

Centering Student Artwork As Sites of Engagement, Possibility, and Hope:
Exploring Social Justice Art with Adolescents

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Abstract

In an era of scripted curriculum and strict accountability, this research study examines how a social-justice, arts-based program encourages students to explore current social issues, with a sense of hope and possibility moving toward empowerment for both students and teachers. As this study focuses on how students engage in activism and explore social justice topics, the theoretical framework undergirding this research includes social justice pedagogies (Greene, 1995, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2013; Dewhurst, 2011, 2014), multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009), multimodal theories (Kress, 2010; Jewitt, 2008; Harste, 2010), and public pedagogies (Biesta, 2012, 2014; Malley, Sandlin, and Burdick, 2020; Charman and Dixon, 2021). This study employs an intrinsic case study design, embedded within sociocultural theory at the macro-level, utilizing thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and mediated discourse theory (Scollon and Scollon, 2003; Wohlwend, 2020) in the analysis of visual media and artwork. This approach also allows for a broader macro analysis that places literacy events within specific situated and cultural contexts as well as a micro-level analysis of artifacts and interactions with material objects. Data collected includes classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, and photos and videos of student artwork and performances. Central to the data in this study are the student artifacts, as the focus of learning and engagement both in classroom and in public spaces. The themes shared in the findings include the significance of narrative in generating artwork, creating conditions that support student engagement, hope and empathy as intentional points of reference, mobilizing of silenced voices, disrupting communal spaces through semiotic resources, and raising critical consciousness for all participants. Implications for this study include utilizing public spaces as sites of learning and meaningful transactions, leveraging semiotic resources as part of social justice commitments, and recognizing student artifacts as bridges and sites of possibility.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A Classroom of Possibilities

Walking into a large, spacious classroom, I encounter a sort of chaos that is full of energy and noise. At first glance it seems that students are everywhere, walking, painting, talking, and reading. Large, heavy tables are scattered across the classroom, some covered with artwork, and some filled with paintbrushes, bottles. One student stands near the front of the classroom in front of a large oil painting of a brightly colored taco truck, painstakingly adding details to the moon looming above the night sky. Another student leans over a large, life size silhouette that covers a seven-foot-long table. She brushes golden paint onto the long hair of the silhouette, not looking up to notice other students walking by her. Just beneath the long golden hair, there is a black and white QR code, and the name “Peaches” written in yellow paint. A group of four boys chatter in Spanish while two of them paint blue skies surrounding the small white speech bubbles that their friends draw in with thin black brushes. The painting is of a local motel and includes written lines of dialogue from various characters found throughout: young men standing outside, housekeeping staff checking rooms, a hotel manager, and people found inside the motel rooms. Another student has earbuds hooked up to his phone and he writes slowly on a piece of binder paper, the book *Sold* by Patricia McCormick next to his arm. Though I can see a variety of modalities at work, all of these students are united in their creative artwork and explorations of human trafficking. They are all thinking about their future audiences, the people who will view their work once they leave the classroom. And with life size silhouettes, pop up artwork, stories and monologues, and paintings, the possibilities for learning about their work are endless.

Statement of the Problem

Living in a digital, tech-savvy world, adolescents are now exposed to a multitude of social justice issues and topics through social media and the internet. According to Pew Research Center (2021), 72% of teenagers reported using Instagram, with YouTube and Snapchat also placing high on the list on social media apps. And with the prevalence of social justice movements on social media, as seen with the rise of recent #BlackLivesMatter hashtags, as well as other social movements through Twitter and Instagram (Pew Research Center, 2018), it is clear that adolescents are exposed to and engaging with civic engagement and social justice issues in a variety of spaces. Through Instagram memes, TikTok videos, celebrity athletes, and social media personalities, teenagers are aware of movements such as Black Lives Matter as well as topics such as discrimination, systemic oppression, and inequities. In his book *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, Jason Reynolds addresses young people directly, stating that they are “the antidote to anti-Blackness, xenophobia, homophobia, classism, sexism, and other cancers that you have not caused but surely have the potential to cure” (Reynolds and Kendi, 2020, p. 251). Hope and the possibility for change reside within the youth of our country, as “young people have always been at the vanguard for community and social change, and today’s young people are no different” (Ginwright and James, 2002, p. 31).

Recognizing and valuing these possibilities with adolescents is exciting and invigorating. Yet it can also be challenging for teachers. How can teachers approach complex social justice topics with teenagers? How can teachers create spaces for students to explore social justice topics where they are free to express their understandings through a variety of modalities? How can students bring their understandings and ideas into public spheres, connecting with their own communities and larger public spaces? These questions guided my initial explorations of a local

arts-based high school institute, in which students and teachers focused on relevant and social-justice oriented topics as they created and shared artwork within the community.

Personal Rationale and Researcher Positionality: A Belief in the Power of Possibility

I truly believe in the power of literacy to transform lives. I believe that it can create spaces for people to make changes, small and large, that impact their own lives, their communities, and the world around them. The ability to create and express ideas through a variety of modalities and within a variety of spaces allows for possibility, hope, and new ideas. It opens possibilities to create the world in which they want to live and engage with others through meaningful transactions.

One of my loves of teaching high school was being a part of adolescents' lives while they were exploring their own identities, their own understandings of the world around them, their own power as individuals to make decisions, create relationships, and build the life they wanted. It is a time of life that is at once exhilarating and intensely complicated. I witnessed the changes and transformations of so many lives as I taught both freshmen and seniors. I was inspired by stories of students who left high school excited about the changes they could make in the world and their passion for making a difference as adults. I saw their passion for creating, whether that be through songs, poetry, video, stories, or visual art, and their enthusiasm for sharing their work with others.

When Leticia, one of my very quiet senior students, asked me for feedback on her personal essay, I learned her story, that of a seven-year-old hiding under blankets in the back of a truck with her parents, crossing the border at night. A quiet girl who sat in special education classes because her school was tiny and there was no official class for English language learners. And finally, as a high school senior ready to apply to college and go to medical school so she

could help undocumented workers in the field, like her parents. She wrote poetry that she shared with others, telling her story through a mixture of Spanish and English. She created artwork and decorated boxes which held the artifacts from her childhood. And today, after graduating from Stanford and then medical school at UCLA, Leticia runs medical a mobile clinic that travels across the San Joaquin Valley, bringing medical services to those who desperately need it. Leticia's story and others are the ones that swirl through my mind when I think of why I became a high school teacher and why I want to help all students share their stories and create the changes they wish to see in the world.

At the core of Leticia's story was her belief in what was possible. Despite the challenges that she and her family faced, her belief that higher education and the opportunity to become a doctor was possible never wavered. She believed in the possibility of making an impact on society and her community, and her own power to help create the world she wanted to see. This belief in possibility is also at the core of my beliefs as a teacher and a learner. Literacy can create new possibilities and change lives.

There are multiple connections between possibility and literacy as a social practice, which values all learners by recognizing the multiple means of understanding, communicating, and making meaning. I have explored literacy as a social practice, both as a classroom teacher and in teacher education, and I see this as foundational to my research in art classrooms with high school students. Viewing literacy as a social practice enables us to realize the various assets and ways in which students make meaning and express their ideas through various modalities. How is literacy enacted in ways beyond reading and writing in a traditional sense? How is literacy part of students' lives as they examine the world beyond the classroom with a critical

lens? How are they able to analyze and act in public spaces, beyond the classroom, in ways that are meaningful and significant in their lives?

These personal experiences and questions led to me to ArtWorks Institute. The ArtWorks Institute captivated me with the focus on voice, story, artwork, and social justice topics with adolescents. Inquiry took a leading role as teachers utilized Understanding by Design (Wiggins, 1996) approach as they planned learning engagements that would lead to performance-based exhibits at the close of the school year. Students continued to explore essential questions throughout the year. Asking these questions and exploring became a means of supporting teacher and student voices. With the relationship between theory and practice in mind, I knew that this institute was a place to learn and engage. As “effective teachers are theoretically minded for they have reasons or rationales for what they believe ‘works’ in the classroom” (Vacca and Vacca, 1986), I saw the potential to learn about the rationales and the practices in the art institute classrooms.

I incorporate various lenses as a teacher and as a researcher that impact my work and my interactions with teachers and students throughout this study. My values of various literacies and modalities are part of what I bring to my work, as well as my belief in the power of literacies to transform lives. Literacies open up possibilities to dream of alternative realities, hope for new changes, and envision possibilities for a better world in which they live.

Professional Rationale and Significance of Study

I want students to value and appreciate their own literacies and also engage as creators in their own communities. Art, inquiry, and social justice are all part of this broader experience in the classroom and beyond. Exploring the art institute, I see connections between engagement, multiliteracies, and social justice artwork that all support dynamic literacy experiences. How is

literacy part of students' lives as they examine the world beyond the classroom with a critical lens? How are they able to analyze and act beyond the classroom in ways that are meaningful and significant in their lives?

As I reflect on my own interests and experiences as a teacher, I remember how asking what I called "big questions" that could drive student learning. Students naturally desire engagement, and when given the opportunity to ask their own questions and explore, they can make rich connections and build understandings. Seeing the art institute in action reveals how inquiry is a key element. Students work together in creating and exploring their essential questions throughout the year, enacting the "inquiry-based collaborative learning" (Harste, 1990, p. 1993). Bringing inquiry and social justice art together in a classroom space creates rich opportunities for students as well as teachers.

There are significant possibilities for broader understandings of literacies and meaningful interactions in and out of the classroom. Students' lived experiences and funds of knowledge (Moll, et al, 2005) are a valuable part of the literacy experience. They bring expertise and knowledge to their projects. They also bring a variety of literacies to their work, as artists, writers, and creators. In order to approach complex topics in society such as systemic oppression, human trafficking, and immigration, we must recognize the need for complex and varied responses that help us more fully understand topics and how best to express ideas and questions. We must think creatively and we need to foster "learners who know how to use art, music, drama, etc., to reposition themselves, gather information, change perspectives, re-theorize issues, and take thoughtful new social action" (Harste, 2014, p. 11).

