trend toward assets-based approaches to promoting resilience has come to regard youth as resources to be developed rather than problems to be fixed (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Lerner & Benson, 2003). Heath (1991) said that successful community-based organizations promote shared responsibility and family pride among the youth participants. McLaughlin (2000) summarized ten years of research on 120 youth-based organizations by saying that adults not only can provide guidance on social etiquette within and beyond the program, but can also give youth meaningful roles in the organization. Participants then learn "trust, responsibility, and personal accountability. They learn that their actions and their inactions matter. They acquire a critical sense of agency and realism. They learn that they can make important contributions to their group and to their community" (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 14).

In keeping with these beliefs, the second Youthscapes objective was to enhance group cohesiveness and identity within and beyond the program's walls. A sense of group identity and responsibility enabled Youthscapes apprentices to positively represent their individual and collective identities to their communities. Program coordinators not only focused on the "hard" technical skills needed to create media projects but also incorporated "soft" skills, such as responsibility to the group, patience while completing a project over the course of many months, and getting past roadblocks. More experienced team players were encouraged to guide newer apprentices through the various stages of planning, producing, and showcasing their works.

Apprentices developed a sense of belonging to a family-like network, which empowered them to thrive as productive young people engaged with socially sanctioned goals, acquiring career-related skills rather than merely "playing" with media. During formal instructional time four afternoons a week, the program emphasized that each team member had a commitment to contribute to each project, and that each member was a valuable asset to each apprentice director's production.

Apprentices developed trust and group pride by giving and receiving constructive criticism. They developed group ownership by giving credit to each person for his or her contribution. Whenever a video was about to be unveiled to the public, a private screening party gave apprentices the opportunity both to enjoy their accomplishment and to make last-minute edits before receiving the ultimate feedback from the community audience. Group projects, both within and outside the program walls, gave apprentices opportunities to learn that, as McLaughlin (2000) suggested, their actions (such as their video creations and their behavior when out in the community) and their inactions (such as their refusal to perpetuate stereotypes or cause mischief on the streets) truly did matter.

> Since most of the preparatory phases of media production—writing, casting, and rehearsing—took place within the program's walls, one of the most daunting tasks was to venture outside to find appropriate locations in which to shoot the scenes.

Negotiating Private Spaces in Public Places

Since most of the preparatory phases of media production—writing, casting, and rehearsing—took place within the program's walls, one of the most daunting tasks was to venture outside to find appropriate locations in which to shoot the scenes. Some of the apprentices stuck to the familiar, using their own backyards and bedrooms as backdrops for their stories. Others went beyond their small circle and crossed boundaries of public space sanctioned for adolescent use, shooting in abandoned warehouses, parks, public transit escalators, sidewalks, football fields, public bathrooms, restaurants, and even their own high school classrooms. Instructors explained the legality and possible risks of using various locations.

Unfortunately, there were not many public spaces that were truly public enough for teenagers to gather without inspiring some degree of wariness on the part of adults. On one film shoot, at a park playground in Oakland, local families seemed to withhold full access to "their" territory when the young teens of color invaded with their cameras and equipment. Victor, the African-American senior quoted at the beginning of this article, was helping the camera person by clearing a walkway up the stairs of a slide. At the top of the stairs, an older white man was unwilling to move. The man told Victor, "We're not going to just give you guys the park," as if the apprentices had invaded the sanctity of

the playground experience. Victor politely said that they were just "borrowing" this section of the park for a few minutes. The father said, dismissively, that he would continue to play with his child as usual and that the crew could go elsewhere. After the incident, Victor told the other apprentices that he suspected the father wanted an altercation, but Victor was all too aware of how his behavior as an African-American teenager might be seen by the watchful audience of park-goers: "I didn't want him to be, like, 'Don't hang around black people. You see what that black kid did?'"

Did the stubborn father see Victor as a teenager—or as a *black* teenager? Simply by congregating in public spaces and differentiating themselves through fashion, gesture, and verbal expressions, teenagers of all colors attract attention, cause irritation, and generate uneasiness among adults (Hall, Coffey, & Williamson, 1999; Lieberg, 1995). Four years in Youthscapes had prepared Victor to react in a manner that disproved the expectations of the white adult. In keeping with Youthscapes' goal of increasing engagement between youth and their communities, Victor chose to remain civil. He saw the consequences of his actions not only for himself but also for the production group as well as the larger community of African-American urban youth. Through the guidance provided by Youthscapes on how to deal with interpersonal obstacles and juggle multiple roles for the sake of the project, the apprentices were particularly aware of the images they projected, both on screen and in person.

The tension between urban youth of color and white adults became more salient when the apprentices joined a youth media contingent from across the country at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah. Most of the Youthscapes participants had never been outside the Bay Area. With me as one of the chaperones, they traveled to a town that caters to white recreational skiers and snowboarders. Conscious of an invisible divide, the apprentices periodically uttered phrases to the effect of, "We are the only people of color in this town!" Even at a lunch gathering of youth groups from across the country, the Youthscapes apprentices noticed with disappointment that they were the only non-white participants, which made them feel homesick for the diversity of the Bay Area. At screenings and parties, the apprentices preferred to hang out with one another in groups at the back of the event, rather than pushing through crowds of people who behaved as if the apprentices were invisible. To document the bewildering adventure of being away from home, the apprentices decided to turn their "outsider" experiences at Sundance into a documentary. While toting around cameras and boom microphones, the apprentices at times encountered disapproving stares from the public. This experience mirrored Goodman's (2003) description of reactions to other youth media groups filming on the streets:

> …average citizens, especially youth of color, are not expected to use professional-quality equipment and to be engaged in the more serious business of gathering news and producing documentaries. This is still considered to be the sole province of mainstream media institutions.… It is a shift in power relations for traditionally marginalized teenagers. (pp. 52–53)

The apprentices gravitated toward the younger, more innovative pieces being shown at the festival and wanted to interview cast members after screenings. Unfortunately, some producers instructed their cast to refuse the interviews. Perhaps they were worried about the depictions these exuberant urban youth might broadcast. Despite the many raised eyebrows of those around them, the apprentices maintained the group solidarity that Youthscapes encouraged. They found strength in numbers. If an apprentice was questioned by an authority figure or was hesitant to approach someone for an interview, a fellow apprentice would be right there to provide encouragement and a sense of legitimate group identity.

