Abstract:

This two-part article addresses the outcomes of art programs in public libraries by examining the literature, and by asking teens how these programs can affect their civic engagement. The literature review synthesizes previous research on art, libraries, teens and civic engagement, and positions this case study in relation to the theoretical constructs of adult researchers.

The case study generates a grounded theory of the teen experience of art programs and correlating shifts in civic engagement. Fourteen teens joined in six weekly arts programs, responded to surveys and participated in interviews on art, libraries, and various measures of civic engagement, and the ways in which these three concepts intersect. Teens were research partners. The resulting teen-generated and validated theory describes how library art programs can directly and indirectly affect teen civic engagement by facilitating the development of social capital, offering opportunities to engage, and allowing teens to guide their own actions and decisions regarding the sorts of civic engagement in which they want to participate. Overall, participants believed that these programs can positively affect empathy, a sense of belonging, social networks and connections, creativity, a sense of being listened to and valued, and other cognitive and emotional shifts.

Introduction

From coast to coast public libraries are buzzing with energy as teens scrawl henna tattoos on their hands, record hiphop tracks, or knit. Public librarians are serving teens through an increasing number of programs and services. Books as The Hipster Librarian’s Guide to Teen Craft Projects commonly advocate art programs to reach out to teens and daily chronicles of art-based programs fill YALSA’s email discussion lists about teen programs. In best practice articles, young adult librarians offer heart-felt advice such as “librarians help teens make tight-knit connections...with craft, libraries can pattern a legacy of connection,” and

...the teen you helped will grow and learn more about themselves and the world. When you facilitate fine arts programs with teens...you present a program and then watch for a spark to appear in one of the participating teen’s eyes, and you think, ‘This is perfect, I just changed someone’s life today.’

Teen librarians want this to be the case, hope it is the case, but have little available research that demonstrates how our carefully planned art programs affect teens. Meanwhile, the civic engagement or citizenship-enabling mission of public libraries languishes, ostensibly exchanged for an economic one. Well-educated, civically engaged citizens founded the first tax-supported public library in the country, the Boston Public Library, to encourage the entire citizenry to become similarly engaged and educated. This justification for the use of tax dollars for libraries is that access to information will ensure an educated electorate, a citizenry informed about the issues of the day and willing to do the hard work of democracy.

The Problem

Catherine A. Johnson asks, “If the provision of information is no longer its most important role, how should the library reposition itself to remain relevant to municipal funders?” All sorts of answers suggest themselves, primary among them the idea that libraries can continue to function as agents of civic engagement and social change, counteracting the tide of divisive individualism as people are becoming more and more isolated behind their screens. Researchers could explore several models of civic engagement support, such as: zeroing in on the library as a thirdspace, maintaining online tools for community participation, citizen journalism or community publishing as facilitated through local libraries, and focusing library programming to foster active citizenship or civic engagement.

This research was proposed from my inchoate sense, after thirteen years as a youth services librarian, that art programs in libraries offered a way for teens to socialize, learn and respond to issues that impacted them that seemed fundamentally different from school, church or other activities. Years of watching teens produce socially-aware art, and hearing teens describe their understanding of social realities while doing craft projects had made me aware that something was going on under the apparently sugar-coated surface of making jewelry from bottle caps and writing song lyrics on t-shirts with bleach pens. I wanted to know what was occurring during these fun, well-attended programs, and to see if there was any correlation between the programs and some community benefit that could inspire funders to get as excited about programs as the teens were.

In response to these musings and observations, this research looks at a commonly-held program at libraries, past the private value these programs hold for each participant (which is by no means a statement about the relative worth of such private value), and examines how public funding...
for these programs results in a public benefit. Fourteen teens from one small public library helped to build a grounded theory addressing the research question “How does art programming in public libraries affect civic engagement in teens?” They spoke of the barriers to engagement that they encounter. They were cautious participatory scientists. Through their own words and choices this study situates the teen within his/her community, within the library, and in relationship to art and civic engagement.

**Implications**

When libraries use civic engagement to gauge outcome measures for the community impact of teen art programs, a circle is bound: Civic engagement created the public library through tax support, and the public library facilitates civic engagement and thus a stronger community. The impact of this research potentially goes beyond the immediate beneficiaries of the results, the teens, to communities in which they live. Since entire communities can conceivably benefit from increased teen civic engagement, this research adds to the conversation on how libraries benefit communities. If librarians interpret the grounded theory to provide more focused programming for teens, teens may begin to use libraries more regularly, feel better served and more satisfied with the library program offerings.

This study is relevant for a variety of other reasons. Teen librarians may be able to use it to justify and market their programs, garnering monetary, staff, and community support. Library administrators could use it to explain the need for teen program funding to library boards and city councils. Currently, few public libraries have dedicated teen funding. If quantitative research based on this and other theories of teens in libraries reveals that teen programming has a measurable benefit for the community, library boards may consider revising their mission to incorporate art programs, and funding them. On a cautionary note, both the literature review and the grounded theory describe how adult-centered ideas of what civic engagement “should” be can alienate or disenfranchise teens. Librarians should not plan their art programs for the sake of overtly facilitating civic engagement. Art for art’s sake or for the sake of fun and individual enjoyment is the teen-centered best practice; the potential benefits of civic engagement appear to be more important to community members, library staff and funding agencies than to the teens themselves.

**The Literature**

The literature on art, civic engagement, libraries and teens is a well-developed conversation, even though some of the participants have yet to speak directly to one another. Philosophers and sociologists have mused upon the intersections between art, community, empathy, and communication. Library theorists and political scientists join the conversation as they describe the library’s critical impact on civic engagement, citizenship, community-building, and building social capital. The concept of the public sphere, where people come together to share experiences, is critical to the idea of civic engagement. Education philosopher Henry Giroux notes that the public sphere is defined as the “mediating space between the state and private existence...rooted in collective self-reflection and discourse under conditions free from domination.” Libraries are perhaps the ultimate public sphere, due to their status as a least-mediated space compared to our other public, religious, economic, or social institutions. Teens have few places to gather that are not commoditized, or in the business of faith or pedagogy. Unfiltered access to art may be available in a museum, if one can afford to go to a museum, or an art center, if one is lucky enough to have a free art center in one’s community. In some communities, none of those options is available, and the library is the only free public space for creative activities.

To define two critical terms for this study, I turned to the work of sociologists. Erlich defines civic engagement as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.” In this study, both fine and applied arts fulfill the definition of “art.” Painting canvas and painting mendhi, playing violin and listening to punk rock, are all treated equally. In terms of instrumental value, this research is informed by Gans, who considers the traditionally more desirable “high art” and less desirable “low art” as equivalent. While the literary arts should fall within the range of “art,” the impact of reading literature is not part of this research.

Research examining the impact of literature on teens, and those studies aren’t replicated here. Furthermore, the shifting focus of libraries from purveyors of books to multimedia community centers is one of the main thrusts of this project. If libraries are offering non-book-related programs, we need to understand why and how these programs affect library patrons.

Teens

Many researchers such as have interrogated the concept of teen civic behavior. They have examined how teens exhibit, build, need, or lack civic engagement. Church attendance, the length of time living in a community, size of friend network, mother’s education, family political views, participation in social organizations, are all factors in the formation of civic engagement. The types of programs available to teens are often quite limited, particularly in rural communities, where 4-H and Scouts are often the only options for extracurricular, nonreligious, non-sporting programs. Generally, public libraries are mentioned in the context of literacy alone in studies about civic engagement or teen life.

Thousands of studies have been done on teen cognitive, social and emotional development, from Piaget onward. A review of this literature is outside the scope of this paper, but one of the most commonly used tools describing the needs of teens is the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets list. This list synthesizes teen development studies and responds with practical suggestions for people and institutions working with teens.

In Hanging out, Messing around, and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media, Ito, et al. (2008) touched on many of the Source Institute’s recommendations, when they described their vision of how libraries can affect teens through the teen’s interests in digital media and collaboration:

...what would it mean to enlist help in this endeavor from an engaged and diverse set of publics that are broader than what we traditionally think of as educational and civic institutions? In addition to publics that are dominated by adult interests, these publics should include those that are relevant and accessible to kids now, where they can find role models, recognition, friends, and collaborators who are co-participants in the journey of growing up in a digital age.

Where the case study in part two of this article differs from previous studies of teens and teen attitudes toward civic engagement, is that the teens were not only asked directly how they feel and perceive various issues, they were invited to directly participate in the research process. The theory results from teens as these “collaborators” and “co-participants.”