Enacting literacy in these spaces allows us to explore artwork and what is revealed through creating this artwork; as Albers (1999) suggests, "through students' artworks, educators

are more able to identify how students see their world and how their visual constructions of meaning reveal their own beliefs about social locations such as gender, race, class, and sexual orientation” (p. 8). Dewhurst (2014) explains that “Social justice art education is an evolving, iterative process by which people create works of art in an effort to have an impact on factors of inequality or other injustice” (p. 2). There is a need for more exploration of social justice artwork with students as they search for new possibilities. Spending time in this institute presents a unique opportunity to explore how students interact with social justice oriented themes and how they prepare a variety of artwork for sharing in school and public spaces. In the art institute, there is potential for understanding more about the engagements that support hope and possibilities through meaningful learning experiences.

Research Methodology Overview and Questions

This study utilizes a qualitative case study design, allowing for a focus on one particular year of social justice exploration with a group of students and two teachers in the institute. My primary data sources include weekly hour-long classroom/field observations, nine semi-structured teacher interviews (1.5 hours each), two informal hour-long student interviews with three students, three observations of public art exhibits, and multiple photographs and videos of student artwork in classroom and displayed in public art exhibitions, as well as publicly available video footage, photographs, and recorded interviews with participants. Through the various pieces of data, this study explores how teachers and students engage in learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, and in particular how learning experiences occur in public spaces. This study intends to answer the following questions:

Central Research Question

- What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?

Research Sub-questions

- How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?
- What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?

Local Context

Approximately 1800 students attend Milner* H.S.; the demographic make-up for the 2019/20 school is approximately 72.3% Latino, 18.2% Asian, and 4.2% African American, 3.4% Caucasian and 1.1% two races or more (www.ed-data.org, 2022). Over 94% qualify for free and reduced lunch and 22% are designated English language learners (www.ed-data.org, 2022). The ArtWorks Institute is a Career Technical Education Pathway at Milner H.S. Students enter the Institute beginning in 9th grade and they take multiple classes across disciplines as part of the ArtWorks Institute. While the ArtWorks Institute is now a CTE Pathway at the school, it was originally envisioned as an independent Institute within the school. The framework and goals of the institute are now part of the CTE pathway, but the original path of the institute is found within the institute's mission and values. These values and ideals are an important part of the context in which teachers plan inquiry topics and enact their curriculum with adolescents. In highlighting student values, the institute focuses on "student identity, establishing a family environment; encourage student creative expression/creativity; and endeavor to practice the eight

habits of studio thinking” (ArtWorks Institute website). The eight studio habits (Hetland and York, 2007) include the following: develop craft, engage and persist, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and understand the art world. In articulating values for teachers in the institute, the emphasis includes: “encourage art across the curriculum: ELA, Social Science, Science; demonstrate the power of the image through the visual arts; and collaboration among teachers/disciplines” (ArtWorks Institute website).

As the institute has evolved into a CTE pathway, it has maintained its focus on visual arts. The mission statement has been revised over time and currently states that its goal is to: “provide students with a visual arts education by integrating art into core classes such as history, language arts, and science through hands-on art assignments, dramatic performances and technical media which enhance the learning experience and provide a pathway from school to career.” (*ArtWorks Institute* website) The institute emphasizes voice, as “*ArtWorks Institute* gives voice to the voiceless through the power of visual storytelling” and this statement is included in multiple displays and institute publications/brochures.

Each year, the institute explores a new topic, selected in part by teachers and students as part of generative and organic conversations. Participants seek relevant and timely topics that will engage students and create spaces for authentic exploration and inquiry. Past topics include incarceration, foster youth, homelessness, immigration, refugee stories, drought, and the Civil Rights movement. The 2018/19 school year focused on human trafficking, and the institute shifted to focus on women’s empowerment and women’s suffrage for the 2019/20 school year (timed with the one-hundred-year anniversary of women’s suffrage). During the 2020/21 school year, students focused on pandemic experiences and creating artwork through their individual and community experiences with Covid-19.

A Theoretical Framework Built on Hope and Possibility

At the core of my theoretical framework is student artwork, which I have come to think of in terms of its dynamic, multimodal, and social justice oriented nature. In considering student artwork, I focused on important elements, including meaning making, modalities, notions of equity and social justice, multiliteracies, connections with community, artifacts, and social interactions in public spaces. These concepts also encompass the notions of possibility and hope. These concepts are foundational in creating a space in which students engage in artwork and explore social justice oriented ideas. Understanding these concepts as they relate to student artwork is important in order to further explore the theoretical framework that allows for analysis of student artwork.

Social Imagination and Possibility

The foundational layer of this theoretical framework is composed of the concepts of possibility and hope, specifically with how they relate to an understanding of social justice that undergirds this work. Specifically, these ideas are found in the social imagination and possibility as discussed by Maxine Greene (1995, 1997), and these ideas also embody hope for learners and community members who engage in imaginative possibilities.

First it is necessary to establish Greene's concept of social justice and how this connects with the concepts of social imagination, possibility, and hope. Greene envisions social justice as an approach that is grounded within teaching and within being a member of society. It is a way of approaching the world with the possibility of change in mind, thinking about the world in which people want to live and see how transformation could benefit others. She also recognizes the idea of "awakening" or "consciousness" in youth as part of her understanding of social justice. Greene (1998) states:

Teaching for social justice is teaching for the sake of arousing the kinds of vivid, reflective, experiential responses that might move students to come together in serious efforts to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. That means teaching to the end of arousing a consciousness of membership, active and participant membership in a society of unfulfilled promises – teaching for what Paulo Freire used to call “conscientization” (1970), heightened social consciousness, a wide-awakeness that might make injustice unendurable. We speak often of generating a sense of agency in young people; and it seems evident that this mode of teaching is at least likely to communicate a sense of agency, if the young can feel themselves engaged with those around them (Greene, 1998, p. xxx).

These concepts of consciousness, wide-awakeness, and engagement are critical in understanding the potentials for interactions with social justice ideas for adolescents. This is truly an approach to teach and interacting with the world that highlights what is possible and the idea of creating change in the world with hope of addressing injustices and inequities. Greene (1998) writes, “To teach for social justice is to teach for enhanced perception and imaginative explorations, for the recognition of social wrongs, of sufferings, of pestilences, wherever and whenever they arise....It is to teach so that the young may be awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change their worlds” (Greene, 1998, p. xlv). Ultimately, it is these enhanced perceptions and imaginative explorations that lead us toward social imagination and the notion of possibility.

Care and empathy are also intertwined with these ideas, as these further enhance our human connections and commitment to others, especially in considering the nature of what is possible in society. Janks (2013) highlights how critical literacy is “linked literacy to a politics of

self-empowerment and an ethics of care” (Janks, 2013, p. 227). This “ethics of care” is critical to establishing the foundation for a pedagogy of possibility and the notion of social imagination. It is through care and empathy that we engage with others and begin to seek what is possible, and what is necessary, in creating the world in which we live and the world we wish to see for others and for ourselves. The idea of an ‘ethics of care’ supports engaging social imagination in a way that betters the world and the spaces that people inhabit. As one asks what is possible and hopes for a better future, care and empathy become guiding principles in envisioning alternatives.

These ideas are foundational to social imagination (Greene, 1997), as this intersects with the idea of transformation and possibilities within social justice pedagogies. Imagination allows for the possibility of seeing alternative realities, allow for possible movements and transformations. The emphasis on possibility is present as we are able to “imagine not what is necessarily probable or predictable, but what may be conceived as possible” (Greene, 1997, p. 2). This again draws attention to the light and what is *possible in new spaces*. Greene’s exploration of imagination continues with, “imagination, after all, allows people to think of things as if they could be otherwise; it is the capacity that allows a looking through the windows of the actual towards alternative realities” (Greene, 1997, p. 2). When we are able to conceive of alternative realities, alternate ways of being and doing, then we are engaging with what is *possible*. Possibilities, transformation, and the idea of seeing new ways of being are all foundational in considering how social justice movement can be supported and sustained. Mirra (2018) asserts that “imagining the experiences of other citizens and of a more just world is a crucial first step to making such a world a reality” (p. 22). Social imagination becomes this first step.

Greene's statement about the need for "multiple-literacies and the diverse modes of understanding young persons need if they are to act knowledgeably and reflectively within the frameworks of their lived lives" (Greene, 1997, p. 3) also resonated with what is *possible* when students are able to create and express in a variety of literacies and modalities. The generative possibilities of multiple mediums are directly connected with imagination and possibility. Further, Greene creates a framework for understanding the social imagination as a place of possibilities and hope for the future, identifying empathy as a critical idea in this transaction between the imagination and the possibilities that exist. She states that, "imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called "other" over the years.....of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). This focus on empathy brings together the idea of self and the relationships with others, the possibilities of seeing through another's perspectives and considering someone else's feelings and experiences. It supports notion of care and empathy for others, in considering and imagining other experiences and perspectives. Imagination makes this possible, as one begins to consider other realities, other experiences, other ways of being, all with care and empathy in mind, as "imagination alters the vision of the way things are; it opens spaces in experience where projects can be devised, the kinds of projects that may bring things closer to what ought to be" (Greene, 1997, p. 5). Alternative spaces and possibilities for cultivating the imagination open avenues for new possibilities, notably with new perspectives in mind. Care and empathy for others help guide this idea of imagination, seeking what is possible in a quest to value, support, and honor all individuals. These lenses show how it is possible to imagine and actively seek the world in which we want to live.

Engaging with the Idea of Hope

Hope, possibility, and community become integral and meaningful pieces of engaged, dynamic learning spaces. With these notions in mind, hooks discusses the idea of “engaged pedagogy,” which differs from a critical pedagogy in its emphasis on “well-being” (hooks, 1994, p. 15) as a “progressive, holistic education” (hooks, 1994, p. 15). It is an active commitment to self-actualization for teachers and students. This approach to learning recognizes not only the possibilities of learning in various spaces; it also emphasizes the holistic nature of learning as humans. Learners are “striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world” (hooks, 1994, p. 15). This approach acknowledges our place in the world as community members and citizens, and recognizes that our learning must extend beyond traditional walls and engage in the world in which we live. This practice of freedom builds on the ideas of connection and community. This approach of “engaged pedagogy” also means that both teachers and students are empowered. It is a direct departure from a transmission model of teaching, in which knowledge is transmitted from the teacher to the learner. Instead, all active participants are positioned as learners in the world in which they live, as they search for how to exist and live in these spaces with a holistic approach to learning and being. Teachers and students are all engaged in meaningful processes of learning and discovering; they are engaged as active participants of communities and of their own learning experiences as members of those communities. Similar to Greene, hooks draws on Freire’s (2000) notion of “conscientization” and translates that idea to “critical and awareness and engagement” (hooks, 1994, p. 14). This active participation centers learner’s experiences as integral to the process of learning. hooks (1994) also emphasizes “that empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks” (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Risk taking must be present for all

learners in the classroom, including teachers. This notion again builds on possibilities as engaged learners and the idea of meaningful connections.