In producing their documentary about the Sundance trip, the apprentices challenged adult assumptions about who gets to inform the public through media. Though the apprentices did include some evidence of their feelings of displacement in Utah's homogenous environment—shots at the airport set against a description of landing in "Mormon Disneyland," or an image of a storefront named "Elegant Asia," which highlights the exotification of the Far East—the main storyline focused on their collective excitement over the many "firsts" they experienced: playing in the snow together, spotting celebrities, learning from an

> Despite the many raised eyebrows of those around them, the apprentices maintained the group solidarity that Youthscapes encouraged. They found strength in numbers.

industry buyer about what makes a good film, pursuing careers that are opening to them because of the skills they have honed in the program. Throughout the film, they highlighted their feelings of tremendous privilege for having raised enough money to attend in the first place. Instead of focusing on the negative aspect of feeling like "second-class citizens," the Youthscapes apprentices chose to celebrate their time together and to showcase the sense of limitless potential gained from creating positive images on a shoestring budget—images that could ultimately be displayed at a venue as prestigious as the Sundance Film Festival.

Breaking Down Barriers

When they filmed in public locations or went on field trips, the Youthscapes apprentices encountered reactions similar to Conquergood's (1992) depictions of public discourse about gangs, which evokes "middle class fears and anxieties about social disorder, disintegration, and chaos, that are made palpable in these demonized figures of inscrutable, unproductive, predatory, pathological, alien Others lurking in urban shadows and margins, outside the moral community of decent people" (p. 4). When the multi-ethnic apprentices *trespassed* onto the middle class, family-oriented playground, the father who confronted Victor maintained the imaginary boundary between the suburbs and the inner city with his body language and tone of speech. The apprentice crew gathered around to support Victor in a way that recalls the heightened group solidarity of a gang that ventures outside of its "hood" to face a hostile external world (Conquergood, 1994).

When asked during his year-end interview what he valued most about the program, Pedro, a Filipino-American, said he was grateful that he had found a "sense of solidarity" with like-minded and "motivated" people to fill his emotional void, so that he felt less alienated. Similarly, Victor said, referring to the other Youthscapes participants:

> It's more than just a program… it's a family. It's not like public schools where instructors tell you what to do and how to do it.… They really get to know you. They really know about your strengths. They want to know about your life, what you are interested in… I found most of my tutors are like my big sisters... Big brothers and big sisters. That's how I look at them.

> "It's more than just a program… it's a family. It's not like public schools where instructors tell you what to do and how to do it.… They really get to know you."

At the media conference where Heather and Hank sat on a panel, the audience asked questions about what it meant to them to make videos and show them to others. Heather shared that, when she and Hank were working together, she felt a "great sense of family. We are making films because we enjoy it. Whether they are seen or not, the fact that we get to do it together is something I'll take with me for the rest of my life." Heather's public testimony to the power of collective agency reminds us that collaborative exercises can empower not only individuals but also groups.

Youthscapes enabled the apprentices to form alliances that helped them combat preconceived notions about their identities. Vigil (1993) pointed out that gangs "fill socialization voids and offer attachments, commitments, involvements, and beliefs for young people in need of affiliation and achievement" (p. 94). The apprentices formed a gang-like alternative family against an outside adult world that often seemed hostile or indifferent to their needs. Having established a group identity as young urban media activists, the apprentices were equipped to stand up for themselves as producers with a legitimate voice in the predominantly white male world of the media. They had to step beyond the refuge of their program walls to produce their videos, connecting with adults, both within and outside of their local communities, who might otherwise have overlooked their perspectives.

Implications of Identity Production through Media

Challenging the premise that adolescents—particularly adolescents of color—are aimless and irresponsible, Youthscapes participants made a positive mark on public territory. They used the powerful tools of the media to counteract negative images of urban youth, and they demonstrated their sense of group and personal responsibility, agency, and identity during face-to-face encounters with members of the varied communities they encountered when they stepped outside the walls of the program.

Youth-centered community-based media programs can help adolescents combat misrepresentation in the media and alienation from society. Such programs can develop mentoring systems that promote resiliency and agency to combat negative images prevalent in adult-

controlled media. Freire (1970) pointed out that learners can act as producers and constructers of knowledge rather than simply being acted upon. Students with the technological capabilities to write, perform, and edit video productions can tell their stories in the precise ways in which they want them told. Thus, Youthscapes was not just a way to get young people off the streets. These urban youth were empowered to *re*-present their images, their reputations, their passions, and their ideals, both in public screenings of their work and in face-to-face encounters with community members.

As in other community-based video production programs (Fleetwood, 2005), Youthscapes participants were active agents in breaking down barriers between themselves and their own community. Their alternative families in the program fostered independence and freedom of expression, as well as social interdependence. The apprentices developed a media "gang code" of technical and aesthetic work ethics, in which individuals pushed highly collaborative projects forward despite obstacles placed by outsiders who might not understand or respect their mission. Learning how to interact with prejudiced or dominating adults may have provided the apprentices with greater resilience in tackling future obstacles. Youthscapes empowered urban young people of color by encouraging their voices and fostering positive civic dispositions including tolerance and respect for others, social responsibility, efficacy, and connection to the community.