Art
Several large-scale studies answer Ito, et al’s question largely in relation to adult experiences of arts participation, which correlates with increased civic engagement. But teens are participating less often in many types of art, and overall participation in the arts is dropping precipitously. Many young adults now access art through electronic media instead of through live performances or visiting museums. Yet young adults are increasingly willing to volunteer, though it is uncertain whether that is due to school requirements or other social changes. Studies of people who participate in arts and who read literature reveal dramatically increased rates of voting, collaborative arts, and participation in community events; those who actually create art are civically engaged at still higher rates. National Endowment for the Arts researchers parsed the statistics: “The odds that performing arts attendees will volunteer are 3.8 times greater than for non-attendees, regardless of their educational attainment, gender, and other selected demographic traits.” Educational attainment level is a predictor for civic engagement activities such as volunteering, but art participation correlates even more strongly.

McCarthy, et al., and Guetzkow and Fuqua each described how the intrinsic and benefits of the arts, including individual cognitive and empathetic benefits, can spill over into community benefits.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 1: Adapted from McCarthy, et al.**

Participation in the arts affected the economic, cultural and social health of communities and individuals. Fuqua described how skills garnered through arts programs are an economic benefit and described the need for access to the arts as a social justice issue:

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.
This focus on equal access resonates with the librarian’s credos established in the Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement, in which equal access is cited as a critical element of public library services.

Brice Heath, Soep & Roach’s longitudinal study of non-school art programs noted that kids who participate in these programs perform community service more than four times as often as control sample. The artist children’s belief that it is important to help others in their community was nearly 20% higher than the control group, and they were 13% more likely to see themselves as being able to address inequality. The researchers found that the art programs enabled a “commitment to understanding contemporary circumstances while creating new ways of seeing.” Similarly to Brice Heath, et al., and Maxine Greene, McCue’s case study described how art itself is a civic space. She found that, “seeing ‘otherwise’ is a crucial perspective in the development of a healthy citizenry; we have the chance to imagine what it is like to be someone other than ourselves. In this way, appreciating and producing art teaches habits of mind and heart that connect us to the world.”

While art does not necessarily make people “happier,” most people discover the form of art that will be most meaningful to them at around age thirteen, a target age for public library teen programs. Participation in the arts engenders important individual and societal benefits such as empathy, communication, civic engagement, social capital, tolerance and self-esteem, academic achievement, and pleasure. In most of the studies examined here, libraries are neglected as an important resource for the arts and artistic development.

Civic Engagement

Dozens of studies have investigated how civic engagement plays out, but the focus here is on those related to teens, art and/or libraries. Miklosi’s study found that teens need to learn skills to discuss civic issues. Teens often didn’t see the impact of national policy on their lives, and thus didn’t care about it, though they were willing to work on issues they felt were relevant to their lives, and they were individualistic about their engagement. In other words, “what’s in it for me” was the name of the game. Miklosi found potent evidence that teens desire leadership endeavors with “legitimate power-sharing opportunities.” Topics surrounding respect and being listened to captivated teens’ interest.

The MacArthur Foundation’s book Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth synthesized multitudes of studies and illustrated best practices for educators and youth advocates. In it, Rheingold described a poll in which 70% of the people ages 12-24 believed that it was important to help one’s community, and 82% reported doing something to support a cause monthly. His depiction of teens refutes depictions of teens as apathetic slackers:

... it does seem that the majority of young people are convinced that supporting a social cause is something they should do. However, there is a strong disparity between interest and involvement, an ‘activation gap,’ and there is significant room for growth.

danah boyd notes that civic engagement grows from real-world experiences of teens. Rheingold quoted boyd as saying “Politics start first with the school, with your friends... then they grow to being about civics. Pushing the other way won’t work. You need to start with the dramas that make sense to you.” Coleman attacked the notion that young people’s activism should be pushed or managed, fearing that “citizenship is being molded and constrained by technological infrastructures that are designed to perpetrate a narrow, quiescent and consumerist model of civic action.” As teens seek their own forms of engagement, often in digital worlds, or in ways not recognized by adults, they may push back against external pressure to participate in civic action. This pressure to volunteer or otherwise become “good citizens” as defined by parents and teachers, can backfire. Rules and
guidelines surrounding teen civic behavior “simply exist to reinforce institutional fear and authority.” 45 Earl and Schussman affirmed that “one must ask whether existing notions of what comprises civic engagement tend to ignore, devalue, and otherwise marginalize ways in which younger citizens are connecting with one another to collectively make a difference in their own worlds.” 46 This research contributes a cautionary tone to the implications of this study: Imposing an external aim for civic engagement on teens may be less effective than offering a forum through which they can be heard.

Livingstone, Couldry & Markham surveyed over 1000 British teens. 47 They found teens to be more interested in celebrities and conforming to peer norms than in politics. Teens protested that “having your say does not seem to mean ‘being listened to,’ and so they feel justified in recognizing little responsibility to participate.” 48 While the teens were not less trusting than older people, they did have less social capital, and fewer social expectations.

Sociologist Robert Putnam’s book Bowling Alone describes how involvement in community organizations, including libraries, increases the social capital of communities: they are more likely to have high voter turnout and increased volunteerism. 49 Individuals who participate in one sort of civic activity are likely to participate in other civic activities, building their own personal social capital. Putnam argued that we face a civic crisis in terms of young people’s civic disengagement, 50 and that Americans have largely abandoned civic life in favor of individualistic activities such as television viewing. Yet many researchers, including Putnam, consider both art and libraries as builders of social capital for both individuals and communities. 51 Youniss, McLellan and Yates’ metasynthesis of the last thirty years of studies determined that the sporadic development of civic engagement cannot be due to the macro-process of society-wide apathy, as Putnam asserts. 52 They linked the development of civic identity to participation in organized groups as teens.

Empathy is one of the most commonly identified correlates of engagement, 53 and one of the building blocks of civic engagement. 54 Social interactions are mediated by feelings of empathy in which we interpret and predict the behaviors of others, and modulate our own behaviors on extrapolations of how we believe others will interpret ours. 55 The shared experiences of these interpretive and predictive interactions, specifically through art in the case of this study, can build teens’ inner empathetic “library” to include more and more possible interpretations and predictions. Artist-philosopher Maxine Greene sums up the way art acts as a facilitator of empathy and connects diverse people:

> Often times, the extent to which we grasp another’s world depends upon our existing ability to make poetic use of our imagination, to bring the ‘as if’ worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers, choreographers, and composers, and to be in some manner a participant in artists’ worlds reaching far back and ahead in time. 56

A reserve of social capital is necessary before a teen will choose to engage. In addition to empathy, another major factor identified as critical to building social capital is the sense of belonging in one’s community. 57 A third factor of social capital and engagement involves social trust, which plays an especially important role in facilitating volunteering and charity giving. 58

**Libraries**

In conversation, librarians discuss how libraries benefit communities and enable stronger communities, but others in the community may forget the role libraries play. There is a resurgence of interest in social capital and civic engagement in library contexts, as evidenced by recent studies and the ALA Center for Civic Life. 59 Johnson found a strong correlation between indicators of community involvement, volunteering and charitable giving and the frequency of library use. 60 Library users displayed a higher level of social capital than random residents of the city. 61 In her research on
Libraries and communities, librarian de la Peña McCook noticed that librarians were rarely part of the conversation on community building and delineated myriad characteristics of community-building activities and how libraries already support them. Librarian Jenny Levine conducted the sole study on teen civic engagement and library programs. She looked at videogame library programs through a series of descriptive case studies. In one of the case studies, a librarian asserted that the programs transformed teen beliefs from “My community doesn’t value me” to “My interests are valued by the community, and the library proves it.” These case studies were descriptive in nature and did not generate a theory, nor test one. Levine states that “transformational power—not books—is our brand, and those transformations happen in relation to many different media. They happen in relation to people, communal spaces, social programs, a wide variety of services, and many different content containers, including but not limited to books.”

A growing body of research describes how libraries serve teens and how teens in turn perceive libraries. A grim picture emerges. While libraries are offering more and better services to teens, often the teens are not responding with positive perceptions of libraries, especially boys. Walter acknowledged the tensions in serving teens: “Adolescent culture is not always compatible with library culture. Few public libraries have the kind of space that welcomes and nurtures teens. The needs of other patron groups are sometimes in conflict with the needs of young adults.”