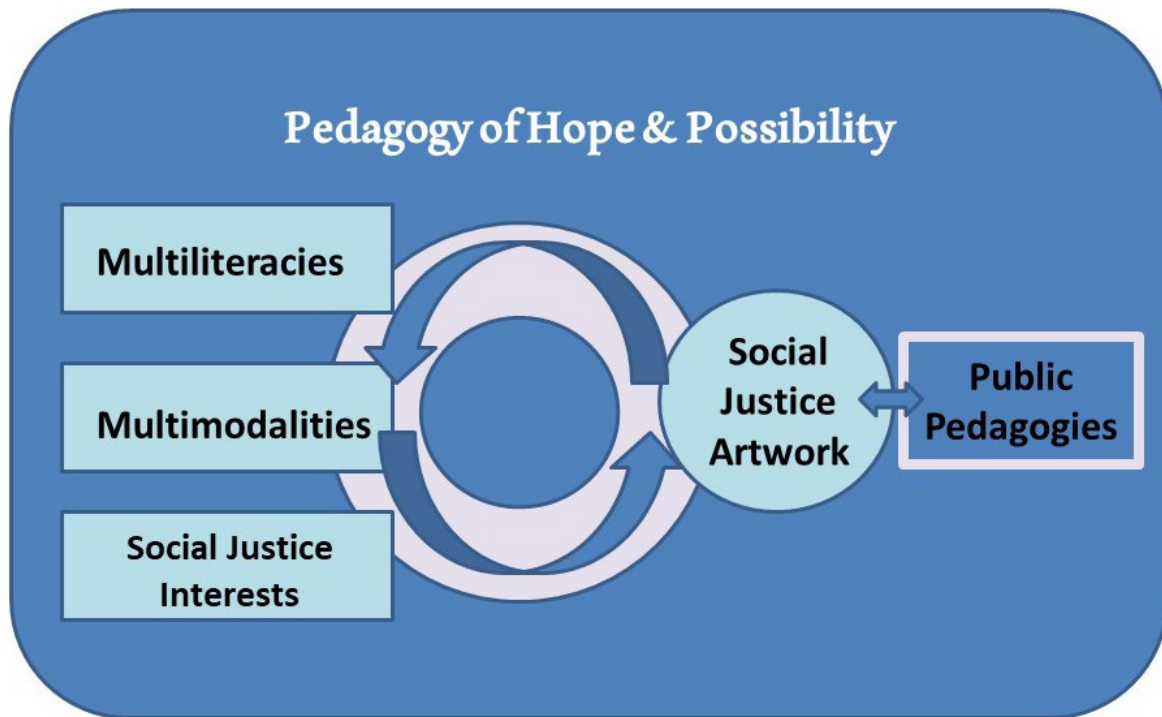
Hope allows for learners to dwell in what is possible, believing that new understandings, knowledge, and experiences are attainable for all, especially within a community experience. As teachers, we approach the notion of learning with hope as a foundational element, as “educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness. As teachers we believe that learning is possible, that nothing can keep an open mind from seeking after knowledge and finding a way to know” (hooks, 2003, p. xiv). This possibility is also connected to community, as “progressive education, education as the practice of freedom, enables us to confront feelings of loss and restore our sense of connection. It teaches us how to create community” (2003, p. xv). Communities extend beyond the classroom into new spaces and help learners consider multiple perspectives, experiences, and ways of being in the community and the world. When teachers and students embrace the notion of engaged pedagogy, they can “make the classroom a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership” (hooks, 2003, p. xv). This generates possibilities for learning that extend beyond the classroom and into the community and the world. It is an opportunity to build on the “collective awareness of the spirit of community” (hooks, 2003, p. xv) which is dynamic and generative.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the notions of hope, possibility, and community, as these concepts are generative when the relationships between them are actualized. Further as we engage with these generative concepts, we can see the possibilities for enacting social justice practices that lead citizens toward the worlds they wish to inhabit and the experiences they hope for as community members.

Multiliteracies, Multimodalities, and Public Pedagogies

As a means of exploring the theoretical framework of multiliteracies, multimodalities, and public pedagogies, I propose a visual that depicts the foundation and the relationship between and among these ideas, the confluence of all which supports the enactment of social justice pedagogies. (See graphic in Figure 1.1 for a visual overview of framework). Grounding this work in social justice movements and social justice pedagogies is a foundation of possibility, hope, community, and empathy. These ideas are critical to supporting and empowering youth with social justice in mind. As Greene (1997) reflects, “it is a matter of awakening and empowering today's young people to name, to reflect, to imagine, and to act with more and more concrete responsibility in an increasingly multifarious world” (Greene, 1997, p. 10). Engaging with multiple perspectives, multiple literacies, and multiple modalities facilitate aesthetic experiences that facilitate critical consciousness and the development of empathy with adolescents. These concepts work together to support adolescents’ engagement and enactment of social justice pedagogies in their own communities and spaces.

Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework



Deepening our Understandings of Literacy: Multimodalities and Multiliteracies

Moving away from a print-centric view of literacy expands our understandings of what constitutes literacy and how these expansive understandings can impact broader ideas of social issues, specifically social justice pedagogies. Literacy researchers have shifted away from cognitive views of literacy and embraced more complex and socio-culturally based understandings of literacies in a variety of authentic contexts. Street (2003) examined the autonomous model of literacy and the “alternative ideological model [which] offers a more culturally sensitive view literacy practices as they vary from one context” (p. 77). With this focus on authentic contexts, literacies became acknowledged as more diverse and varied, and therefore capable of new and evolving practices that carry the potential to impact society. Valuing and supporting diverse literacies creates spaces for students to explore their own narratives,

counternarratives, and the possibilities for change and growth, helping us see the relationships to and the possibilities within social justice literacies and public spaces.

Multimodalities

Multimodalities create possibilities for recognizing diverse learning, valuing all literacies, and empowering students as meaning makers. Building on understandings of social semiotics, the social dimensions of meaning making and the cultural contexts of language and semiotic sign systems (Halliday, 1978), multimodalities "acknowledges the non-linguistic modes in human social meaning" (Mills, 2016, p. 65). Kress defines this as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). As students engage in the production of something involving multiple modes of meaning (for example, texts with visual images), they are creating a multimodal production. Recognizing the power of multiple modes of expressing understanding supports diverse student learning, as this creates opportunities for students to create, express, and transform in modes beyond the print-centric focus of the classroom. Utilizing various modes for expressing and sharing enhances possibilities for student voice and builds on students' strengths as learners. Employing multimodalities also creates spaces for diverse learning experiences and the development of student voice and agency.

Multimodal theories build on sociocultural understandings of literacy, honoring and building on students' diverse literacies, languages, cultures, and ways of making meaning. It recognizes how the nature of texts and communication has undergone significant change in recent decades, with a proliferation of possibilities available to citizens through visual and digital opportunities. The advancement and availability of technology has further impacted the various means available for creating and sharing meaning making experiences both in and out of the classroom. The use of various modalities highlights the complexities and the possibilities for

engaging students with diverse curriculum experiences, as "a multimodal perspective highlights the complex pedagogic work of designing curriculum knowledge across modes in the classroom" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 263).

Multiliteracies

A key moment in the evolution of multimodalities is found with the development of multiliteracies. The origins of multiliteracies are located with The New London Group (1996), whose work focused on a question of differences: "How do we ensure that differences of culture, language, and gender are not barriers to educational success? And what are the implications of these differences for literacy pedagogy?" (The New London Group, 1996, p. 61). Through the discussion of multiple literacy scholars, a call for a new "pedagogy of multiliteracies" addressed the evolving textual, digital, and multimodal experiences. This work became foundational in the evolution of multimodal theories, as researchers directly addressed the changing digital and multimodal experiences of learners encountering various mediums within their learning and sharing experiences. This further complicated understandings of literacy as dynamic, evolving, and complex, rather than a narrow, more cognitively centered experience. Jewitt (2008) states that, "multimodality and multiliteracies can help to support the pedagogic task of developing students' explicit understandings of a broad range of multimodal systems and the design of these. The need is to move away from a monocultural and monomodal view of literacy" (p. 262). In engaging with various modalities, students engage in dynamic, complex, and nuanced experiences with literacy.

In taking the lens of differences, the New London Group expanded their understandings of diverse literacies as well as the possibilities for how learners enact literacies in rich, authentic contexts. Their focus was to understand and value all differences rather than prioritizing or

valuing specific literacies of the dominant culture. Multiliteracies theorists re-envisioned literacies as broader than print-based literacy, stating "Multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). They recognized that language is one form of communication but not the only one that users employ to express meaning and interact with others. This created a foundation for the evolution of multimodal theories and an emphasis on the power of design and redesign for meaning makers. As the nature of languages and communications have evolved, so must the ways in which we discuss, explore, and analyze these many literacies which connect various learners. Following the work of Heath (1983) and Street (1984), the New London Group moved away from the autonomous model of literacy and instead viewed literacy practices in cultural contexts (Mills, 2016). This significant shift created possible avenues for multimodalities and connections with social justice, as "multiliteracies emphasizes the real-world contexts in which people practice literacy. This theory also places significant emphasis on the role of power relationships in shaping literacy and literacy learning" (Perry, 2012, p. 58). This focus on real world contexts and the emphasis on power relationships present rich opportunities for multimodal and social justice experiences.

The New London Group (1996) outlined four key components to a multiliteracies pedagogy: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice; these components also present generative opportunities for social justice pedagogies and experiences. Through situated practice, learners connect with experiences, all valued as meaningful and important. Overt instruction allow for explicitly teaching theoretical connections. Critical framing becomes a particularly important piece of analysis that supports a critical lens, and a

conscious awareness of social, cultural, and political contexts. This becomes a place for more nuanced understandings and potentially critiques of learning. Transformed practice supports creativity in authentic learning experiences as learners transfer their meaning making and learning into new spaces or contexts, exploring tensions and authentic purposes.