The example of Youthscapes has practical implications for youth workers and for their professional development, as well as for the wider community and policymakers. Professional development of youth media workers might emphasize developing youth agency to use the power of media to *re*-present urban youth, particularly those who are most often negatively stereotyped: girls; youth of color; gay, lesbian, and transgender youth; and young people with disabilities. Youth would need to be equipped not only with the technical tools of media making but also with the skills needed to distribute their messages to their communities and beyond. Easily accessible youth media products could offer policymakers, community-based organizers, teachers, and administrators a greater sense of connection with the concerns of urban

young people, which could lead to increased dialogue regarding youth policies within and beyond the classroom. Then, perhaps, the public would not be as easily persuaded by political campaigns that routinely capitalize on the vision of "irresponsible" teenagers as a public health threat (Males, 1996). Reaching out to public television stations, pitching youth-centered ideas to network producers, and disseminating copies of local youth works to similar community-based youth organizations can further showcase adolescent voices and demonstrate their value to the local community and even to global mainstream media channels.

> The apprentices developed a media "gang code" of technical and aesthetic work ethics, in which individuals pushed highly collaborative projects forward despite obstacles placed by outsiders who might not understand or respect their mission.

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Notes

[1] All names of participants and the name "Youthscapes" are pseudonyms.

the curtain rises

How Community-Based Arts Contribute to Youth and Community Development

by Jennifer Fuqua

It's 6:20 p.m. on a Friday in December, and the show is about to begin. After waiting for 20 minutes, the crowd is restless. The delay couldn't be helped; six girls were running back and forth between two subway stops to get the "clean" tape of their music.

As the crowd prepares to heckle, the atmosphere in the junior high school auditorium is closer to *Showtime at the Apollo* than to afterschool education. The neighborhood is out in force, along with friends, family members, and co-workers who have caught the F train from far-flung Queens neighborhoods. More than 500 people sit crammed into seats designed for 12–14-year-old students. They are repeatedly asked to sit down as they line the aisles trying to get a better view and a gulp of fresh air from windows that never seem to open far enough.

A bit nervously, I walk to center stage to welcome the audience to the annual talent show at the Queens Community House Beacon in JHS 190. As I make a pitch for the young people who have spent so much blood, sweat, and tears preparing for their performance

and inform the audience that the Beacon is a boo-free zone, I'm thankful that no one boos *me*. I'm vaguely aware of getting a "shout-out," which reminds me of the deep love and respect I feel privileged to share with the performers. We are a family.

At 6:25 p.m., the show begins. An unassuming boy with glasses, age 14, stands alone with a music stand that holds his notebook. Some of the kids in the audience are ready to pounce. Then the teen does something amazing. With a purposeful cadence, he reads his poem, which speaks about loss to the citizens and families of New York City after 9/11. When he finishes, someone shouts "yeaauh!" in a way usually reserved for a favorite gangsta rap. The boy has won over the audience; expectations have just risen.

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In this talent show, the Beacon performers shared with their community a set of productions that took months to prepare. During that time, the young people received guidance from more experienced artists and had space and time to create their own process and experience. Different acts often practiced in close proximity, sometimes in structured activities but more often in informal open sessions. Two or three dance groups would stake out opposite corners of the gym, their dueling boom boxes blasting an escalating cacophony of noise. In the process, the performers developed their own language, overcame shyness, projected their voices, expressed their poetry, and moved together. Finally, they also moved their audience.

This story is not unique. In any community you can find people—often a lot of people—who value the arts and support the idea of providing a place where young people can share in creating artistic products. Community-based arts programs support positive youth development in city neighborhoods and in smaller towns across America. Some receive government support, some have foundation money, and others build an entrepreneurial base. When such programs do not get enough funding or cannot find an affordable space—or when standardized testing is valued as an end result—we miss opportunities to develop the hearts and minds of young people.

Research has found connections between typical models of community-based arts programs and authentic learning (Heath, 1999). Young artists in programs like the Queens Community House Beacon form "communities of practice," informal groups united by what they do together and what matters to them. In such joint enterprises, where the members negotiate the processes and the products, mutual engagement over time builds a shared repertoire of knowledge and resources (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice in the arts enable what Lave and Wenger (1991) have called "situated learning," where co-participation and social engagement provide the context for learning. The situated learning within communities of practice encouraged by community-based arts programs supports positive youth development. Besides its intrinsic value, arts education also helps young people gain knowledge and skills that apply to fields outside of the arts. My own observations as a teaching artist and program director, some of which are described in this article, provide evidence that community-based arts programs are key to the futures of

> In any community you can find people—often a lot of people—who value the arts and support the idea of providing a place where young people can share in creating artistic products.

young people, particularly alienated youth who struggle to find a place in public school systems.

Youth Development and Learning through the Arts

According to the Youth Development Institute (1998) at the Fund for the City of New York, a *youth development* program is designed to meet the human developmental needs of youth and to build a set of core assets and competencies needed to participate successfully in adolescent and adult life. Four typical models of extended learning that enable "authentic work experience," identified by Shirley Brice Heath (1999, p. 28) in her evaluation of 124 youth-based arts organizations, mirror the values of a youth development framework. These four models provide the basis for my examination of the value of arts-based programming for youth and community development.

In Heath's *marketing model,* young people research local resources and become entrepreneurs by selling in their neighborhoods the artistic products and services they develop. In the *tagging model,* young people not only develop their own creative skills but also assist others, particularly younger children, in developing their talents. The *positioning model* places youth in an apprenticeship or internship where they can observe and imitate teaching artists or youth workers. These experienced mentors can introduce the young people to cultural institutions and their workings. Finally, in the *line-up model,* young people continue their traditional education in high school or post-secondary institutions while also developing their artistic abilities either as a possible career or simply as a hobby.

Community-based arts programs fit the youth development framework in many ways. Teaching artists, who often develop long-term relationships with the community-based organizations that employ them, play a significant role in the success of young people. Community arts programs create safe spaces in which youth can build constructive relationships with peers; small classes also give youth the chance to develop close interactive relationships with adults. As in Heath's four models, young people develop concrete job skills through hands-on learning, apprenticeships, and exposure to technology. Furthermore, these programs build on what youth value by incorporating their point of view in meaningful ways and encouraging voluntary participation and leadership.

Clear expectations and rewards are a part of regular, sustained programs in which children count and youth are valued community members.