Australian case studies demonstrated that urban youth have more mobility and choices than rural or suburban youth, and often they choose not to go to library. Derr & Rhodes identified a sense of belonging and place which stemmed from voluntary, uncoerced actions generated by teen-librarian interactions. The resulting social capital benefitted both communities and individuals. Edward & Williams took an ecological systems-theory approach and found that libraries can function as part of the mesosystem of linking key elements of teenage experience. For example, libraries provide a temporally and spatially available ‘place to go’ when school and home are not available.” They also pointed to the fact that teens not only have little access to public space, but they also must jockey for access to home resources such as computers or simply a space to make noise in. As in the Derr & Rhodes report, Edward & Williams called for libraries to become thirdspaces that build social capital by facilitating the sense of belonging and place needs of teens.

The literature on library teen services impacts this study by highlighting the concept of social justice as a goal in offering programs and services to those who often have nowhere else to go. This literature is in its infancy in many ways; few quantitative studies have been done regarding teens in libraries. Most of the literature involves a case study, with limitations similar to this research. Until more large-scale, externally-valid, and longitudinal studies are done, the research on teens and libraries remains inconclusive.

Though some librarians were writing about arts in public libraries in the 1970s, this body of literature remains undeveloped. Jane Manthorne wrote in 1971 about the needs of disadvantaged kids and how libraries were meeting those needs through art programs such as film, music and creative writing. Teens sought art spaces and experiences in 1971. They still seek them today: One teen noted that “They should build like a studio thing where kids can go and relax. I play the guitar, but I can’t play it in my house because they always go ‘shut up.’”

Writers have praised the ImaginOn Loft and its innovative studios for recording music, animating or filming, and writing. Teens are content creators as well as content users at this library, which partners with a children’s theater. YouMedia at the Chicago Public Library also facilitates a teen-empowerment agenda with studio spaces and art performances. Programs like YouMedia and ImaginOn are an answer to Manthorne’s 1971 call for a “living, changing idea place.”
The literature on the four main conceptual components of the research question contributes a great deal to a top-down, adult-originated theoretical framework describing how teens are affected by art, how art affects civic engagement, how civically engaged teens are, and how public libraries affect civic engagement. Less plentiful are studies on ways in which public libraries affect teens and support art. The library context for art and civic engagement is rarely examined, nor are teen attitudes often interrogated. In this study, the teens generate their own theory of how the four components of this research do, or do not, overlap in their lived experiences.

**Conclusion**

Part 2 of this article will discuss a case study that is situated within the larger body of research described in this literature review. However, as Moeller, Pattee, and Leeper note:

> Adults often talk about the concepts and feelings young adults experience ... without actually engaging young adults to understand their first-person accounts—a practice that, at best, provides only half of the picture and, at worst, results in the dissemination of false pronouncements about young people’s habits, tastes, and abilities.\(^76\)

An adult-generated theoretical construct provided by this literature review and other, even more abstract philosophical texts,\(^77\) could be considered epistemologically valid and tested quantitatively. Yet Schaefer-McDaniel critically evaluated the various theories of teen social capital and found that few researchers have bothered to consider the teen’s perspective, choosing to survey and interview teachers or parents about their perception of teen behaviors.\(^78\) However, without the input of young adults themselves, the use of adult-rendered literature neglects the teen context in which any studies of teens needs to be grounded. Part Two of this research article will use teen language, teen researchers, and an embedded researcher/teen librarian to build a theory grounded within teen realities.

Even without the teen perspective on art programs, libraries and civic engagement, this literature review is valuable. First of all, it coheres several lines of inquiry from many disciplines to form a framework for considering how public library art programs can affect teen civic engagement. Irrespective of the truth value of the grounded theory that will follow in Part Two, this synthesis of the literature offers youth services librarians a useful foundation to begin the conversation on why arts programs in public libraries should be funded and valued, not only for the sake of the individual participants, but also for the community as a whole. A collocation of many studies on the civic outcomes of art programs, for example, will give the practicing YA librarian many tools with which to convince funders to support teen programs that can seem frivolous to people with a 19\(^{th}\)-century view of libraries as “book places”.

Secondly, one of the ways in which the validity of any given study can be assessed is to ascertain whether it substantiates previous research. The data gathered in the interviews of the case study that will be described in Part Two overlaps with nearly every study mentioned in this literature review. One of the few exceptions is the idea that teens do not value public libraries or consider them relevant to their own lives. In the case study it became apparent that the teens feel strongly that the library is important, relevant and a place they respect. The reason for this difference from the previous research\(^79\) appears to be the art program context in which the teens experience the library.

Finally, this literature review can have implications for a young adult librarian seeking research inspiration. While instituting a full-scale research project may be time- and resource-intensive for a practicing librarian, an analysis and/or synthesis of existing literature can move the corpus of literature on teen services forward, even when one takes as an interdisciplinary view as in this review. New ways to measure the outcomes and benefits of young adult library services can result from such synthesis, offering more tools for praxis\(^80\) in the day-to-day offerings of teen services.

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Graffiti, Poetry, Dance: How Public Library Art Programs Affect Teens

Part 2: The Research Study and Its Practical Implications

Shannon Crawford Barniskis

Introduction

Part one of this article synthesized the literature on civic engagement, art, libraries and teen services to demonstrate how public libraries can transform the lives of their patrons and the communities they serve. This case study responds to the top-down view of this topic generated by adult researchers, by creating a bottom-up teen-validated grounded theory. In my thirteen years as a teen librarian, it seemed that something special was occurring in the art programs I hosted or observed in public libraries. Teens were not simply creating steampunk sculptures, they were also appeared to be connecting with one another in interesting ways and talking about serious social issues while playing with glue. Yet I remained aware of my own biases: Did I simply want to believe my work had an impact on the teens I served? I decided to ask the teens.

The Problem

The problem facing teen librarians in particular, and public librarians in general, is that they may host art programs, but no one has yet developed a theoretical foundation to explain how and why, or if, these programs are widely beneficial. One could construct a theoretical foundation from the existing corpus of literature on art, teens and civic engagement, such as one derived from the metasynthesis in Part 1 of this article. However, such an adult-centered theory may not reflect the worldview of teens in libraries. In the research study described in this paper, the teens who participate in library art programs appear front and center, recounting their own experiences and ideas.

This qualitative study asked the research question, “How does art programming in public libraries affect civic engagement in teens?” Teens who participated in library art programs reflected on questions such as these:

- What does civic engagement look like to teens?
- How engaged do teens feel within their communities?
- What are the barriers to civic engagement?
- How can art affect this sense of engagement?
- How do libraries support civic engagement? How can they support it better?
- How do libraries support teens? How can they support them better?

Utilizing their responses, a grounded theory was built that situates the teen within his/her community, within the library, and in relationship to art and civic engagement. Librarians can learn how the library can affect both the teens, and the communities they serve, through programs already being held in most libraries.

Assumptions and Limitations

Throughout this project I referred to Ehrlich’s definition of civic engagement, “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge,
skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”

The concept of the public sphere, where people come together to share experiences, including art experiences, is critical to the idea of civic engagement and community-building. Giroux defines that the public sphere is as the “mediating space between the state and private existence...rooted in collective self-reflection and discourse under conditions free from domination.” Libraries are the least-mediated public sphere in most of our communities, when compared to our other public, religious, economic, or social institutions.

 Teens have few places to gather that are not seeking to make money from them, or to further a particular educational or religious agenda through them. The motivation of the librarian is simply to serve (not educate, proselytize, or sell), and there are also sincere attempts to minimize informational filters by ensuring that the user can access the widest-possible range of materials, ideas and services, without censorship. In addition, teens can find few outlets in which to engage in creative activities that are not schools, churches or commercial enterprises. In many communities, there is no access to art that is unfiltered by pedagogical, commercial or religious goals. Free access to art may occur only within public library situations. This is certainly the case in the rural community in which the research site is located. There are no clubs, museums, or services that offer free art programming outside the library.

 One main assumption resonates through this project: Civic engagement is necessary and desirable for our democratic system to thrive. This article treats this idea as a given, and it will not be interrogated. As a researcher, I value libraries, art and civic engagement highly (and participants may not value them at all) so there was a danger that carefully crafted a priori conceptualizations would not overlap the study participants’ ideas and values. By grounding the theory in the narratives of the participants, this study reflects the lived experience of the participants, not the researcher’s values. At the same time, grounded theory rhetoric allows the language of the participants to shine through the theoretical framework.