Two key elements are threaded through “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” which informs the connections with social justice and creates direct links to possibility with public pedagogies. First, there is an “increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral” (1996, p. 64). This acknowledges the diversity of modes, influencing multimodal theories and the increasing complexities in meaning making. Second, multiliteracies is “a way to focus on the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness” (1996, p. 64). This idea draws on the focus of “differences” as the authors sought a way to understand and name the differences we are experiencing across cultures, languages, and contexts. Layered with the ideas of hope, possibilities, and imagination, these multiliteracies and multimodal theories work together to further create the foundation for conceptualizing and enacting social justice interests and public pedagogies.

Social Futures and Transformative Possibilities

The idea of social futures and multiliteracies supports the notions of students as active creators and designers with intention and agency, enacting possibilities and generating potential for social justice experiences in new learning spaces. The New London Group (1996) outlines six design elements as part of the meaning making process; these elements are part of the possibilities of “radically changing” three areas: “our working lives, our public lives (citizenship) and our private lives (lifeworld)” (p. 65). This is where we find a connection to the social justice

issues that our part of our various lives and how engaging as a *Designer* facilitates the possibility for social change. First comes the engagement as active participants, “literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers - makers - of social futures” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 64). Access and resources are part of changing working lives, ideas which connect with social justice issues just as changing public lives involves civic pluralism and private lives involve identity and communities of practice. Learners become designers and creators with multiliteracies and multimodalities at the core of their work, as “design is one of the most important parts of multimodal expression because it encourages imagination, vision, and problem solving” (Albers and Harste, 2007, p. 13). With confidence and the ability to design, learners are able to consider social futures and the work they want to influence their worlds. When learners see themselves as capable of initiating and making social change, their work as Designers can influence workspace, private, and public lives for a multitude of people. The possibilities for change extend beyond the space of the Designer and can have far reaching consequences for communities, and society as a whole.

Possibilities for Social Justice Orientations and Public Pedagogies

The classroom opens possibilities for exploring social justice topics and considering ideas that are of interest to both students and teachers. Expanding possibilities with literacies also increases the possibilities for students to make connections across texts, modalities, and ideas of a social justice nature. These possibilities build on the approach that Greene utilizes in viewing teaching with social justice in mind as embracing social consciousness and engagement. These opportunities allow for learners to be awakened and engaged with considering and interacting with possibilities that can impact injustices and inequities in various spaces. Boyd (2017)

describes social justice literacies in the classroom, as “teachers who work for social justice exhibit various literacies based on their experiences, the students they teach, and their interactions with and the knowledge of the world around them. Therefore, if literacies are social practices that can be taught and acquired, then it follows that the ways teachers act for social justice within their schools and classrooms can be described as literacies, and more importantly, they can be learned” (Boyd, 2017, p. 9). Viewing social justice literacies in the classroom supports an organic, exploratory, and dynamic experiences that draws attention to student inquiry, engagement, and interests rather than a set idea of outcomes. This becomes an orientation that lends itself to creating social justice oriented artwork and sharing creations in public spaces.

Sites of Engagement: Public Spaces

Engaging in public spaces calls for an exploration of public pedagogies, especially as participants act with public interests and social justice in mind. Participants bring their social justice literacies into public spaces with specific intentions and transactions in mind, calling for a continuing of learning experiences beyond the traditional classroom. Public pedagogy is described as a “theoretical concept focusing on forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and practices” (Malley, Sandlin, and Burdick, 2020, p. 1). Engaging in thematic mapping, Malley, Sandlin, and Burdick (2020) identified five categories relevant to the scholarship of public pedagogies over the past four decades: citizenship within and beyond schools; popular culture and everyday life; informal institutions and public spaces; dominant discourses; and public intellectualism and performative social activism. These areas are relevant and timely in studying how adolescents interact with social justice ideas in public spaces, particularly as they create and share artwork.

Clarifying these understandings of public space and publicness also allows us to examine the relationship between the two and how we then understand the concept of public pedagogies as currently conceived by theorists. Sandlin, Burdick, and Rich (2017) “nuance the role of the public pedagogue, suggesting that ‘enacting pedagogies or ‘public interventions’ in the interest of publicness (Biesta, 2012, 2014) might entail not speaking to, for, or on behalf of a real or imagined public, not attempting to facilitate a particular outcome of learning, but rather enacting the role of interrupter...with the aim of enacting political and cultural questions through the very acts of public interaction and human togetherness themselves” (p. 833) (Malley, Sandlin, and Burdick, 2020, p. 8-9). Several key elements arise out of Malley, Sandlin, and Burdick’s (2020) work as well as Biesta (2014). These interactions can often happen as interruptions or disruptions, which can be of a critical nature. These interactions can also serve to open spaces for further conversations, questions, and explorations. The outcomes may not be specific in nature, but rather exploratory, organic, and on-going.

Conclusion

This layered framework is built on pedagogies of hope and possibility. These ideas are foregrounded in the explorations of multimodalities and multiliteracies with social justice in mind. When students are empowered to engage in possibility, hope for new futures, and social imagination, they are able to create and share their voices. Sharing voices within public spaces facilitates a redesign of power, access, and equity, as these ideas foster the development of hope, empathy, and critical consciousness. This framework also positions all participants as learners and recognizes social justice engagements in various spaces. Dewhurst (2014) acknowledges that “when we listen and really pay attention to the young people we encounter, we realize that they are engaged in some of the same quests for understanding, clarity, and change that we are

invested in as educators and researchers” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 14). This acknowledges the interests and commitment of youth to understanding and creating new possibilities for the future. Multiliteracies and multimodalities generate further potential for hope, empathy, and meaningful interactions in public spaces. Disrupting traditional notions of knowledge, learning sites, and public space, participants enact their own understandings, public interests, and discourses in public realms that invite participation across public participants. Art and creative practices can operate as an analytic tool that opens up multi-modal, reflective spaces and support a platform for youth to develop critical social awareness, empathy, and imagine new possibilities and alternatives in public spheres.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Engaging in artwork involves a complex array of literacies, modalities, and social interactions that form a dynamic transaction for artists and audiences. Seeing the complexities of multiple literacies in various contexts, modalities, and public spaces creates the possibility of seeing connections across research and literacy experiences. Drawing on multiple literacies, multimodalities, and valuing equity for all participants, it is possible to engage in counternarratives that speak to social justice themes. Engaging in these counternarratives opens avenues for students that include equity, voice, critical consciousness, and agency. Further, creating and interacting with multimodal creations in public spaces facilitate opportunities for meaningful transactions with a variety of audiences, maximizing the opportunities found in critical sites of engagement. Centering work on social justice issues and ideas of concern to the public can create dynamic and meaningful transactions for all participants that carry the possibility of transformation. Through this literature review, relevant concepts are explored and situated within a framework that allows for examination of the complex processes of creating and sharing social justice oriented artwork in a variety of modalities and contexts, including the ideas of creating narratives and counternarratives. This highlights the significant potential of artistic expressions in a variety of public spaces created by students and community members. These dynamic creations are woven into the fabric of what it means to be a community member in public spaces, drawing on the possibilities for learning both inside and outside of the classroom.

Multimodalities, Multiliteracies, and Literacy Events

Viewing literacy learning as “events” broadens our understandings of what is possible in literacy, moving away from a narrow, print-centric definition of literacy; multimodal events then

become sites of engagement for multiple participants. This centers literacy events as dynamic and multidimensional, as Harste, Woodward, and Burke asserted that “literacy and literacy learning were multimodal events” (1984, as cited by Siegel, 2006). Multimodalities encompasses the use of multiple modes, as “images, gestures, music, movement, animation, and other representational modes [are placed] on equal footing with language” (Siegel, 2006, p. 65). In focusing on multimodalities, attention is drawn away from print literacy and includes what Kress (2000) terms a “theory of semiosis that accounts for the ‘interested action’ of socially located, culturally and historically formed individuals, as the remakers, the transformers, and the re-shapers of the representational resources available to them” (Kress, 2000, p. 155). Engaging in the use of multiple modes is a literacy learning event for learners, and it is one that carries possibility as a dynamic and transformative event as learners create, transform, and shape with multiple representational resources. Employing multiple modalities carries possibilities for new meanings and communications, as “a multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts. More simply put, multimodality can afford, not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning” (Hull and Nelson, 2005, p. 225). This statement speaks to the affordances of multimodality and the increased potential for new and different meanings when engaging with various modalities, particularly in light of the digital and visual opportunities available both inside and outside the traditional classroom.

Considering literacy as a social practice moves practitioners and researchers into an ideological view of literacy and away from an autonomous view of literacy; Street (2003) explains that “literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003, p. 77).

Considering literacy as part of complex social principles acknowledges that literacy is different for various learners, contexts, and cultures. Understanding literacy in this view means a broader, more expansive view of the ways in which people read, write, share, act, and express meaning in various forms and modalities, as “the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being” (Street, 2003, p. 78). This view of literacy as a social practice is fundamental to understanding the possibilities with multimodal events and multiple literacies. Recognizing how people create and express meaning as part of their everyday identities in a variety of settings allows for more complex understandings of cultures, communities, and also individual practices that are critical to identity and social interactions.

The New London Group (1996) furthered our understandings of literacy as a social practice and the possibilities for diverse learners and diverse practices. They embraced an expansive view of modes for expressing meaning in a variety of spaces and modalities, moving beyond language centric communications. New London Group (1996) explains that "multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (p. 64). This centers users as drawing on their own resources as part of their own meaning making processes. New London Group (1996) also recognizes that students are "active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers - makers - of social futures" (p. 64). Seeing students as meaning makers who embrace multiple modalities and design opportunities as they create also shows how students have agency in their thinking of ‘futures’ in their design work. It is also paramount that students see *themselves* as meaning makers with agency. As “designers,” students

enact possibilities with the work they create, drawing on their diverse resources, experiences, and literacies. Multimodal literacy events and multiliteracies support the development of student voice and agency as transformative meaning makers who can create and facilitate meaningful transactions with their audiences in a variety of spaces; through various modalities and literacies, adolescents are able to engage as civic individuals and enact social justice pedagogies.