The same qualities that aid in social development also make art education an excellent means through which to develop the skills needed for lifelong learning. Art activities develop persistence and attentiveness; curiosity, reflection, and interpretation; and imagination and invention. Arts activities often teach creative use of language and vocabulary, as well as impart cultural knowledge. As Weitz (1996) noted, art education develops self-awareness, empathy, and sensitivity; it also provides an outlet for the expression of emotions. "Creative art activity allows the adolescent to gain mastery over internal and external landscapes by discovering mechanisms for structure and containment that arise from within, rather than being imposed from the outside. The artistic experience entails repetition of actions, thoughts or emotions, over which the adolescent gains increased tolerance or mastery" (Weitz, 1996, p. 9).

In an era when the importance of communication cannot be underestimated, the intrinsic qualities of arts education should be seen as essential to the development of any contributing member of society. *Gifts of the Muse*, a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004), describes how the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of the arts experience have both private and public value. For an individual young person, initial pleasure in the arts—an intrinsic benefit—can lead to expanded capacities for empathy and cognitive growth—an instrumental benefit. Since creative and critical thinking and effective communication skills are prerequisites for many fields, these capacities are important for any endeavor a young person might undertake. The Wallace Foundation study thus shows that the intrinsic and private benefits of arts education can spill over into instrumental and public values, such as the development of social capital and economic growth. In particular, the study found that arts experience has a powerful effect on engagement (McCarthy et al., 2004).

Welcome to the Neighborhood

New York City's settlement houses have a long tradition of incorporating the arts into their work with communities. Many serve as arts centers in their communities, offering training in a variety of art forms, including visual arts, theater, music, and dance. Some settlement houses are even home to renowned conservatories. Dance, music, and theater organizations, such as Carnegie Hall, Theater for a New Audience, High 5 Tickets for the Arts, and the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, offer settlement houses opportunities to enhance their arts and cultural offerings without great expense or in-house expertise.

Connecting youth development, arts, and learning through successful partnerships with arts and cultural organizations has characterized the approach of the Queens Community House (QCH, formerly known as Forest Hills Community House) throughout its history. Located in a public housing development in the Forest Hills area of Queens, New York, QCH has integrated the arts into its services in many schools and satellite community centers, as well as the "mother house," since its inception. Countless staff members—not only teaching artists but also managers and program directors—call themselves artists, musicians, performers, or filmmakers. Through the local council for the arts, the city council, and other government agencies, QCH has been able to build partnerships with local museums and arts organizations. These partners enrich the programming in all divisions—youth, senior, and community services. The arts have often bridged the gap between generations, whether participants work together or gather together to appreciate the arts.

QCH has offered afterschool activities for more than thirty years. A typical afterschool group at the "mother house" includes newcomers and second-generation immigrants from South America, Southeast Asia, China, and Eastern Europe. For the past nine years, QCH has operated a Beacon Youth Development Center in a local public middle school. The Beacon provides homework help, test preparation, academic enrichment, arts activities, leadership training, sports, and recreation year-round to more than 2,500 youth ages 6–21 and their families each year. Participants reflect the ethnic mix of their neighborhood: Approximately 20 percent are African American, 16 percent Asian, 16 percent Hispanic, 20 percent white, and 18 percent of mixed ethnicity or "other." Many are recent immigrants from Asia, Central and South America, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union. Most are from low-income or working poor families.

> Art activities develop persistence and attentiveness; curiosity, reflection, and interpretation; and imagination and invention.

Community-Based Art Educators

The teaching artists who are so vital to community arts programs are attracted to working in out-of-school-time programs for a number of reasons. Out-of-school-time programs offer longer sessions over longer periods of time, more opportunities to work in the community with local arts institutions, and often more flexibility in curriculum choices than do school-based programs. Where community-based youth programs see the arts as a necessity rather than an add-on, teaching artists find a safe haven. Since most jobs are part-time, they fit well with the lifestyle of artists who need time to work on their craft. Particularly in New York City, community-based programs and artists provide great mutual support.

Ten years ago, I found myself longing to make a deeper connection with the community and with communities of practice. As an artist, academically trained and participating in professional arts networks, I knew that some of my most cherished moments of clarity, learning, and connection had been through sharing the arts in education and practice with young people. Serendipity led me on a trip on two trains, with a bus transfer, to the middle of Queens. I started working with teens at QCH not only as an arts educator, but also as a girls' group facilitator, cooking teacher, and technology instructor. I often saw some of the same young people on different nights at the center. As I got to know them and they got to know me, it became easier to connect everyday experiences with learning new skills, and I moved from a didactic, "institutionalized" approach to a more participant-centered strategy. As I watched young people grow up, I felt personally connected to them.

Teaching artist Patricia Runcie, who recently worked on a play with fourth and fifth graders in the afterschool enrichment program at QCH, noted that she has seen some of the kids who have been labeled "troubled" or "difficult"—particularly boys—blossom in her class. "Often they end up being the most creative and committed," she explained (personal communication, May 2007). The afterschool setting provides both freedom and a safe haven from potentially destructive influences. Runcie, like many teaching artists in New York City, juggles several part-time jobs. Besides teaching, she also runs her own emerging theater company and does marketing and promotion for Broadway theaters. In the past, she has done clerical and restaurant work. However, she wanted the hours she spent not working on her craft of acting to *mean* something. Like many others, she has chosen to work with kids in com-

> Serendipity led me on a trip on two trains, with a bus transfer, to the middle of Queens.

munity-based arts programs. She believes that artists who are in the field practicing their craft have a valuable connection to make with kids who are aspiring artists.

Unfortunately, maintaining the funding needed to keep experienced teaching artists on staff is a challenge for community-based organizations that are not viewed specifically as arts programs. A few years ago, the arts budget was cut in Runcie's QCH afterschool program. The program director tried to maintain the same number of sessions for the afterschool participants but had to decrease the stipend for teaching artists. As a result, much more oversight was required to support less experienced teaching artists. With its smaller staff and less-skilled teaching artists, the program struggled to help parents understand the valuable contribution the arts make in the learning process. In a high-pressure school environment focused on high-stakes testing, parents, particularly those of English language learners, preferred that their children spend time on homework. It was hard to "sell" a reduced, lower-quality arts program to kids who felt pressured to concentrate on homework.