 The benefit of being a researcher situated within the library context is that some of the participants already have a relationship with me; new relationships were built through the act of doing art as an equal participant in the programs. The participants were comfortable speaking to an embedded researcher. The drawback is that some teens may be reluctant to say negative things about the library or librarian. Ultimately, I steered the research away from the participant’s judgments about the librarian role, which limits the information garnered on the importance (or lack thereof) of the librarian’s role. Objectivity was not possible: the researcher is present in the data, in the codes and categories, in interactions with participants in the focus group and interviews. I reflexively examined all identified assumptions, treating them as data, whether the assumptions were mine or those of the teen participants.

 The study examines subjective data and assumptions about the power of libraries, art, civic engagement, and teens’ described experiences. The subjectivity of the data is what makes this theory idiographic, personal, and contextual, but that does not mean it is invalid in a scientific sense, merely that its external validity may be limited, depending on the epistemological stance one takes in relation to positivist and post-positive theory generation. The qualitative information gathered both from my assumptions and biases and those of the interviewed teens merge to build a holistic picture of what art programs mean to the participants in this study, including the researcher. This does not render the research less rigorous, but merely renders it in human scale.

 There are other limitations. For example, the sample size in this study is small enough to preclude any meaningful quantitative data. The exploratory surveys offer limited quantitative data,
which served to expand upon the qualitatively gathered data, and to seed questions for the interviewees, so they could muse upon the applicability of the survey data to their own experiences. Inferential statistics tests need larger samples to assess probability. The experiences of these rural teens may be only loosely generalizable when compared to those in urban libraries or those with more access to the arts.

**Study Design**

A qualitative case study design was used for this study. Teens were asked to reflect on their experiences during and after a series of arts programs hosted by the “H Public Library.” The teens in the focus group all attended the same six programs, or at least five of them. The teens that were later interviewed individually as a theoretical sample, attended at least two of these six programs, and had attended similar programs at this library previously.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Graffiti</strong></td>
<td>A graffiti artist first gave a brief presentation on the history, importance, and styles of graffiti. He then demonstrated basic techniques, and gave the teens many test sheets to practice and play with. He helped the teens create a 4x8’ graffiti sign reading “teenspace” for the teen area of the library. 22 teens attended the 2 hour workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Photography</strong></td>
<td>A local photographer gave a presentation on designing a shot and how to use digital cameras to get the desired effect. The sixteen attending teens were paired up and told to go practice these techniques by finding the “alphabet” in the town. The teams returned to the library and shared the photos. A winning team won Amazon gift cards supplied by the teaching artist. 2 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modern Dance</strong></td>
<td>A modern company and their advanced students performed several brief pieces for the audience of 15 teens, 12 adults and 4 children. Most of the pieces were student-created: Choreographed, costumed and musically directed by the dance students, who were teens. The company director introduced each piece and spoke of the creative process, along with the dancers. A couple of professionally-choreographed pieces were also shown. A question and answer period followed the dances. 1.5 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artist Trading Cards</strong></td>
<td>A teaching artist explained what Artist Trading Cards were, talked about how artists exchanged them internationally and/or locally. She quickly showed a few basic techniques of stamping and collage, but mostly let the teens (attendance: 16) play with the wide array of materials. Each teen created several ATCs and exchanged some of them. 1.5 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poetry Reading</strong></td>
<td>Six poets of various styles/ages/genders/ethnicities read poetry to the audience of 18 teens and 9 adults. The poem varied in length, subject matter, level of comedy, etc. Teen volunteers acted out in gesture and posture Gwendolyn Brooks’ “we real cool.” A lengthy question and answer period followed. 2 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manga Drawing</strong></td>
<td>An artist and illustrator taught the techniques of manga-style drawing with a powerpoint presentation of various styles and aspects, and a demonstration. The teens practiced their own drawings and shared them. The teaching artist was able to give individual feedback during the 1.5 hour class. 16 teens and five adults attended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: The art programs**

**The Research Site**

The “H Public Library” is nestled within a small community with a service population of about 5000, in south-central Wisconsin. At the time of my research I had been the Youth Services Librarian at the H Library since 1999. While the choice of this library as the study site represents a convenience sample, it is also fairly representative of small-town Midwest life. The county in which this library resides is similar to other rural Upper Midwest counties in the percentage of people under age 18, the median household income, retail sales per capita, and other randomly chosen demographic data. The research site is located in a county that could stand in for any number of counties throughout the Midwest, and the town could be any town in those counties.

Teen programs and services have been a top priority of the “H Library” since late 1999. While little historical data could be located to determine whether teen programs were part of the library mission in earlier years, teens have participated on a limited basis in the Summer Library Programs since at least 1993, and probably for as long as there has been a Summer Library Program. Unfortunately, few records were kept to establish the historical context of teen programming at this library. Also, few records were kept that separate programs for children under age 12 from those for teens. Until 2009, the Department of Public Instruction Annual Report didn’t separate programs for teens from those for younger children, but lumped them all together under “juvenile”. However, in 2009 the “H Library” hosted 64 programs for teens, and 374 teens participated in them. In 2010, there were 62 programs for teens at this library, with 472 teens participating. About a dozen of the 2010 programs were small teen discussion groups, another 30 were gaming events, and the rest were art programs, with an average of ten teens attending each art program.

The research site is located in a library system consisting of twenty-six libraries. Of these libraries, only two had greater teen attendance at library programs in 2009, and those libraries (“B” & “W”) were 594% and 1048% larger than the research site library. The “W” larger library is the largest library in the system, and has the system’s only dedicated Teen Librarian. Of these twenty-six libraries, only fourteen held any teen programs at all in 2009, and two of those libraries held only one program each. The “H Library” holds more teen programs than other libraries in Wisconsin of a similar service population size. In fact, when looking at twenty-four libraries that are closest in teen program attendance to “H Library” throughout the state, the average service population of those libraries is 22,039, or 386% larger than the “H Library.” All of this data is to show that the “H Library” takes teen services and programs seriously, and tends to provide far more teen programming than other similarly-sized libraries in Wisconsin, and more than many significantly larger libraries as well. The impetus for the increased teen services was due to several factors: The teen librarian saw a need for services aimed at teens in the small community; the community responded to the increased services with increased attendance and positive feedback; the mission of the library supported programming as a main function of the library; and the local businesses and granting agencies monetarily supported the successful teen programs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>*Gender</th>
<th>*Family Income</th>
<th>*Church Attendance</th>
<th>*Parent's Educational Level</th>
<th>*Time Lived in Community</th>
<th>Language spoken at home</th>
<th>Focus Group or Individual Interview?</th>
<th>Coder and/or validator?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$40-50,000</td>
<td>Weekly+</td>
<td>4-year degree</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>Hindi, Arabic, English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Coder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>$30-40,000</td>
<td>Yearly+</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$75-100,000</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Graduate/doct oral degree</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Coder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Over $150,000</td>
<td>Monthly+</td>
<td>4-year degree</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$100-150,000</td>
<td>Weekly+</td>
<td>4-year degree</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callie</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$50-60,000</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>High school/GED</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>$30-40,000</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$20-30,000</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$100-150,000</td>
<td>Weekly+</td>
<td>Graduate/doct oral degree</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Coder &amp; validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>$75-100,000</td>
<td>Monthly+</td>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>3-6 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Coder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$30-40,000</td>
<td>Weekly+</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td>Coder &amp; validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>$10-20,000</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Coder &amp; validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>$20-30,000</td>
<td>Monthly+</td>
<td>4-year degree</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td>Validator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>$40-50,000</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>High school/GED</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Found to correlate with increased civic engagement*11

Table 2. A description of the participants.
Data Collection

Fourteen teens aged 12 to 18 participated in this study. They do not reflect a statistically representative sample. Instead, they represent the widest possible range of social, economic and age factors, especially those identified as correlates to civic engagement. In this way, it was possible to gather a wide range of narratives from varied experiences of the different teens. The study participants generated data in several ways.