The intersections of space, opportunity, and transformation create the possibility of new, alternative ideas; students can create new ideas with social justice in mind. With a focus on space, Gutierrez (2008) theorized about a collective third space where transformation is possible. She described this as the “design of a particular social environment of development, a collected Third Space, in which students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 148). This speaks to the ideas of engagement, movement, and transformation beyond the traditional classroom, and hints at social justice possibilities within these Third Spaces. There is an emphasis both on the individual identity to “reconceive who they are” and also to consider what can be accomplished “beyond” the traditional. This is another instance of looking within and looking outward, as individuals and in a larger community/society space. Gutierrez (2008) hopes that this “illustrates the transformative potential of a humanist and equity-oriented research agenda and project” (2008, p. 148). Situating her own work in this space, Gutierrez (2008) aims to show the potential and the possibilities for equity and social justice with an “equity-oriented criteria for creative a more justice and democratic educational system” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 148). Gutierrez sees learning in Third Spaces as encompassing various modalities and literacies (conversations, conferences, whole-class discussions, teatro, etc), drawing on the concept of multiliteracies as a method for valuing and supporting diverse learning. The “collective social imagination” is a space that

supports “building a new shared vision” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 154) in thinking about education, communities, and sociopolitical changes. There is a sense of movement, possibilities, and hope that creates the foundation for Third Spaces, and this connects with the prospects of bringing multiliteracies together with a social justice agenda in a way that supports transformation.

When students are able to create and engage as designers, they can use various literacies and imagination to design new narratives and new possibilities. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) revisit the pedagogy of multiliteracies and continue their explorations of the evolution and the possibilities of literacy learning, which builds on understandings of social futures and transformative spaces. Similar to Harste’s (2010) view of meaning making, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) also believe that “meaning making is an active, transformative process” (p. 175) and that “all forms of representation, including language, should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175). Multiple modalities, literacies, and experiences further enhance opportunities for transformation in meaning making and social movement.

The possibilities of transformation link these ideas with social justice themes for learners, as they explore both interior and exterior changes. There is a potential for transformation as the “act of designing leaves the designer Redesigned” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 177); in this way, the creator, or learner, can be transformed personally. This aspect is an important part of social justice literacies, as one’s own identities and experiences are a rich part of the experience and capabilities for social justice. This is also a key aspect of Cope and Kalantzis’ (2009) work, as “a pedagogy of multiliteracies is characteristically transformative as it builds on notions of design and meaning-as-transformation, Transformation curriculum recognizes that the process of designing redesigns the designer (Kalantzis, 2006) Learning is a process of self-re-creation”

(Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 184). Designing and creating makes self-re-creation possible. In redefining one's self, it is also possible to imagine the possibilities beyond individual identities and the classroom space. Transformation in multiple spaces is supported by the relationship between multiliteracies and social justice, and the transaction between these elements.

Reenvisioning the four components to a multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group, 1996), situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) reframe these ideas with a curricular orientation as: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying. These four concepts highlight the possibilities for students with curriculum experiences that create opportunities to engage with possibility.

Experiencing speaks to new and different experiences, for students and in understanding others' experiences. Conceptualizing involves theoretical work, understanding relationships between ideas and complexities that create the world in which we live. Analyzing can involve a critical approach to analyzing power structures, rationales, and motivations, as well as analyzing functionally, including causal relationships and inferences. Applying involves "making an intervention in the world which is truly innovative and creative and which brings to bear the learner's interests, experiences and aspirations. This is a process of making the world anew with fresh and creative forms of action and perception." (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 186). Through these concepts, it is possible to see how transformation can evolve through curricular experiences that situate learners as having agency and power to act. Learners are then positioned to deepen their learning, complicate their understandings of the social world, and create or apply new ideas that build on their own analysis and understandings of issues. It creates possibilities for transformation for learners and their worlds, allowing for creation of new narrative, new counternarratives, and new connections across social justice oriented ideas.

Agency and Equity

Bringing multimodalities into practice and valuing the various modalities and strengths that students bring to their literacy learning experiences is a matter of equity for all students. In seeking equity and opportunity, students are then empowered to recognize their own agency and share their voices. Equity becomes a central concept for all participants in literacy events, for the creators and viewers. A reciprocal nature of agency and equity develops when students are able to access various modalities and then use their access points to create and share their understandings with others. Siegel (2006) asserts that educators should "treat multimodal transformations as a matter of social justice" (p. 73). Learners who may struggle in a print-centric environment experience a new sense of empowerment in utilizing various semiotic sign systems outside what is considered standard in school literacy. Employing various modalities draws on students' assets as meaning makers. Learners can bring and celebrate a multitude of identities and experiences with them in their work as multimodal creators and text designers. This makes their voices more distinct, nuanced, and empowering. Students are then able to create with intention, purpose, and clarity. This in turn is also influential and important for the viewer, as various modalities also open points of access and opportunity for audiences.

Art education creates a space for students to express their voices, focus on the socio-political, and create with agency and purpose. Albers (1999) recognized how visual images carried the opportunity to support transformation of student artists, while Dewhurst's (2011; 2014) research furthered these connections between student voice, agency, and transformation as part of her focus on activist literacies. In her focus on artwork, Albers (1999) noted that student artwork is complex, and "as students develop their skills and techniques in art, they also become more proficient at representing their ideological beliefs" (p. 7). Their multimodal artwork

became an avenue in which they could express their ideological beliefs, including their complexities and questions as students and as artists. Intention as artists is critical to student agency; just as Harste et al (1984) recognize the powers and possibilities of transmediation, Dewhurst (2011) recognizes that “as a process of learning, translating requires activist artists to critically reflect on the intentions of their artwork” (p. 372). This critical reflection speaks to the agency that students develop as artists when they engage as meaning makers in multimodal productions.

Part of student agency is the awareness of self and also self-efficacy as learners, creators, and initiators of change. Through the process of creating artwork, Albers (1999) noted the importance of conversations, often initiated by the process of creating visual images, as a catalyst in creating artwork with a critical stance and reflecting on this stance. Conversations became an empowering part of the multimodal creation process, one that impacted students and their multimodal products. Critical conversations and experiences encouraged socio-political awareness. Students discovered their own beliefs, identities, and awareness in conversations, which also influenced their artwork. The process of creating art, which took substantial time, invited students to respond and reflect on concepts which support the development of student agency; multimodal work carried possibilities as emotional and intellectual responses to various perspectives (Albers, 1999). In this way, students are supported in creating art with purpose and intentionality, while reflecting on their work and developing their own understanding of agency as artists. Dewhurst (2014) also recognized how the process of creating multimodal artwork impacted students, as “participants were both *directing* their art to achieve their intended impacts while also *experiencing* some of those impacts themselves” (p. 115). Working with an understanding and awareness of ideological beliefs and their own sense of self and agency,

students consider audience and impact while working through the process of creating and sharing artwork.

Opportunity, Engagement, and Voice

Recognizing and valuing multiple modalities and literacies increases access opportunities and points of entry for students, continuing the possibilities for equity and social justice experiences for all participants, including audiences. With the ability to understand and express in various modalities, learners experience increased access and opportunities for creating and sharing. This can open new avenues of dialogue across learners and audiences, giving rise to possibilities for authentic, meaningful encounters and social justice understandings. Cappello, Wiseman, and Turner (2019) developed a critical multimodal framework in order to “describe the ways that children use multimodal tools such as sketches, photographs, drama, or songs for personal meaning-making, critique, and agentive learning in classrooms (Mills, 2015; Siegel, 2006, as cited by Cappello et al, 2019, 209). This framework draws on multimodal theories to show how meaning making in a variety of modes supports students’ agency and their role as text critics (Luke and Freebody, 1999). They draw on “social semiotics” (Albers, 2014, Siegel, 2006; Mills, 2015) in “theorizing how critical multimodal literacy opens up equitable learning opportunities for children through a range of visual ‘resources that make difference visible...so that voices that might traditionally be marginalized are heard’” (Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008, p. 33). With multimodal-based learning experiences, students have a wider range of resources and opportunities to express their understandings and engage a critical stance. Cappello, Wiseman, and Turner (2019) create “four dimensions of critical multimodal literacy: communicating and learning with multimodal tools; restorying; representing, and redesigning; acknowledging and shifting power relationships; and leveraging multimodal resources to critique

and transform sociopolitical realities. In this framework, we bring together theories of critical literacy and multimodality with an equity pedagogy lens” (Cappello et al, 2019, p. 209). These dimensions support the idea of a relationship between multimodality and student voice. The concepts of restorying and redesigning both acknowledge that students are capable of not only understanding, but also recreating and redesigning their own work. This creates a space for them to critique sociopolitical realities through their own works, with their own voice and vision. Being empowered as a text critic brings them closer to the idea that they can “transform sociopolitical realities” (Cappello et al, 2019) with their voices. The act of creating and critiquing is embedded in a belief in both hope and possibility, as “critical knowledge is a source of hope, for critique enables us to move toward change and to propose new solutions that we would like to see take hold in the world” (Freire, 1985, cited by Cappello et al, 2019, p. 212). When students believe that their voice is heard through their creations, they can believe in the possibilities for growth and evolution.

Highlighting students’ voices through multimodalities maximizes engagement for students and audiences. Drawing on authentic, engaging voices, students can use these multimodal opportunities to engage with audiences. In focusing on the work of one student, Cappello et al (2019) examine how their critical multimodal framework illuminates student voice and work as a designer. The student’s multimodal response, an image, showed how she “communicated and learned with multimodal tools and restoried the curriculum to include her perspectives. The artifact reflected power relationships and demonstrated how she leveraged multimodal resources to represent her experiences as a learner” (Cappello et al, 2019, p. 217). This finding clearly connects with the text user and text critic roles (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Further, using multimodalities created a space for Marcela to share her voice as a text designer,

engaging in ‘design and redesign’ (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Marcela “transformed” (Cappello et al, 2019) through her use of redesigning and restorying. Her work also revealed her identity and power relationships, particularly as she referenced her prior work as a means to show her knowledge and expertise (Cappello et al, 2019). In this instance, the designer’s voice was made visible through multiple modes of expression, creating an artifact to share with others.