Arts at the Settlement House

The arts are alive and kicking in out-of-school-time programs in schools and community centers. It is not a great surprise that, in places that value community-building, teaching artists and young people can create opportunities for situated learning, communities of practice, and the apprenticeship models outlined by Heath (1999). Because life in general, and the arts in particular, are non-static, circular processes, there is often overlap among models. Arts programs at the Queens Community House show several of Heath's models in action at once. The stories that follow show how young people, through their arts programs, make connections to family and community while developing assets that can serve them now and in the future.

Queens Rocks

The Cocoa House Planners have fostered a youth rock scene in central Queens by developing a bi-monthly all-ages show run by Beacon youth. The brainchild of Casey, the former music coordinator, Cocoa House is one of several music initiatives in the QCH Beacon program. A self-taught working musician, Casey started with the Beacon at its inception in 1998 as a leadership coordinator. With the advent of new funding to support music programming, he shifted to working as music

coordinator. This part-time position fit with his lifestyle of touring and promoting his band.

The Cocoa House Planners are a group of young musicians who meet weekly to plan for the bi-monthly event; new recruits attend every month. The planners become well versed in stagecraft, setting up and breaking down sound systems and full sets of instruments. They also organize and promote the shows. A consistent group of ten youth planners, as well as new recruits and others who opt in and out, manage to book an average of five bands every other month for shows that draw up to 300 audience members. An even bigger accomplishment is that the planners become expert at the complex process of marketing and outreach to their target audience, producing literature, and making connections in a process that explicitly reflects Heath's *marketing model.* Several young people have transferred that knowledge to other types of performance events and have expressed interest in further post-secondary training in performance management. Several young Cocoa House bands have gone on to play other venues and to produce demos and CDs.

When Casey moved on to the national tour of the play *Rent,* Heath's *positioning model* came into play. Casey passed the torch to David, a teen musician, who has now coordinated the Cocoa House for several years. David went through a kind of apprenticeship during his five years with the music program at the Beacon. He honed his skills by watching a more skilled musician execute a youth-driven rock show. In effect, David "shadowed" Casey and thereby learned how to step into the role of coordinator.

David was participating in a community of practice, where a shared set of activities and a common goal led to the co-creation of an active rock music scene. The music program gave him the opportunity to gain skills by participating in an endeavor that excited him. As David said in an informal interview, "I see myself as a motivator, being in the position to give young bands a chance. I feel responsible" (personal communication, December 2003). David's sense of responsibility to pass along his knowledge to younger musicians reflects Heath's *tagging model.*

Jean Lave, a social anthropologist, and Etienne Wenger, an educational theorist, put forward the idea of "situated learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). After observing a wide variety of kinds of apprenticeships, they theorized that certain social engagements provide the proper context for learning. This idea radically shifts the notion that knowledge is acquired by individuals alone. The Cocoa House program is driven by a community of young musicians who learn together with an experienced teaching artist and who take responsibility to teach one another something they love.

Art on the Sidewalk

Heath's framework and the principles of youth development are also reflected in the PASE (Partnership for After School Education) Sidewalk Arts pilot. Sidewalk Arts, which lasted for three years at QCH's "mother house," incorporated seasoned teaching artists into an existing school-aged childcare program. Each fall, spring, and summer semester, a new artistic discipline was introduced. The program included incentives, such as trips to local cultural institutions, as well as culminating performances and exhibits. Sidewalk Arts' primary objectives were built around personal development: fostering self-confidence, building leadership skills, and instilling lifelong patterns of creative and productive self-expression. The program also sought to change the perception that urban youth are a deficit to the community.

Sidewalk Arts brought a flexible approach to a focused and disciplined arts program for school-aged children. Four times weekly, two teaching artists worked with groups of eight to ten children in a way that reflects the *positioning model.* The children were exposed to various artistic disciplines and worked on skills in a particular discipline. In the process, they furthered participation in and study of the arts. A fifth weekly session addressed personal development through reflective discussions and journal writing. Since the children were continuing their traditional school education in an intensive arts curriculum after school, Sidewalk Arts also provides an example of Heath's *line-up model.*

The arts and personal development sessions culminated in end-of-semester shows. The last Sidewalk Arts event was a multimedia exhibit featuring a video diary, a photography display that included journal entries next to each child's visual work, and graphic works related to identity. Parents and staff were surprised to see the amount and caliber of artwork. The teaching artists and afterschool staff gave the event "polish" by treating it as an opening, providing fresh fruit and cookies, as well as music to give the room ambiance. The multi-purpose room, with its cavernous spaces and tattered basketball nets, hosts many programs, including morning yoga for seniors, a lunchtime feeding program, and an evening gymnasium for children and teens. For the exhibit, it was dressed up with partitions to create intimate spaces in which to view the works. In contrast to the ten or so parents who attended a beginning-of-the-year parent orientation, more than 40 parents attended the Sidewalk Arts exhibit. Many stayed for a while, talking with staff members and enjoying the pride that was evident in their children's faces.

Cultural events such as the Sidewalks Arts exhibit and the Beacon talent show give families an opportunity to get involved in the lives of their children in ways that celebrate and build community. In keeping with Heath's *marketing model,* children make connections between their work and their families and communities. Such opportunities to gather in community spaces to reflect on children's successes foster a love of the arts. They also build connections to arts networks through teaching artists and arts partners. In so doing, community-based arts programs build new audiences to support the community's arts economy.

My American Idol

When core principles of youth development are integrated into program design, Heath's four models fit naturally into community-based arts programming. The importance of offering flexible opportunities and multiple points of entry cannot be underestimated. In a program focused on positive youth development, a young person can first observe, then participate, and finally lead. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning includes this notion of "legitimate peripheral participation," a process through which a newcomer builds expertise and knowledge by observing from the periphery and then moving toward the center through fuller participation in the sociocultural practice of the group. The story of Marlena, one of many young people I have been privileged to observe as they grew over many years, provides an example.