Surveys

Participants completed an exploratory survey given before the art programs began and another survey after the programs ended. The survey questions included demographic data such as annual family income, gender, age, and so on. In addition, the survey asked the participants how strongly they agree with statements that loosely situated the participant in their feelings about social, civic and consumer activities. Some of the questions were relevant to this research, such as “I am willing to take action in my community to make things better” Others were “throw-away” questions that were intended to keep the participants from thinking too much about civic engagement issues, such as “Texting or otherwise staying in constant contact with my friends is important to me.” The survey did not explore these questions in depth; there was not a large enough sample for inferential statistics or any meaningful analysis of this data. However, the rate at which teens agreed or disagreed with civic engagement statements was used as fodder for the focus group interview. The data from the pre- and post-test surveys were integrated into the resulting theory only when they were spoken about during the interviews. Since this data couldn’t be meaningfully parsed statistically, it only shades the interpretation of the data gathered by the interviews when the teens speak directly to their interpretations of the results. For example, the level of agreement with the statement “I feel like a valued member of my community” was examined during the interviews. Teens talked about how and why the level of agreement shifted from a high level of disagreement before the series of art programs to a fairly high level of agreement after the programs.

Focus Group and Individual Interviews

Ten of the teens were in the focus group. They all attended at least five of the six art programs together. They were interviewed in a group, after the series of six programs were over, at the library. Later, six of them helped to code and validate the theory.

I interviewed four more teens to fill in theoretically unsaturated areas of the grounded theory. They had all attended at least two of the six art programs, and had attended similar programs in the past. They had all applied to be in the research study, but had not been chosen to be in the focus group. The individual interviews occurred over the course of two months, after the focus group interview. These interviews occurred at the library and at a nearby coffee shop. In grounded theory methods, theoretical sampling is a vital step to developing a fully fleshed-out theory. After an initial coding and sorting of the codes using constant comparative methods, it becomes apparent that some categories are “thin” or need more data to explore them completely. The researcher must then gather more data from those people most likely to have had the experiences under study. In this study, the theoretical sampling interviews took place as new gaps became apparent in various categories. I used the same list of questions as I did for the focus group (see Appendix 2) but received more in-depth data due to the one-on-one nature of these interviews. Two of the theoretical sample teens helped to code and validate the theory when it was complete.
**Coding and Memoing**

During the research process the thoughts and insights of the researchers, including the teen coders and validators, were recorded as “memos” and treated as data. This process is inherent to grounded theory methods, and allows the researcher to reflexively examine their own assumptions in a systematic way.\(^{12}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Method of collecting data</th>
<th>Method of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the barriers to civic engagement?</td>
<td>Interview questions such as [If teens mention not feeling valued or inclined to do things they identify as civic or community engagement] “What stops you? What could be changed to help you feel more valued/engaged in more engagement activities?”</td>
<td>Open and focused coding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can art affect this sense of engagement?</td>
<td>Interview questions such as “Do you think art can change how you feel about your community? What about participating in art programs with others that you may not normally hang out with?”</td>
<td>Open and focused coding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do libraries support civic engagement? How can they support it better?</td>
<td>Interview questions such as “Do libraries affect civic/community engagement? How could libraries do a better job with this?”</td>
<td>Open and focused coding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do libraries support teens? How can they support them better?</td>
<td>Interview questions such as “Do libraries support teens? How could libraries do a better job with this?”</td>
<td>Open and focused coding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions like these were explored during the interview(s), but are not fully resolved in the resulting grounded theory. These questions are intended to help us look at the research question “How does art programming in public libraries affect civic engagement in teens?” from multiple perspectives.

Table 3. Research questions, data-gathering and data-analysis methods

**Data Analysis**

After all the data was collected, participants were invited to step inside the research process to help code and reflect on the data, making it their own, and crafting a personal reality in which the research results are meaningful in their own lives. Grounded theory methods were used to analyze qualitative data and answer the question: “How do art programs in public libraries affect civic engagement in teens?” The teen’s stories and insights on how arts programs in a public library have affected their lives constitute the data and participated in a focus group interview.

I invited all of the teens to participate in the study further, as part of the research team. Six teen volunteered to assist in the coding process, changing, adding or expanding on codes. They were shown a video on the constant comparative process, then I showed them the already developed codes and spoke briefly about the coding process. This initial training was minimal, because the teens learned as they did the job, through talking the process through with me. The teens were asked to change, add or take away codes, but to reason aloud why they were doing so. Two teams of teens...
worked on this one team of three and the second team of four. One of the teens was on both teams. The first team worked on the coding just after I had done the initial open coding, which simply described the action taking place on a line-by-line basis in the transcripts. For example, the transcript stated “I see poetry more as art now, I mean before that poetry thing at the library I just thought... saw poetry as kind of a nuisance to have to do in school” I coded this statement as “considering art as a nuisance,” and “seeing things as art that weren’t seen that way before.” The initial coders added a more abstract code: “liking art more.” This team coded for an hour and fifteen minutes, working solely with the focus group interview transcript.

The second team of coders worked on transcripts of the focus group interview and three of the individual interviews for two and a half hours. We worked at a more abstract stage of the coding, and sorted the codes into categories. These teens compared different codes, original statements and categories such as “art changes my mind about engagement?” and “political overload.” I recorded the coding sessions with the teens, and coded the transcripts of those recordings in turn. The teen coders clarified what they originally meant in the interviews during the coding process. Those clarifications helped me understand the nuances of the teen experience.

The teens and I ultimately developed sixty categories that collocated the more than 2000 lines of open coding. One example of the categories used to build the theory is “Art changes my self-image.” The code manual description of this category is, “Any post-art changes in a teen's self-image are collected within this code family, from feeling "better" about doing art to feeling appreciated after doing art. Both negative and positive ideas are gathered within this one family, as are both internal and externally-motivated changes to a teen’s self-image.” The codes that make up this category include “Feeling welcome anywhere their art is displayed,” and “feeling appreciated when people see teen’s art.”

**Results**

This research revolved around the perceptions and experience of 14 teens, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen (see Table 2 for a description of the participants). Notably, only two of these fourteen understood what the notion of civic engagement meant. The teens developed a concept of civic engagement based on the interview interactions. When they indicated ignorance of the concept, I offered the teens a wide definition based on Ehrlich’s, emphasizing that it encompassed anything aimed at making a community better. The themes generated from the data here are specific to these participants, but, through a grounded theory approach, contribute to and inform theory of the library's role in promoting civic engagement.

The coded, categorized, and abstracted teen narratives form a complex tangle of related themes that describe how library art programs support teen engagement. Seven main themes resonate throughout the interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of a Teen Statement</th>
<th>Examples of Categories</th>
<th>Examples of Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art moves us</td>
<td>how art changes the way teens feel about other people, themselves, their communities, and political ideas</td>
<td>“it’s definitely not something that I would ever think about normally... I had a picture of a prostitute at night smoking a cigarette and it’s all dark, and you see this outline of her in this coat and she has a cigarette and it’s lit and it just ... you won’t think of it but once I saw that picture I was just like, ‘Oh she’s got a life too.’” (Rachel)</td>
<td>Art changes my mind about my community; Art changes my self-image</td>
<td>art changing response to things; art enlightening teen; “Art has never changed my mind”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We want to connect, we want to open up

about building social connections and the often-accompanying feelings of enlightenment, empathy or support.

“I’ve taught chain mail to a woman that was I believe was like 67 years old and she picked it up like that … I have done some knitting but it’s not my thing. But I respect and appreciate it. It’s actually a good—you can really brainstorm with people from different generations that have different ideas on the same things.” (Eric)

Out of my comfort zone; Tolerance/Empathy

changing mind about kids after seeing their art; thinking library art programs discourage teens from ignoring others; identifying engagement as social

It’s an adult’s world

teen perception that the world is based on adult realities, adults have all power, force adult forms of engagement

“They’ll never even listen to your idea of what happened. It is like you’re a ghost-they don’t even hear you.” (Ashley)

“They just have their own reality and it doesn’t have anything to do with your reality.” (Emily)

Adult ideas of engagement; Voiceless

Adults having guaranteed voice; not being engaged because no one listens; adults thinking helping others is community engagement

Creating a community that supports us

creating a community where teens feel supported, valued, and listened to and defining what that means

Community is “a network of people working together to decide and accomplish something” (Kayla)

Identifying the positive in the community; We want our own world

Escaping to the city to find art and things to do; feeling local venues wouldn’t be interested in teen art; identifying teen programs as support for teens

We want to help, but don’t push us

Discussion of the resistance to engagement that sprang from a sense that teens were pushed or manipulated by adults, and how (and how much) teens prefer to engage

“I don’t personally like to take leadership when it comes to it, but if someone would … ask me something like, “Hey let’s do this,” I’d totally be for it.” (Maria)

Feeling forced; Wanting more involvement

Feeling pressured to contribute; feeling listened to while volunteering; needing a ride to engagement opportunities

Libraries can make a difference for us

Discussion of how or if libraries can make a difference in teen lives or in teen civic engagement and teen perceptions of libraries

I definitely do feel closer to the libraries that I go to, after going through a program. So it is like the more programs that you go to the more it feels kind of like home in a way. Not a real home but like a really comforting awesome place.