Student voice becomes a prominent theme when students have agency and opportunity to create multimodal works of their own choosing. They can create with audiences in mind, seeking to engage with others and share their voices. Exploring the idea of learners as multimodal composers, Smith (2018) addresses students’ multimodal composing goals and how students created multimodal productions for various audiences. This experience supported the development of student voice as they expressed their own, original, and complex ideas through their multimodal work. Interest and identity appeared in the findings, as students saw multimodal creations as an opportunity express their own identities. Smith (2018) also recognized the complexity of the student process and students engaged in creating multimodal web pages and PowerPoint presentations. Smith’s (2018) research allowed windows to see nuances and complexities in students’ experiences, identities, and interactions with multiple modalities, as well as how they created/composed for a variety of purposes with many modes of communication. Smith (2018) states that:

This study presents an initial reconceptualization of multimodal composing as a unique blend of sociocultural, affective, content-related, and personal dimensions. Through connecting students’ perspectives – while interacting and retrospectively – to their specific modal designs, we gain a nuanced understanding of the interrelated dimensions shaping adolescents’ modal use in response to literature (p. 208)

The process of creating multimodal work drew not only on content, but also sociocultural, personal, and affective dimensions for students. This created an opportunity for students to develop voice as their own identity, personal and cultural resources, and experiences were integral parts of the creation. Smith's findings drew on social semiotics, examining how various modes were selected with specific purpose and intentions. Smith looked at the composing goals of students in using modalities together (complimentary, matching, sensory) and also with regard to purpose and expressing identity with a combination of modes (Smith, 2018). It is through the use of various modes that students are able to leverage their own assets as meaning makers and express their voices, as "an adolescent might be able to express personal emotions visually in a way that is not possible through linguistic modes, whereas another student could prefer to rely on the stability and specificity of linguistic modes to convey the intended message. These modal affordances vary based on different composers, genres, and intended messages" (B.E. Smith, 2017 and B.E. Smith et al, 2017, as cited by Smith, 2018, 186). Allowing for choice and use of various modes allowed for more nuanced expressions and created opportunities for students who may have been limited by traditional linguistic modes. These concepts again amplify the possibilities for transactions with audiences that carry potential for social justice issues.

Popular "zines" are another literacy avenue in which students create and share in multiple modalities, allowing for creativity and non-traditional means of expressing voice and initiating critical conversations. Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) discuss zines as "little magazines...self-published alternatives to popular culture" (p. 408). These self-published magazines draw on semiotic resources to create "eye-catching graphics, illustrations, and photographs" (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 418). Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004) focus their study on a zine published by

three secondary students who are politically active and activist minded individuals looking to share ideas, writing, and provocative content on issues that are relevant and meaningful for them. The zines are a “passionate form of literate expression” (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 411) for these three students, creating a space for topics such as racism, sexism, homophobia, animal rights, etc. As a student-created multimodal experience, the zines in Guzzetti and Gamboa’s study are rich texts to explore. The zines disrupted traditional notions of literacy, through the topics, presentation of writing, and graphics. While the zine was distributed at school, the administration and most of the teachers were unaware of the production, in a sense disrupting traditional school literacies. These zines became a site for collaboration and a space in which student voice was fostered and developed. Students used words and decorative fonts, styles including vertical placement, etc. The students’ use of modalities and design “reflected their identities as members of alternative cultures of anarchists, activists, and DIYers” (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 426). The zine itself became a space for collaboration and encouraged multiple possibilities across participants. Students involved often sought collaboration and input from other youths; one of the initial founders displayed an “activist nature and ...[attempted] to draw others into her efforts” (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 423). Students expressed their own views through writing and design of the zine pages, which directly tied to their own experiences, interests, and viewpoints. These connections were apparent in their bedroom décor, clothing choices, and music/reading interests. All of these ideas connected with their writing and sharing in zines, individually and as collaborations between the three authors, as “their collaboration on ideas and articles not only helped them each as individuals to form and represent their own identities but also allowed them to assist one another in identity formation and expression” (Guzzetti and Gamboa, 2004, p. 432). The student creators also demonstrated a “willingness to

publish pieces that challenged their ideas” (p. 429) as they sought “critical dialogue” (p. 429) with their peers. Their interactions revealed multiple intentions with regard to student voice; the student writers wished to share their voices, challenge readers, and promote conversations about relevant, meaningful topics. Turner et al (2013) also noted that “students are actively involved in the democratic process and in civic life” (p. 44) in the production of zines, videos, and art murals for community spaces. Students engaged in critical media literacy, explained as an opportunity for students to “decipher, critique, change patterns of interaction and to produce media that reflects their own interests and concerns” (Turner et al, 2013, p. 44). In this process, students shared their voices and ideas while producing their own multimodal work, which enhanced possibilities for social justice engagement. Students worked collaboratively and displayed their work in the community, considering the importance of social justice issues and how to share their voices through different media. The process of creating and displaying work allowed students to analyze and consider issues throughout the process. Students’ murals, zines, and video work reflected their agency and their voices as young adolescents who care about the world they live in and create meaningful engagements as community members.

Counter Narratives in Public Spaces

Multimodal explorations, counter narratives and the notion of ‘restorying’ create an additional opportunity for students to develop and share their voices, enhancing opportunities for social justice, awareness, and equity. Recognizing the power of story in creating art that carries a message from the artist, Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) address ideas of voice and story, as “this process of restorying, of reshaping narratives to better reflect a diversity of perspectives and experiences, is an act of asserting the importance of one’s existence in a world that tries to silence subaltern voices” (Thomas and Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 314). Working in various modalities

affords the opportunities of new configurations and arrangements, including the possibility of making the invisible voices newly visible in alternate forms or modalities. Restorying means that student artists can imagine narratives that speak with diverse voices and experiences; they can imagine otherwise in a place that supports multiple perspectives and ideas. The collaborative and collective nature of digital spaces furthers these possibilities as young creators invent new storylines and characters as they “bend” and “restory” current narratives. As Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) explored original visual artwork shared on fandom websites, they noted how young people explored fictional worlds and characters as fans and also as artists willing to reimagine and restory. Multiple avenues are open to the notion of restorying and reimagining, “as young readers imagine themselves into stories, they reimagine the very stories themselves, as people of all ages collectively reimagine time, place, perspective, mode, metanarrative, and identity through retold stories” (Thomas and Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 318). These stories can carry powerful messages about young artist’s views of social justice issues and relevant topics, such as race, identity, gender, and equity.

Exploring in different modalities also means that students also have the opportunity to share counternarratives with audiences in physical spaces beyond traditional classroom walls. In DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall’s (2019) exploration of adolescent multimodal productions, they also noted how students drew on the complexities of sociocultural literacies and expressed their voices through their work. The students’ multimodal artifacts, including collages, served to “visually narrate and celebrate their lived realities” (DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall, 2019, p. 299) which included multiple roles beyond the classroom. The multimodal products recognized and valued students’ lived experiences and complex identities in a public exhibit. DeJaynes & Curmi-Hall (2019) state, “We read the collage as a collective, multimodal counter story designed

to confront the damage done by stereotypical representations of women of color in media, as well as a relatively safe way to prompt conversation about race in the multiracial community” (p. 307). This notion of counter story speaks to the possibilities found with exploring multiple perspectives, as students experienced with their multimodal collages. Students explored notions of race and gender, drawing on their own experiences and creating a space for voices of marginalized groups. These spaces also allowed for dialogue, as students asked critical questions, inviting audiences to reflect and consider new voices and ideas. Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) explain the notion of counter story and its potential as, “retelling the same story through a number of perspectives has the power to build empathy and understanding” (p. 320). With multimodal resources, these counter narratives created a space for students to consider multiple perspectives, develop their own voices, speak back to larger societal representations, and engage in meaningful, relevant conversations through various modalities. Students had an opportunity to engage in the issues and also critique issues in a way that raised their own consciousness while empowering them with a stronger voice. Their multimodal artifacts highlighted their own voices while also creating spaces for critical conversations and engagements.

Multimodal counter narratives can create new meanings, share powerful voices, and raise critical consciousness for creators and viewers. In examining multimodal counter narratives, DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall (2019) recognized two themes in student work: collective youth resistance and portraits and/or self-portraits as multimodal counter stories (304). The idea of resistance has strong ties with Freire’s consciousness and social inequities (DeJaynes & Curmi-Hall, 2019). The multimodal counter stories have a theoretical foundation in Jewitt’s (2009) social semiotics work and Hull and Nelson’s (2005) idea of creating new meanings with

multimodal compositions that are comprised of multiple modes. The critical, multimodal nature of the findings resulted in students creating self-portraits and collages that raised awareness and spoke back to social issues. DeJaynes & Curmi-Hall (2019) state, “We read the collage as a collective, multimodal counter story designed to confront the damage done by stereotypical representations of women of color in media, as well as a relatively safe way to prompt conversation about race in the multiracial community” (p. 307). Multimodal creations drew on the complexities of sociocultural literacies, valued situated and diverse literacies, and afforded young adults an opportunity to explore and critique issues that they deemed relevant. Ultimately, these artifacts worked in multiple dimensions, representing student thinking, analysis, and cultural critique, while also sparking conversations and disrupting shared hallway space with a variety of school audiences.

Creating multimodal artifacts with a social justice theme highlights how these student-created counternarratives can spark discussions and interactions in public spaces. Exploring the nature of student-created multimodal artifacts within a social justice framework, Caffrey and Rogers (2018) examine a school-as-museum setting in which sixth-grade students created multimodal artifacts centered of social justice issues; as in DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall’s (2019) work, this study also centered on students’ multimodal counternarratives that drew from identity and relevant social issues in a manner that encouraged discussion. With a curricular program that supported identity, multiple perspectives, and a critical lens, students embarked on reading experiences and discussions that facilitated explorations of social issues that were relevant to their lives. Caffrey and Rogers (2018) selected a group of four students who self-selected the topic of Bullying and Discrimination for their project work. Students created a display to share in a museum-style setting with various public audiences; as part of this display, they included their

own multimodal artifacts, including poems, mannequins, visual artwork, informational writing, and superhero capes. This display was shared with other classes, including students at the school, as well as parents, teachers, and members of the community. At the close of the school exhibit, the display was moved to a public setting downtown for an additional public exhibit.