Marlena was part of the QCH Beacon talent show, which was described at the beginning of this article, for each of its seven years. She started in the Beacon program as a participant when she was in junior high school. She then held a summer youth employment position and later became a program aide. For the talent show, she began as an emcee and gradually took on more responsibility as a choreographer and director.

My first conversation with Marlena, when she was 15, came after she had experienced the acute blow of failing to be accepted at a specialized high school for the arts. Marlena had been involved in dancing and performing from an early age, attending the Alvin Ailey school before entering kindergarten, so the arts high school would have been perfect for her. The entrance exams for specialized high schools in New York City are highly competitive. Young people begin preparing in elementary school to be accepted to the "right" high school, which, in turn, often results in acceptance to the "right" college. For a young person without financial means, these high school entrance exams are one of the few avenues to a better future.

Marlena struggled in the high school that was not the one she would have chosen. Her guidance counselor even suggested that she drop out and get a GED. But Marlena remained engaged with learning because of her involvement with performance and the arts at the Beacon. Like many of her peers, Marlena perceived the school environment as threatening. As she recounted stories of her high school experience, she noted, "School wasn't how it should be. There was no support and guidance counselors didn't help" (personal communication, November 2007). Her "affective filter" (Lee, 2003) for protecting herself from perceived threats or insults to her individual, social, or cultural sense of self was high in school but lower in the more comfortable environment of the program, where she was surrounded by peers and adults whose language and cultural practices were familiar. She spoke highly of the support she received in the Beacon program during a difficult time of transition in her life.

As a matter of principle, youth development models like the Beacon incorporate what Lee (2003) refers to as a "Cultural Modeling Framework," which makes explicit connections between participants' everyday knowledge and the demands of content-oriented learning. Cultural modeling introduces new concepts and ideas while guarding against maladaptive reactions to unfamiliar and threatening environments. A large urban public school can indeed be such a threatening environment. The supportive atmosphere of the Beacon enabled Marlena to resist the pitfalls that plagued many of her friends—such as acting out, isolation, destructive behavior, drug dependency, and lack of motivation—so that she could focus on her future.

In a textbook example of situated learning, Marlena improved her literacy and numeracy skills by applying them to tasks that were important to her. She demonstrated Heath's *marketing model* as she developed the organizational skills of a Broadway producer. Planning for the talent show included space allocation, set design, stage management, and fundraising outreach to local businesses. She used the Beacon advisory council to connect to the

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local chamber of commerce and community board. In teaching younger performers, she passed on her knowledge and experience in a way consistent with the *tagging model*. Her self-efficacy demonstrates the benefits of community-based arts education. Now 22, Marlena has obtained her GED and, in addition to having been promoted to the position of full-time leadership specialist, is currently attending a local community college.

A Commitment to Community Arts Education

A nation that used to take the importance of the arts as a given now requires educators and youth workers to explain why the arts belong in our educational programs. The demand for outcomes-driven data has supplanted captivation with and pleasure in the arts as an educational value in its own right.

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Even as arts institutions themselves have lately struggled with resource development, community-based organizations have an even more difficult time in convincing funders that the arts should be part of community-based afterschool programming. Those resources that are available are often accessed only by the few community-based organizations that can support programs through matching dollars and have a large enough infrastructure to seek funding through other revenue streams. Smaller organizations often cannot compete. Money that can be applied to arts education from publicly-funded programs for school-age children, such as the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers and New York City's Out-of-School Time Program through the Department of Youth and Community Development, also increasingly comes with a pre-determined outcomes-driven agenda that mirrors institutional cookie-cutter standards and disregards unique community values and practice. Arts programming designed to promote pleasure and appreciation seems to be accessible only to those who can afford it. The Sidewalk Arts pilot sought not only to bring the arts to low-income children but also to offer evidence of intrinsic and instrumental benefits such as cognitive growth and improved self-efficacy in order to better advocate for resources—but then Sidewalk Arts itself was unable to develop and maintain funding.

In our modern skills-driven economy, access to arts education should be seen as essential for disconnected youth. Whereas in the past, discrimination prevented many minorities from reaping the benefits of higher levels of education, today, increasing stratification of wealth segregates those who achieve higher levels of education from those who do not. Economic segregation thereby restricts access to high-wage jobs for newcomers and the working poor—and their children and children's children remain stuck at the bottom of the ladder. To improve our human capital, we should draw on arts education as a means of developing the expressive and cognitive abilities of young people. Thus, a comprehensive plan for community renewal should draw on the enrichment capabilities of the arts. The stories of the young people in arts programs at Queens Community House—and hundreds more like them—demonstrate how such programs can improve skills. The four models identified by Shirley Brice Heath that have threaded through these stories are explicitly linked to "authentic work experience" (Heath, 1999, p. 28). The skills young people learn in community arts programs can provide access to income-producing activity. A comprehensive range of access points to the arts, including a variety of community-based arts education programs, is thus both natural and necessary. Such programs deserve our support and require certain commitments on the part of funders, policymakers, and program leaders.

Commitment to Sustainability

The benefits of community arts education for both the individual and the community should be supported and recognized. Arts institutions in a city like New York often find that community-based programs are great places to support cultural participation, spark interest, and build new audiences. In turn, community-based organizations benefit from the expertise and resources of their arts partners. Building such partnerships requires time and money, so the funding streams must be consistently available from year to year. Indeed, sustained funding for arts programs that serve all children, and particularly those whose families cannot afford exposure to the arts, deserves broad public support. Programs like the City Council's Cultural After School Adventure (CASA), which brings arts and other enrichments to city students, received an increase in this year's budget, and is one step towards making sure that cultural institutions in the city connect with community-based programs. Recognition of for-profit arts organizations as a part of the "ecosystem" of cultural participation is one way to build connections and increase the sustainability of community-based arts programming.