Do we belong in libraries?; Why gave art programs

Thinking adults wish teens weren’t in library; performers [artists] relating to teens; ideal library offering art space

Does our engagement shift?

Examination of who engages, whether there was a change in participant engagement, why engagement shifted

“If you only feel like you are valued and you aren’t actually valued then you’re not going to get any sort of civic stuff done.” (Rachel)

Leveling up; Defining engagement

Having something to offer to community makes teens feel more valuable; engaging occurs when person is comfortable in their role; defining civic engagement as participation

Table 4: Theme descriptions and examples

These seven themes wind through the way teens experience art programs in public libraries, and how this experience affects civic engagement. The themes are so entwined that it is difficult to tell where one leaves off and another begins. Each theme (to a greater or less extent) addresses a slightly different aspect of how the experience of teens in library art programs plays out. In this way, the theory forms a holistic web describing teen experiences of library art programs and the programs’ outcomes.
The theme at the center of the web is “Libraries can make a difference for us.” The library was the physical and social context in which any changes took place, in which the art programs were experienced, and in which the research was conducted, and thus the hub of all the other themes. However, the most thoroughly-explored theme was “It’s an adult’s world.” Teens spoke of the many ways in which they were powerless to engage in an adult-driven civic context. The second most important theme, to the teen participants, was “We want to connect, we want to open up.” Many statements of “being enlightened” and “moving out of my comfort zone” resonate through the interviews, not just on the topic of art or engagement, but also in connection to adult attitudes and feelings about the library. The only clear theme that emerges as a motivation for the change in civic engagement that the participants describe is “Art moves us.” Through the exploration of how the experience of the art program, as well as the skills gained through the art programs, the teen participants connected more deeply with each other, with their communities, and became more willing to try new things, including engaging in a civic world into which they had previously only dipped their toes.

Ideally the themes could be arranged linearly: The teens arrive at the library from a world in which they have little power, and feel unsupported; they experience art programs that move them, inspire them to connect and open to possibility; and the teens leave the programs and library feeling as if they want to engage and that their engagement shifted. In reality, the data reveals a spiraling interconnectedness and non-linearity in each theme. For example, the “It’s an adult’s world” is the background of the teen experience when they arrived at the library, but it was also a theme challenged by the programs, celebrated in some senses within the programs (when teens looked up to the adult artists) and remains the context in which teens will have to engage when the programs are in the past. The impetus for, processes and results of change cannot be so easily unraveled.
Discussion

This discussion addresses the question “How can public library art programs affect civic engagement in teens?” by describing attitudes, behaviors and beliefs that changed or were identified as changeable by the teenaged participants. Overall, participants believed that these programs can positively affect empathy, a sense of belonging, social networks and connections, creativity, a sense of being listened to and valued, and other cognitive and emotional shifts. Teens, who often felt ignored or unwelcome in their communities, valued the teen-centric context of the art programs. These changes, while necessary to civic engagement actions, are not actual civic engagement behaviors.

The Ehrlich definition of civic engagement has two parts: One part speaks to the social capital required to engage (skills, values, motivation), and the other part describes active engaging behavior (working, promoting). This study supports the theory that art programs in public libraries builds social capital and the building blocks of engagement.

However, the direct effect of these programs on civic engagement behavior is less well-supported. While 71% of the participants indicated that art programs could affect teens in general to be more civically engaged, 20% of that majority said their own engagement was not affected. The remaining participants avoided asserting that library art programs could NOT affect teen engagement, but they did not answer the question. They may have agreed or disagreed with this hypothesis. Some of the participants who agreed that these programs could affect engagement, wavered when confronted with the question of their own behavior shifts.

The uneven support for the hypothesis that library art programs increase teen civic engagement behaviors appears to be partially a result of the fact that many of the participants seemed willing to conjecture about other teens' experiences, but unable to summon the assurance that these conjectures were entirely valid. These teens were too aware of the individuality of experience to offer sweeping statements of non-relativistic truth. They hedged. Meanwhile, the self-awareness displayed throughout most of the interviews seemed to unravel when teens were specifically confronted with the idea that their own personal level of engagement could or perhaps should increase. “I’m good where I am,” said Laura; “I’m already doing it,” says Rachel. Their statements about their own level of engagement may be, objectively speaking, wrong. The teens may be presenting themselves as more engaged than they actually are, or they may be unaware that they are not really performing many civic engagement actions. Or the teens may be actually engaged at a high level. This research didn’t examine this issue, but it’s easier to talk about being engaged than it is to actually be engaged, and this is true for all ages. Rheingold’s “activation gap,” between interest and involvement in civic engagement activities may be in play here. Future research could quantify how large this activation gap is in those who participate in library art programs.

Regardless of the few specific statements that individual teens were not convinced that library art programs affect their civic engagement, questions were asked about the shift in engagement in several ways. The answers to the less point-blank questions make it apparent that these fourteen teens were affected.

Examining Relationships

The data collected in this study spoke to relationship building. Teens described how they perceived relationships with each other, and various adults. The relationship between teens and librarians was not deeply interrogated, largely because I straddled the role of librarian and researcher. Thus, the following musings on the teen-librarian relationship somewhat derive from my memos.
created during the research process, when I was reflexively examining my role in the research and arts processes. These thoughts were validated by the five teen readers of the resulting text.

The teens described the best possible teen-librarian relationship, which involves an adult who obviously likes and cares for a teen, while having no extrinsically mandated stake in how the teen turns out. Unlike teachers or parents, librarians are in a position of appearing entirely on the side of teens. The relationship is not based on coercion; none of these teens felt forced to come to the library or to interact with the librarian, or to perform tasks, in the way they did with teachers and parents. The teens considered the librarian an advocate. For adolescents who feel they have few allies and little power, such an advocate may have an effect on their social capital and engagement. There were hints of this advocacy idea in the data collected in this study, but it was not sought or developed further. In this study, the librarian occupied multiple roles: while doing or experiencing art I was just one of the group; I was the one who thought of the programs, and brought exciting programs into the community; I asked questions about the teens lives, and genuinely wanted to hear what they had to say; I invited the participants into the usually adult role of researcher, and ensured that my analysis reflected what the teens really meant; meanwhile, I was still the person who embodied the authoritative role of the library as institution, with all the preconceived notions teens, and I, have about librarians and libraries; I am the parent of one of the teens at the programs (not in the study, however); I provided the pizza and snacks; I have the keys to the library. These multilayered roles are complex. An examination of the teen-librarian relationship is critical to fully explicating the ways in which libraries and their programs support teens. The roles of the researcher and librarian were too intertwined to be able to attempt that explication in this study.

Aside from the relationship built between the teens and the librarian, relationships amongst the teens also originated and developed during the art programs. One of the main reasons to hold a focus group interview, in which ten of the participants answered questions while eating pizza and candy, was that they enjoyed being with one another. They had just spent about fourteen hours creating art, chatting, seeing the work the others created, and laughing together. They had built a community centered on art in the library. The participants were unlikely to feel voiceless or disengaged when they were together.

In a couple of the programs, other community members stopped by or interacted with the teens. During the graffiti program, which was held outside, a city council member on her way to a council meeting was enthusiastic about the project. She asked teens to come and graffito the side of her store. A banker came over and sprayed a symbol on the graffiti sign. Eric stopped him just before he pushed the spray button when he held it backwards, before the banker could inadvertently spray paint his suit. More interactions between teens and adult community members that they may not have normally interacted with occurred during the poetry and dance programs. These interactions were entirely positive, and signaled to the participants that some adults were paying attention and enjoyed some of the same things they did.