Students' artifacts and presentations revealed personal experiences that drew them to the topic, personal responses to social issues, and calls to action for the audiences. All four students found personal relevance with regard to the topics they selected, including their own experiences with bullying and their belief in the necessity of ending bullying for all people. Their enthusiasm for ending discrimination and bullying is seen in their discussions and reflections on creating interactive experiences for their audiences which would help them understand others, have empathy, and think about possible actions to make a difference in the lives of others. They engaged multiple modalities in their artifacts, seeking potential means of powerful interactions through media, color, visual graphics, and pictures. Analysis revealed how social justice issues and action was sedimented throughout the artifacts, creating multiple points of entry for audiences interested in how to understand issues and take thoughtful action. Caffrey and Rogers (2018) found that, "Social action was represented across modalities (e.g., images, words, objects), through student-selected discourse practices (e.g., storytelling and informational texts) and examples of interventions and social actions" (Caffrey and Rogers, 2018, p. 109). This multi-layered approach created access points for students and audience members to make connections and engage. The museum display itself was a counternarrative, offering the audiences a powerful and rich experience from which to draw future conversations and actions. Social justice action was highlighted as, "the collaborative transformative practice of designing this museum exhibit not only exposed a deep understanding of social justice, but also a solution-

oriented mindset, a commitment to taking action, and an engagement with the public about pressing social problems of our time” (Caffrey and Rogers, 2018, p. 109). The display revealed the complexity of students’ understanding of social justice issues, as they sought solutions and actions for injustices, and a desire to connect with others with these ideas.

Bringing multimodal creations and activist artwork into public spaces highlights the opportunities found in public spaces for engaging and interacting with the ideas of social justice, drawing on civic engagement and public pedagogies. Engaging at a community level beyond the traditional classroom walls helps generate possibilities for meaningful change and interaction. Counternarratives become a powerful means of engaging in public spaces and exploring civically minded approaches to social justice concerns. These narratives in public spaces highlight the generative possibilities for students, as “connection between community engagement and critical analysis of issues of social justice really go hand-in-hand, given that it is through democratic, civic participation that students are able to see how their exploration of ideas can lead to actual change” (Turner et al, 2012, p. 48). Engaging in the process of creating counternarratives, youth are positioned as individuals who are knowledgeable and whose experiences are valuable, and they have the opportunity to analyze issues as they create alternative possibilities. In working with adolescents in a research course with an emphasis on student-based projects and social justice topics, DeJaynes and Curmi (2018) find that “positioning youth as doers and knowledge generators within the space of the classroom promotes shared responsibility and empathy, which are precursors to affiliation, belonging, and activist impulses” (p. 78). Promoting shared responsibility and empathy generates possibilities for community involvement and activism; it also enhances opportunity for powerful counternarratives built on empathetic understandings and a desire to create social futures.

Counternarratives in public spaces bring together possibilities for sharing alternative possibilities with a variety of community members outside of the classroom. In exploring youth, media, and public pedagogies, Rogers (2016) recognizes how youth engage with relevant and provocative issues as they create various counternarratives with diverse modalities in spaces outside of the traditional classroom. Bringing these multimodal narratives out of the classroom defied traditional boundaries and demonstrated how youths were participating in civic spaces, as “these counternarratives constitute aesthetic and ethical engagements in civic life at the local/global interface, counternarratives that represent ethical arrangements, relational subjectivities, and transnational spatial awareness” (Rogers, 2016, p. 279). Rogers included three multimodal youth productions: a zine page, a theater performance, and a film pitch. In each instance, the multimodal creation engaged members of the public and worked as a counternarrative, garnering semiotic resources to share youth’s perspectives on social issues including discarded drug needles, young women’s privacy issues, and an antiviolence program. While all of these issues were grounded in the immediacy of neighborhoods and communities, they also connected with social issues in a broader scale and geographical scope. Working as counternarratives, the artwork encouraged audience members to inquire, learn, and delve into larger issues of drug use, community safety, body image, privacy, identity, and community violence. These literacy events all included opportunities to engage with community members in public spaces, drawing on semiotic resources to generate opportunities for dialogue. Rogers analyzes productions as possibilities to “address local desires, inequities, and concerns” (Rogers, 2016, p. 272). The zine page asked people to dispose of drug needles properly, keeping playgrounds and public spaces safe for children and families. The theater performance showed how young girls were stereotyped and had privacy violated when seeking medical help in local

places, while the film pitch shared urban scenes highlighting inequities and displacement. In each instance, a counternarrative drew attention to possible disruptions and injustices from the viewpoint of the youth. These multimodal events also shared possibilities and encouraged viewers to inquire as to how social futures could evolve.

These multimodal events also highlight the possibilities in moving out of traditional classroom spaces to grapple with literacies to authentic, relevant, and dynamic spaces, furthering our understandings of what social justice pedagogies can be for adolescents. Recognizing the myriad of opportunities for students to interact and take action in civic spaces demonstrates the “ongoing conceptualizations of literacy, imagination, and equity in research and education” (Rogers, 2016, p. 269). The example of the zine page shows how adolescents saw themselves as part of the community and also advocated for the community as active participants; they saw the goal of a safe, equitable community space for children and families, and advocated for that by proposing solutions and creating provocative artwork that would draw attention to their cause. Students incorporated visuals, photographs, and text in creating a zine page that sought a new social future for the community. They sought disruption and civic action with the page and demonstrated how “youth are exhibiting powerful engagements with materiality of arts, media, and literacy to create critical, social, and political narratives that could and ought to be recognized or realized in classrooms. ...[which] might offer new pedagogical spaces that invite students’ subjectivities, locations, and material resources as they engage in local and larger ethical and public dialogues, counter dominant cultural ideologies, address multiple publics, and create new forms of participation” (Rogers, 2016, p. 280). Bringing these zine productions into public spaces valued students’ voices and agency as they engaged with multiliteracies in promoting civic action in public spaces where they had a vested interest.

Adolescents and Activist Art: Connecting to Social Justice Pedagogies

Creating and sharing social justice artwork in public spaces generates potential for students to develop their own critical consciousness (Freire, 1974; Cammarota, 2011; Dewhurst, 2014) and become active participants in public spaces. Students are able to “develop the ability to ask questions of themselves and the systems surrounding them” (Dewhurst, 2014, 9), enhancing the opportunities for critical explorations of social justice oriented topics. Considering “social justice education,” Dewhurst (2014) identifies three attributes: “(1) it is rooted in people’s experiences, (2) it is a process of reflection and action together, and (3) it seeks to dismantle systems of inequality to create a more humane society” (p. 8). These elements are grounded in the multimodal counternarrative work highlighted by DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall (2018; 2019), Caffrey and Rogers (2018), Rogers (2016), Dewhurst (2011), Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004), and Smith (2018). Students are able to develop critical consciousness and inquire about systems, seeking to understand inequalities and how to reconstruct and redesign with social justice in mind. These practices are also found Dewhurst’s (2014) understanding of critical pedagogy as the idea that “young people can then begin to see how the world can be altered or re-created into a more just and equitable world” (p. 9). With this awareness comes the possibility of being an “active agent, capable of enacting change” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 9).

Awareness and agency are key elements of engaging in multimodal artwork and activist artwork.

Creating artwork in a variety of modalities enhances students’ opportunities for imagining new possibilities and sharing those visions with a justice and equity oriented lens with others in public sites of engagement. Dewhurst (2011) writes that “what all artistic production shares is a commitment to engage in creating art that draws attention to, mobilizes action toward, or attempts to intervene in systems of inequality or injustice” (p. 366). With this definition in

mind, social justice artwork is a critical area to explore in considering how adolescents interact with social justice issues and how multimodalities and multiliteracies are part of these explorations. Dewhurst (2011) creates a framework of three lenses, *intention*, *process*, and *social context*, as possibilities for analyzing the complexities of adolescents creating works of social justice. Dewhurst's lenses are helpful in thinking about student artwork and how intentions can take shape into action and changes in equity and/or social justice issues; her lenses are also helpful in focusing not only on "justice based outcomes" but also the possibility that "the work may transform the artist along the way" (Dewhurst, 2011, p. 365). These lenses also provide for a possibility in highlighting a particular aspect (such as intention) in looking at student work and analyzing data. Dewhurst's specific examples show different aspects of each lens in practice and how students transform their ideas and intentions into artwork for audiences to experience.

Students' reflections allow for the possibility of understanding their social justice interactions and how they go about creating work for sharing in the public. Students often reflect on work, which provides insights into their thinking and ideas; Dewhurst's lenses highlight ideas within these reflections. Intention is an idea which is explicitly discussed in classrooms, as well as process. Dewhurst also identifies key characteristics of social justice art and the possibilities for examining artist intentions, thoughts about direct changes of structures affecting inequalities, and addressing injustices. The possibilities of examining intention, process, and context can reveal how artists create works and construct dialogue/action with regards to social justice intentions in an aesthetic creation.

Examining these lenses in practice, Dewhurst (2011, 2014) highlights how student activist art becomes a dynamic, multidimensional event that carries possibilities for transformation and evolution for multiple participants. Following a group of teenage participants

who voluntarily explored activist art in a studio art class, Dewhurst (2011) used her three critical lenses to consider the artwork, the process of creating art, and the potential transformations of artists as they engaged in social justice artwork. In discussing how a 16-year-old artist wanted to cause people to think and analyze, this revealed more than only intention, as it also pointed to “how each artist understands the role their artwork plays in affecting justice” (p. 368) and the “capacity to impact conditions of injustice” (p. 368). These intentions can also reveal connections to lived experiences, further layering the complications of social justice artwork as it connects with the artists and the audiences. The processes of connecting, questioning, and translating highlight not only how the artwork was created, but also the complications within the art itself. For example, one artist explained that multiple purposes were at play, including ‘power’ and ‘aesthetic beauty.’ (Dewhurst, 2011, p. 372). Another student wanted to create a piece of art centered on the perils of climate change but did not wish to use spray paint that would contribute to harmful environmental effects, leading the artist to select another medium for his work. Translating ideas and intentions into fully realized multimodal creations requires strategic decisions that show deeper understandings of social justice issues and potential for social movement. The lens of context or social location can reveal how lived experiences are part of the artist’s work and the potential transaction with audiences/viewers. The social location also helps us consider how the act of creating art itself can be a liberating act for the artist.