Commitment to Fitting the Arts into Existing Programming

From the perspective of both visiting teaching artists or cultural institutions and afterschool program staff, a commitment is necessary to bridge potential gaps in the delivery of arts activities. Youth workers need training and support in understanding the role the arts play in the program, while teaching artists need training and support in understanding the youth development context, group work, and administrative functions that characterize the program. This support needs to come straight from the top, starting with funders and executive directors who provide the structure through curriculum, staffing patterns, and resource development. This commitment then filters down through program directors, who supervise both teaching artists and youth workers. Program directors must support both in their roles while encouraging collaboration and mutual understanding.

Commitment to Learning and Growth

According to the Youth Development Institute (1998), young people who participate in community-based arts programming develop many competencies. In the *social* arena, they learn self-awareness, empathy, and sensitivity. *Cognitive* competencies developed through community-based arts education include critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities. *Civic* competencies include an orientation to community service, peer mentoring, and community organizing. Arts programs also build *creative* competencies, such as original thinking and the ability to express one's self through verbal, written, and visual communication and performance. All these can lead to *employment* competencies achieved through an apprenticeship model that develops skills applicable not only to careers in the arts but also in many other areas (Youth Development Institute, 1998). Teaching artists and youth workers have a positive impact on participants by providing role models that exemplify involvement in the arts and a love of artistic expression. Authentic learning can be achieved in environments that support communities of practice, where young people participate in a safe social structure that allows them to observe, test, and master their art.

Who can a young person like Marlena become? I like to think of Marlena as the mogul she emulated when, at age 16, she wrote, directed, and starred in her own version of a talk/variety show called *Dreams*. Could she be the next Oprah? Absolutely. Marlena discovered that her voice could have a positive impact on peers and adults. The support she found in the program inspired her to give back. Whether she becomes a media mogul, a lawyer, or a CPA, her experiences in a community-based arts program gave her time and space to develop self-confidence, creativity, and focus that will help her succeed in whatever she chooses.

> Authentic learning can be achieved in environments that support communities of practice, where young people participate in a safe social structure that allows them to observe, test, and master their art.

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Critical Issues in After-School Programming

by Robert R. Halpern

Monographs of the Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy, 2006

Reviewed by Ivana Espinet
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With only 6.5 million of the nation's youth in afterschool programs and another 14.3 million caring for themselves after school (Afterschool Alliance, 2004), afterschool education has emerged as a national issue in recent years.

Robert Halperin's *Critical Issues in Afterschool Programming* presents four monographs that examine issues central to the development of the field: the role of afterschool programs in supporting literacy development and fostering the physical well-being of children, the challenge of building a system of afterschool education, and the question of appropriate expectations.

The first two monographs focus on curricular issues: how to support literacy development in afterschool programs and how to address the epidemic of inactivity among low- and moderate-income children.

In the first monograph, Halpern suggests that afterschool programs can be alternative settings for literacy practice and "are well-suited to fostering literacy through the visual and expressive arts and to activities that work simultaneously across different symbol systems—words, pictures, music, movement"

(p. 13). He argues that afterschool programs should not teach or remediate literacy problems that are tied to children's experiences in school. Instead, programs should create safe environments with their own goals and strategies for literacy development.

The alarming rate of obesity among American children, especially in low-income and minority communities, is now rising to the level of what many are calling a national crisis. As health care practitioners and policy experts search for answers to this health issue, physical inactivity emerges as one of the main causes. In his second monograph, Halpern explores the roots of the problem of physical inactivity. He points out how many urban environments have become increasingly
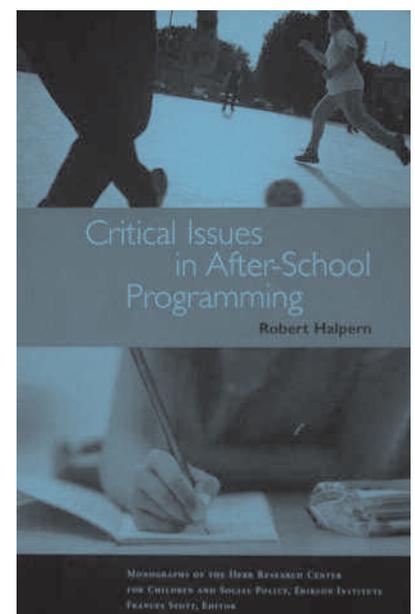
inhospitable for children's outdoor play. He argues that the non-school hours are an ideal time to engage young people in a range of physical activities and youth sports. He also examines some of the challenges afterschool programs face in making physical activity a part of their daily routines, such as a lack of space and the limited amount of time they have to accommodate a range of curricular needs.

Although the first two monographs provide insightful analyses on areas that affect the curricular options for afterschool programs, the last two monographs, which focus on systemic and policy issues in need of urgent attention, are more significant for building the field. The third study addresses the need for and efforts to create *systems* of afterschool education. Halpern presents case studies of multifaceted city-level efforts to build such systems and then analyzes their impact. For instance, MOST (Making the Most of Out of School Time), an initiative launched in Boston, Chicago, and Seattle, provided practitioners in the field with an opportunity to come together, share, and learn from one another. As usual, successes are balanced by challenges; in the case of MOST, some large afterschool providers in those cities chose not to participate, which naturally hindered the effort toward building a comprehensive system and effecting systemic improvement.

At a time when there is enormous pressure on afterschool programs to help close the academic achievement gap among students of different backgrounds, Halpern examines the trend toward aligning afterschool programs with academic outcomes. He questions whether afterschool programs should be expected to concentrate on helping boost academic achievement, arguing that they are better positioned to focus on supporting developmental tasks. Pointing out that afterschool programs have proven to support the social and interpersonal dimensions of children's development, he argues that "afterschool programs have the flexibility to provide developmental experiences in a range of domains that schools lack time for and that low and moderate income families may lack resources to purchase in the marketplace" (p. 129). Halpern encourages evaluators, sponsors, and funders to identify the specific tasks that afterschool programs are well suited to address in order to redefine appropriate expectations, to measure program quality, and to consider the effects of the individual programs.