The participants mentioned the relationships they built with the artists who led the programs. The manga and graffiti teachers were in their early twenties, and the dancers were teens and young adults. Participants mentioned how much they appreciated that. The expertise of the young teachers was evidence of the “leveling up” that the teens could accomplish through art. All of the artists spoke a teen-friendly language, which participants particularly appreciated. Even if those teens never meet those artists again, they have associated a “cool,” sympathetic adult, a feeling of being heard, and a supportive group of peers, with the library. They learned that a community-based institution is available for them, to be co-created with them.
Recommendations

Librarians seeking to use this study to expand, guide, or initiate teen services have several pathways to take. The seven themes can help focus services. Many of the following recommendations (see Table 4), are based both on teen recommendations and my own brainstorming. During the interviews, teens often offered up a vision of how libraries could better support them and their engagement. Many of these recommendations are already in place in libraries, and are only examples of some of the ways librarians can meet the needs expressed by the participants in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Suggested Library Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art moves us</strong></td>
<td>offer a multitude of art programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make sure that teen might not be used to is included in programs, but be sure to reflect teen interests with art programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>include time to reflect in art programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>display teen art, or ask teens to curate art already in the library or community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer a studio space and supplies for teens to create art</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>host teen art shows for the community to enjoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hire local teen bands</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use teen-created music for library publicity, such as commercials</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make the teen library website a digital venue for teen art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>art for its own sake is enough to build social capital, there need be no “message” or point beyond creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>It’s an adult’s world</strong></td>
<td>plan programs to encourage intergenerational communication (such as Wii bowling with grandparents or mother-daughter spa days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer adults a way to respond to teen programs, art or activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invite teens to community discussions and plan for their participation if they are interested</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tell teens when they do things “right” in the library</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>create a Teen Advisory Board or other group to do collection development, choose programs, and raise funds for the teen activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make sure library program teachers or program presenters understand the need to listen and respect teen attitudes and behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want to connect, we want to open up</strong></td>
<td>ensure that programs and services allow time for teens to connect and socially engage with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encourage teens to bring friends to programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>add a social component to all programs, such as a competition or challenge, facilitate new friendships during programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use social networking tools to encourage kids to connect before and after the programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>include ice-breaking activities in the program structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encourage teens with similar interest to meet informally at the library to share their interest further</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be willing to create on-the-fly clubs and group activities based on teen interests, and be willing to dissolve the groups when the interest passes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hire teachers or program presenters that are only slightly older than the teens, or who are teens themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Suggested Library Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seek out local talent for program ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informally touch on themes of empathy, tolerance and enlightenment during programs—beware of didacticism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating a community that supports us</strong></td>
<td>expand teen horizons by offering programs that they don’t expect in their local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invite teens to participate in the Friends group, or even better, on the library Board of Trustees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>host teen discussions based on controversial topics that they face in school or at home</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make the library a venue for both art and ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>publicize programs and events that other age groups are participating in so teens can see civic engagement in action</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post teen photojournalism on social networking sites to make the community aware of issues that resonate for teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer teen-only services, programs and spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want to help, but don’t push us</strong></td>
<td>build partnerships with other community institutions, such as hospitals or senior centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>don’t expect teens to have a great deal of free time to dedicate to any library project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>take on the unwanted organizational tasks of civic projects, allowing teens to steer the project while not being overwhelmed by it</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer ideas for civic engagement, but only follow up on plans that teens pursue</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make sure engagement activities are creative, or speak to real teen concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facilitate teen plans for political engagement, such as letter-writing campaigns for teen library budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use library bulletin boards and/or websites to announce local opportunities to engage, such as protests, volunteer opportunities, or needed donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>didactic or adult-motivated messages about engagement may alienate or pigeonhole teens. Art program “messages” should stem from teen requests of engagement, not adult belief on what teens will benefit from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Libraries can make a difference for us</strong></td>
<td>ensure that teens feel welcome in the library with teen spaces, materials and programs, as well as librarian attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advocate for teen issues in the library and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ensure that the library participates in local art or community festivals to build the sense of the library as an artistic community institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>go where teens are with library services instead of waiting for them to come to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be willing to push the boundaries of traditional library service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer gaming and social activities as much or more than literacy-based activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teen librarian should participate in arts programs with teens as equally as possible to build the sense of a shared experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does our engagement shift?</strong></td>
<td>take on any teen that offers to volunteer, even if it creates work for you, and make sure their work is recognized in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offer ideas on how teens can engage to improve their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ask teens to contribute to campaigns such as “Geek the Library”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ask teens to contribute to or entirely take over the teen library website or Facebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Suggested Library Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>account</td>
<td>ask teens to teach things they're interested in, or at least mentor other teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promote a secular version of radical hospitality for teens to mentor other teens to programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>connect library programs with real engagement opportunities (such as a knitted graffiti</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>project after a knitting class)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>host read-a-thons that raise money for causes the teens choose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>let teens do the book talking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ask teens to report on teen events both at the library and in the community, on the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>library website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Suggested library responses to this research

There is a danger in planning art programs with a goal of anything beyond the private intrinsic value of art—art for art’s sake. Earl & Schussman’s concerns over how “existing notions of what comprises civic engagement tend to ignore, devalue, and otherwise marginalize ways in which younger citizens are connecting with one another to collectively make a difference in their own worlds” are relevant here. Librarians who attempt to force civic engagement out of art programs may be disenfranchising teens and their need for self-empowerment and connection on their own terms. Facilitating engagement is different from enforcing it; if teens are not participating in the art programs, it may be because they feel that they will be herded into an adult vision of civic engagement.

Teen librarians already know that the art programs we provide improve the lives of their teens. Librarians may not know why or how exactly the benefits unfold, but they are obvious to anyone who games, does art, or has a lively discussion with a passel of impassioned teenagers. Nevertheless, even a small case study that evaluates the how and why of the benefits of library programs can be reassuring and motivating for librarians. It can be empowering for librarians to recognize that research exists describing how library programs for teens can meet the needs of the community and fulfill the mission of the public library, even when the programs are not obviously literacy-based. Parents, staff members, trustees, funders, other patrons, and even the teens themselves may question what making sock dolls, spine label poetry contests, and photo scavenger hunts have to do with the library. Having a theory of how public library art programs affect teen civic engagement, or at least, build social capital and provide the building blocks of civic action, is a valuable tool for librarians who have to answer these questions. At the same time, skepticism is necessary. Future research will need to be careful not to over-emphasize the role of the library program or service in affecting the actions of the patrons or community. Attitudes may be more easily affected than behaviors. In addition, not all teens will be reached by library programs. Ashley believed that art programs can’t affect “people [who] are so set that they don’t like reading and they don’t like hanging out at libraries. There’s no way you can change them.” Four of the other participants indicated that not every teen can or will be moved by library programs. Future studies should interrogate non-participation and lack of interest in libraries.

Future research

More research is needed to either continue the qualitative study of art programs in public libraries in other types of communities, or to quantitatively evaluate the theory generated here. For example, in this research two of the teens had very little to say in the focus group interview. They mostly restrained themselves to comments such as “I agree,” and offered few opinions, even when asked to do so. This reluctance to speak up could have meant that they disagreed with what was being said, or they were not comfortable speaking on the topics under discussion, or they had nothing to add. They both indicated that someone had already spoken for them when they were asked to expand on various ideas. In future research of this nature, the investigator may prefer to focus on individual interviews. While the focus group interview encouraged a party-like atmosphere aimed at making the participants feel comfortable, some teens dominated the discussion, and others were less willing to speak. Not every participant fully participated in the interviews. A few teens stated ideas then retracted them partially, or agreed with ideas in one context, but disagreed in others, so there were occasionally uneven answers to the research questions. In addition, the case study nature of this research calls for further study of the adolescent experience of public library art programs. Future researchers could answer the call in several ways:

- Further case studies are needed to build an analytically generalized theory.
- Quantitative studies involving surveys could be used to nomothetically model a statistical generalization about the validity of the theory.
- Further qualitative studies could examine different aspects of the research question, such as the role the librarian plays in teen civic engagement

Art programs are a popular way to reach teens in libraries. However, other library activities and services may also affect teens deeply. More research needs to be done on the outcomes of teen reference services, teen gaming programs, teen discussion groups, and teen collections. Libraries may be supporting adolescent development in a variety of cognitive, emotional, or social ways. For example, teen book discussion groups could be examined to see if participants have lower incidences of bullying. Teen perceptions of the young adult book collection could reveal changes in worldview, and art programs could be reexamined in the context of creativity or economic activity within the community. The literature on how library services affect teens is scant, but will hopefully be expanded by YALSA’s new Journal for Research on Libraries and Young Adults. Furthermore, research on how programs affect other populations, including adults and seniors, could focus more on community-based outcome measures. The more research available to practicing librarians on the outcomes of library services, the better we can align these services with their goals and mission.