In this book, Halpern addresses some of the critical questions that the field of afterschool education must contend with in order to clarify its role. He also encourages us to think about overall systemic organizations that can help support individual programs. The four essays spark a discussion on how to formulate and implement strategies for addressing common challenges facing the field. One of the advantages of the book is that the essays can be used individually in professional development efforts, whether staff groups choose to debate curricular issues relevant to specific afterschool settings or to tackle systemic issues that affect the field as a whole.

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Afterschool Matters Initiative

The Robert Bowne Foundation (RBF), seeking to have a long-term and substantial effect on the field of out-of-school education, launched several initiatives to accomplish this mission. Afterschool Matters is one of the initiatives, the goals of which are to:

- Generate and disseminate research about community-based organizations serving youth during out-of-school hours
- Build a network of scholars studying community-based organizations serving youth
- Contribute to basic knowledge and the improvement of practice and policy in the area of community-based youth programs

Afterschool Matters/Occasional Papers

One of the projects of the Afterschool Matters Initiative is the journal *Afterschool Matters*, a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness of the field of afterschool education. The journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and in shaping policy. Articles for the journal are solicited from the field, and a range of academic perspectives are considered along with personal or inspirational narratives and essays, book reviews, artwork, and photographs.

The RBF Occasional Papers is a peer-reviewed series published twice a year. The goal of the Occasional Papers is to provide a venue for publishing research that explores key issues and topics in the practice and theory of afterschool programming, youth development, and learning during the non-school hours. In addition, the Occasional Papers address key policy issues in the area of youth development. The intended audience for this series includes researchers, university staff, afterschool program managers and practitioners, and policy makers. Prospective papers are solicited by the RBF.

Copies of both *Afterschool Matters* and the Occasional Papers are available on the RBF website, www.robertbownefoundation.org.

Research Grants/Research Fellowship

The RBF sponsors a national Research Grant competition. Four grants of $10,000 are awarded to support either original empirical research in or about community-based youth programs during the non-school hours or research syntheses or policy analyses of community-based youth programs.

Now in its fifth year, the RBF Research Fellowship is dedicated to building the capacity of youth program staff to design and conduct research in the areas of youth development and education during the out-of-school hours. The goals of the Research Fellowship include generating and disseminating research in the area of education in community-based organizations serving youth during the out-of-school hours, building a network of scholars, contributing to basic knowledge and the improvement of practice, and informing policy in the area of community-based youth programs.

For more information about the RBF Afterschool Matters Initiative, contact:
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Art Credits

Cover: Kingsley Middle School 21st Century Community Learning Center. In 2003, Kingsley Middle School, in conjunction with three other schools in northern Michigan, received a five-year 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant. The charge of the grant is to provide afterschool enrichment activities for students in the fifth through eighth grades. Students in one of the activities, an afterschool art club, created this mural of a stag, which is the Kingsley School's mascot. For information on the Kingsley CLC, please contact Scruffie Crockett, Kingsley Community Learning Center Coordinator, scrockett@kingsley.k12.mi.us.

Pages 1, 7, 34, 39: Young Audiences/Arts For Learning. The Louisiana chapter of Young Audiences is a non-profit arts-in-education organization that serves approximately 200,000 school children each year. The national organization serves nearly 8 million students annually. Programs in music, theater, dance, poetry and storytelling, and visual arts enhance learning and reinforce the school curriculum. Young Audiences/Arts for Learning offers an assembly performance program, classroom workshops, a literacy initiative in schools, professional development for educators, the SMART (Science*Math*Arts*Recreation*Technology) afterschool and summer camp programs, and many other arts-and-education programs. Particularly in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Young Audiences believes that the arts are a powerful tool to help children express themselves and recover their resiliency. For more information, visit www.ya4la.org.

Pages 12, 17: Mira-Lisa Katz. Photos of the dance participants described in "Growth in Motion"

Pages 23, 29: "Youthscapes," described in the article "Media Gangs of Social Resistance"

Your Program in Art

Does your youth development program have children's art that you would like to contribute to *Afterschool Matters*? If so, please submit high-resolution image files to:
Sara Hill, Ed.D.
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We will ask you to fill out a form indicating that you have the artists' permission to publish the works in *Afterschool Matters*.

Afterschool Matters

Call for Papers
Spring 2009 Issue

Afterschool Matters, a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of afterschool education, is seeking material for the spring 2009 issue. Published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time with support from the Robert Bowne Foundation, the journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and in shaping youth development policy.

Afterschool Matters seeks scholarly work, from a variety of disciplines, which can be applied to or is based on the afterschool arena. The journal also welcomes submissions that explore practical ideas for working with young people during the out-of-school hours. Articles should connect to current theory and practice in the field by relating to previously published research; a range of academic perspectives will be considered. We also welcome personal or inspirational narratives and essays, review essays, artwork, and photographs.

Any topic related to the theory and practice of out-of-school-time programming will be considered for the 2009 issue. We invite you to discuss possible topics in advance with us. Suggested topics include:

- Descriptions and analyses of community-based youth organizations as institutions that support youth development through civic engagement, social and emotional development, arts development, academic achievement, or other means
- Descriptions and analyses of programs that collaborate with a range of community institutions, such as faith-based organizations or businesses
- Exploration of employment-related topics, including, for example, youth organizations as spaces for training and employment, youth as workers, community economic development, and youth programs

Submission guidelines
- Deadline is July 1, 2008, for the Spring 2009 issue of *Afterschool Matters*.
- Submissions should be double-spaced in 12-point font, including quotations and references, and submitted electronically or on a disk in Microsoft Word or Rich Text format.
- Submissions should not exceed 5,000 words.
- Include a cover sheet with the manuscript title, authors' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.
- The names of the authors should not appear on the text, as submissions are reviewed anonymously by peers.
- Follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition, for reference style guidelines. Present important information in the text and do not use extensive footnotes or endnotes.

Inquiries about possible articles or topics are welcome.
To inquire or to submit articles, contact:
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