It is unclear whether the research process of this study or the art programs themselves caused the apparent shifts in civic engagement. From the shifts that are measured in the pre- and post-test surveys, which were administered before the interviews, teens felt that the art programs made the difference. During the interviews, teens explained why the shifts measured in the surveys occurred. The act of asking the teens to participate in a research project, and then asking them questions during interviews, may have impacted their answers—any researcher knows that the act of examining a phenomenon changes it somewhat. Future research may be able to clarify to what extent art programs shift engagement, and to what extent participation in research studies affects teens.
Conclusions

Emily stated that art has “something to do with humanity.” Art programs are a fun and safe way for teens to express that humanity and the emotions, fears and triumphs of being human. Art programs enlighten teens, expand their horizons, and offer them a new vision of a community that supports them. Art programs reinforce and expand on the human connections between the participants in these programs. Libraries are well-positioned as non-coercive, free, relatively unbiased institutions in nearly every community and neighborhood, even those too small to support other cultural institutions. If art programs are going to happen in a free, non-pedagogical, secular, and non-commercial way in small or poor communities, libraries are ready to serve. Even in large or wealthy communities, libraries are already serving. To encourage civic engagement behaviors in teens, libraries have the tools to shift attitudes and build social capital. Eric, who had participated in library art programs at four different libraries, and who has taught art classes in libraries sums up the effect of public library art classes on teen civic engagement:

They help with getting people involved and showing them that ... the library’s not lame, rather it’s one friend drawing another to the library, in getting them involved and like, “Oh, library cool.” Or to somebody who didn't know that library had stuff to offer and they were in there checking books and to see it, “Oh, sweet.” And then they get like into the community. They enjoy it, they go to other things, they volunteer. It gets a lot more people active, I think.

Art has an intrinsic value for individuals, whether it is enjoying learning, enjoying creating, or simply enjoying. These intrinsic benefits often spill over into community benefits. Such community benefits can be promoted to funders as a reason for communities to support art programs in public libraries, but will not often be the reason teens choose to participate in them. Teens will say “oh sweet...” in response to art programs, and any civic engagement or social capital outcomes must occur free from coercion or didacticism, as a lucky bonus.

Libraries which offer teen-focused art programs are ensuring that an “engaged and diverse set of publics” are receiving the tools they need to act within the community, and, ultimately, on the behalf of the community. The seven themes identified by the participants in this research describe how avoiding adult domination, finding friends and role models, and expanding the traditional concept of the library from book-place to creation-space can empower and motivate adolescents to create stronger communities.

References


2010 Wisconsin Public Library Service Data.


Earl, Jennifer, and Alan Schussman. 2008. Contesting cultural control: Youth culture and online petitioning, 74.


Appendix 1: The Survey Instrument

FOCUS GROUP SURVEY

1. When was the last time you attended a program at this library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within the last month</th>
<th>Within the last 6 months</th>
<th>Within the last year</th>
<th>Within the last 3 years</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please list some of the programs you remember attending:

3. If you are an artist, please check all the appropriate circles to describe the type of art you create:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>○ Visual art, painting, photography, sculpture, etc.</th>
<th>○ Films or videos</th>
<th>○ Music</th>
<th>○ Dance</th>
<th>○ Writing, poetry, essays, stories, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○ Computer-assisted art</td>
<td>○ Fiber or bead art</td>
<td>○ Performance art/Acting</td>
<td>○ Other:</td>
<td>○ I am not an artist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>-1- Strongly Agree</th>
<th>-2- Agree</th>
<th>-3- I Don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>-4- Disagree</th>
<th>-5- Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I am over 18, I am likely to vote in most elections.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am over 18, I will likely remain in the community I live in now.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to attend a four-year college.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a wide variety of friends is important to me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to write a letter to the editor, either now or when I'm an adult.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texting or otherwise staying in constant contact with my friends is important to me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to take action in my community to make things better.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think playing sports, or exercising regularly is important.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the latest gadget (phone, gaming console, etc.) is important to me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to participate in a protest, march or sit-in.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to buy the latest fashions.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to volunteer for some organization, without being required to do so.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a valued member of my community.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FILL IN AFTER THE PROGRAM: HOW DID THIS ARTS PROGRAM IMPACT YOU?

5. Please rate how much you agree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>-1- Strongly Agree</th>
<th>-2- Agree</th>
<th>-3- I Don't Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>-4- Disagree</th>
<th>-5- Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found this program to be enjoyable.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found this program to be worthwhile.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to attend future programs at this library.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After this program I am more likely to join a local club, organization or group.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After this program I am more likely to create art than I was before.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After this program I am more likely to participate in other community events, at the library or elsewhere.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After this program, I would be more likely to vote (if I could) to increase library funding.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Do you think this program changed your attitudes about anything? If so, tell us what changed:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND/OR THE LIBRARY?

7. ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY. CHECK OUT THE PROGRESS OF THE STUDY, AND THE RESULTS, ON OUR WEBSITE AT: [Link]
Appendix 2: The Interview Questions

Tell me about your experience of the six art programs you just participated in here at the library.
What, if anything, is changed from the beginning of the program to today?
Specifically, do you feel closer to or further apart from the other participants, the library or librarian?
Are you more or less likely to do an art now or appreciate art now in new ways?
	Describe what it means to you to be "engaged in your community."
Do you think that's different from what adults would consider being engaged?
Describe what the phrase "civic engagement" means to you.
Do you think that's different from what adults would consider civic engagement?
How do you think art affects you?
Does it affect your empathy for others?
Does it change your mind about anything?
Do you feel closer to other people when you look at or experienced their art or do art with them?
Do you feel more tolerant of others when you experience their art?
Do you think art in general can change how you feel about your community?
What about participating in art programs with others that you may not normally hang out with?
Do art programs like the ones you attended change how you feel about your community?
Change how likely you are to [do things teens identify as civic or community engagement]?
Do you think similar things happen for other people?
Can public libraries affect your ideas or feelings about things?
What things?
*Do you think they can affect other people's ideas or feelings?
Can they affect civic/community engagement?
How can libraries do better at this?
Do public libraries support teens?
How can they do this better?
How are you engaged either in your community or in the civic way?
Do you feel like you can or want to [mention things teens identify as civic or community engagement]?
Do you want to be more or less or differently engaged?
What stops/helps you?
What could be changed in the community to help you become engaged like you want to be?
Do adults listen to you?

If you made art, do you think it adults would pay attention to it?

*Do you think other teens would?

What you think would happen then to your feeling of engagement or being listened to?

Do you have a venue to share your opinions? Or your art?

Would you share it if you had a venue?

Let’s talk about respect. Respect others have for you, or you have for others you have the library or the library has for you, that you have for the artists we just met or the artists have for you. What’s the story there?

I gave you guys a survey before the art program started and at the last program. I asked you all sorts of questions and I was a little tricky. I asked some questions that I’m not actually researching, for example how important you think sports are, or the latest fashions. Those questions are interesting in that they gave a kind of picture of this particular group of people, but you can probably tell from the questions I’ve been asking during this interview that what I’m really interested in is civic and community engagement. So looking at the questions surrounding civic and community engagement in the surveys there were some major shifts before and after. I want to ask you why you think these things changed. (Hand out graphs).

What does it mean to be valued by your community?

Before the art programs began, several of you indicated that you really disagree with the statement "I feel like a valued member of my community.” After the six programs, no one said they disagreed with that statement, a couple people decided they strongly agreed, more people said they agreed and everybody else was neutral. Why do you think this changed?

The statement "I am willing to take action in my community to make things better” also saw a large shift. Before the programs some people disagreed with that statement, only a couple strongly agreed. After the six programs, a lot more people strongly agreed and nobody disagreed. Why do you think that happened? What kind of action are we talking here?

Other shifts occurred with the question about volunteering and the question about writing a letter to the editor. There was also a little change in people agreeing with the idea of remaining in this community after they turn 18. What do you think happened here?

Another change was how many people agreed that they were likely to join a club or participate in community events. Why do you think that changed?

Last question: How do you think other teens feel about art, civic engagement and libraries? And how do you think adults feel about it?

*Not all of these questions were asked; many of the answers were given before teens were asked them. For example, I did not need to prompt all but one of the teens to speculate on how teens would react to similar programs.
About the author

Shannon Crawford Barniskis has served as the Youth Services Librarian at the Horicon Public Library for twelve years, and has worked in libraries for 17. She is currently a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s School of Information Studies. Her research focus is on information policy, public libraries and content creation. This research project was the recipient of the 2011 Frances Henne/YALSA/VOYA Research Grant.

When not librarianing or researching, Shannon spends her time making stuff, from fiber arts and altered books to fairly lousy poetry.