Furthering understandings of transformations of student artists, critical consciousness is a concept which is highlighted through these lenses. This aspect clarifies the possibilities for transformation within the student artists as individuals, as well as their understandings and intentions in creating social justice artwork. In listening to a student discuss how they viewed images of women in magazines differently, Dewhurst (2014) observes how students may “come

to a more critical consciousness through the actual process of art-making” and develop a “more critical stance” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 74). This level of engagement comes through questioning and analysis and leads adolescents toward deeper understandings of ideas beyond their initial thinking. The process of engaging with ideas and translating these ideas through various modalities and mediums, all while reflecting on intentions and possible outcomes of sharing their art, empowers learners and solidifies their agency as the creator of their own artwork with a critical stance. With a foundation in socio-cultural and multimodal theories, examining social justice work with these lenses can help achieve a more nuanced understanding of possibilities within social justice art.

Creating counternarratives utilizing various modalities and learning sites allows students to focus on equity and justice with multiple audiences and create possibilities for meaningful dialogue and transactions. Utilizing a youth participatory action research (YPAR) approach with a critical arts pedagogy, Wright (2020) drew on Dewhurst’s (2011, 2014) activist art framework to examine how educators can support youth’s “knowledge production, systemic analysis, and transformative agency to address and transform structural injustices” (Wright, 2020, p. 33). With this approach, Wright examined instances where students discussed lived experienced and reflected on their understandings of injustices; students also reflect on their performances and arts-based practices in self-selected groups. Students created counternarratives and shared them with others as part of their engagement with social justice arts. These counternarratives disrupted traditional discourses and created spaces for new social futures, giving students the opportunity to imagine. Students drew on the notion of “Theater of the Oppressed” (Boal, 2019), to create “real” versus “ideal” skits that imagined new scenarios to traditional injustices and oppressions experienced by the youth. These skits led students to meaningful, authentic discussions about the

necessity of safe spaces for youth in the community. The skits created an opportunity to analyze and consider why certain issues were present and what possible solutions existed for teenagers in the community. These discussions became fruitful places to invent new alternatives and design social futures.

Critical arts pedagogies can be a strategy to disrupt dominant youth discourses and shift epistemological positions to invent new possible realities. Art and creative practices can operate as an analytic tool that opens up a multi-modal, reflective space and supports a platform for youth to reimagine new possibilities for their intersectional identities, encounters, systems and present and future worlds. Artmaking can be used as a tool of analysis to examine young artmakers' everyday experiences in a process of inquiry that reveals new ways of thinking about normalized encounters, intersectional identities, and shared experiences (Wright, 2020, p. 43)

In this instance, we can see how the students engaged as artmakers in developing and performing skits based on their experiences and the issues they faced in the community. Developing art created not only a space to analyze and understand the problem in greater depth; it also created the avenue to “reimagine new possibilities for their intersectional identities.... future worlds” (Wright, 2020, p. 43). When students engaged in a multimodal production, it generated new possibilities as they enacted alternative scenarios and reflected on the “ideal” skit. As students engaged in a search for social justice, they did so with a critical lens, examining the issues and circumstances that led to unfair targeting of youth in the community and negative encounters with law enforcement. They sought alternatives with a critical eye, and this allowed them to take a view that encompassed possibilities along with realities. This “critical arts pedagogy” (Wright, 2020) is activist in nature and gave students a chance to see, understand, and create with new

perspectives. Students sought change and agency, for themselves and for others in their community, as “engaging in a critical arts pedagogy built a sense of transformative agency to be able to act with others to change their environments and allowed the artmakers to etch out creative possibilities in the present and near future” (Wright, 2020, p. 44).

Social Justice Artwork and Public Pedagogies

Building naturally on the multiliteracies and multimodal theories that students incorporated in their work, examining public pedagogies clarifies the possibilities and potential for intersections with issues of interest to the public and social justice concerns. Biesta (2012, 2014) recognizes public spheres not necessarily as places for didactic teaching, but rather places of ‘human togetherness’ where “forms of interruption that keep the opportunities for ‘becoming public’ open” (Biesta, 2012, p. 685) are supported and recognized. Social justice oriented work can become part of these public spheres in which artists and audiences interact and interrupt norms. Biesta theorizes that “public pedagogy can work at the *intersection* of education and politics, that is in the interest of the public ‘condition of plurality’” (Biesta, 2014, p. 22). In this way, there is a concern for publicness that moves beyond an educational moment; these learning moments are rooted in a public space and in a way that also speaks to a concern for “publicness.” Biesta (2012) writes that “public pedagogy appears as an enactment of a concern for ‘publicness’ or ‘publicity’, that is a concern for the public quality of human togetherness and thus for the possibility of actors and events to become public” (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). With this understanding, interruptions within public spaces serve to enhance the ‘publicness’ of places, allowing for new opportunities that connect individuals and allow for freedom, possibility, and opportunity. Further, Biesta (2014) recognizes “educational work” as not being instructional in nature, but rather “more activist, more experimental, and more demonstrative” (Biesta, 2014, p.

23). This creates opportunities to explore alternatives in a more organic, experimental space than traditional instructional moments.

These forms of ‘interruptions’ can also include a critical, activist nature within public spaces. Engaging a critical lens with public pedagogies allows us to examine power structures and concepts of design and re-design in public spaces. This critical lens illustrates how it is possible for educative agents work “toward a revelation or an epiphany in regard to the society structures of power” (Charman and Dixon, 2021, p. 55) highlighting a critical element within public pedagogy work. This concept of critical public pedagogy “ascribes to a problem posing form of education” (Charman and Dixon, 2021, p. 55), drawing on Freire’s (2000) notions of problem posing education and the ideas of dynamic, transformative views of education and the practice of freedom. This aligns with the vision of people who “come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire, 2000, p. 83).

Considering the concept of ‘interruptions’ combined with a critical lens creates new possibilities for understanding activist artwork in public spaces. In this sense, the artist is not an instructor, but instead acts as an interruptor. In this way, the artist is seen as “the educational agent - the public pedagogue - is neither an instructor nor a facilitator, but rather someone who interrupts” (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). Coupled with multiple modalities, artists can express nuanced understandings of social justice issues while initiating artistic interruptions in public spheres, fostering complex interactions within community spaces. These interruptions become the basis of the transaction, or dialogue, between art, creator, and viewer. Kester (1998) clarifies this as “activist art is based on relationships with its audience and political intervention; it is deliberately designed as a forum for public dialogue” (Kester, 1998, as cited by Duncum, 2011, p. 353). This

builds on the idea that reality is something that is in process, and not static, as activists seek to ask questions and engage with the public through their artwork.

As creators of these interruptions, artists facilitate transactions and act as “educative agents” (Charman and Dixon, 2021), actively disrupting what could be commonplace public transactions and redirecting attention and action in a way that highlights public interests and social justice issues. This engagement as disruptors highlights their own agency as community members and participants in public spaces. Desai and Darts (2016) write that, “urban interventionist art practices.... use urban spaces as sites of art-making, learning and social action” (p. 188). It is possible for artists to approach these shared public spaces as potential sites of learning and social action; these interactions also highlight the potential for critical engagement. In focusing on social justice issues and disrupting traditional spaces to highlight voices and issues of marginalized groups, artists, engaging and members of the community, can address power and social justice issues with a critical lens. Zorilla and Tisdell (2016) highlight critical possibilities as “critical public pedagogy hinges on reality’s deconstruction/reconstruction in making power relations visible (Fine, Weis, Centrie, & Roberts, 2000; Grodach, 2011; Jaramillo, 2010)” (Zorilla, and Tisdell, 2016, p. 286). Highlighting the power relations and making visible what is often invisible in society, artists are able to interact with audiences and members of the public through their artistic ‘interruptions.’

Sharing social justice oriented artwork in public spaces can raise critical consciousness and create possibilities for further explorations for all participants. Zorilla and Tisdell (2016) explore these ideas through their exploration of Camnitzer’s artwork, as they examine public art sharing and transformations. Zorilla and Tisdell (2016) state, “Camnitzer talks of opening space for individuals to interact with artworks, so codes are exchanged, and new meanings are formed

and evolve as work, artist, and viewer come into relation. The budding may awaken viewer and artist to a new understanding of power imbalances, hopefully challenging ideology and perhaps affecting the status quo” (Zorilla and Tisdell, 2016, p. 285). The process of creating art opens spaces for critical explorations for both artist and viewer. While not using the term critical public pedagogy, Camnitzer’s artwork and discussions demonstrate how he embraces the idea of art as a means to challenge, critique, and educate viewers about social issues. With his conceptual art, Camnitzer creates a space to raise critical consciousness, which encompasses critical public pedagogy; this relationship is expressed as, “art can be a form of adult education for critical consciousness as well as a form of critical public pedagogy” (Brady, 2006, as cited by Zorilla and Tisdell, 2016, p. 277). Art becomes a site of engagement for raising critical conscious and engaging as critical public pedagogy.

Situating art in public spaces creates avenues for discourse among members of the public while highlighting voices and ideas that often remain invisible. Desai and Darts (2016) explore two public art projects that intersect with members of the public and address public concerns. One project takes place at public bus stop, interrogating the ramifications of eliminating public bus lines that were used by members of the community. The student artist of this project was interested in the power dynamics of who made decisions about public bus routes and the factors that drove the decisions regarding which bus routes would be viable in the future. In using a public bus stop as a site of engagement, the artist made a statement “This is not a bus stop,” which in turn asked viewers what the bus stop was, and what it would be once it was no longer a public bus stop. Of particular interest to the student artist was the fact that the bus stop was located in a low-income community and served a large number of people without transportation options; also of note was how members of the public were viewed as ‘consumers of service’

rather than members of a community. These factors inspired Nicole's work to create a space for community members to interact, through "log books" and an online blog address. This encouraged personal interaction with passers-by and actively sought input as to how the elimination of the public bus route would impact members of the community.

A second project involved creating an "invisibility suit" made of small white boxes that disguised her physical image. This project allowed the artist to mask her identity while starting conversations about surveillance in public spaces and the balance between security and privacy in an increasingly technology-based environment. Dismayed at the myriad of ways in which technology facilitated the collection of private identification and information, the student artist sought to explore these interactions and how public spaces and people were impacted by private security interests. Inspired by the technology used by a private company in video surveillance systems, the student activist created an interactive art experience for viewers and carried this concept forward into online documentation and conversations. This project also recognized the viability and possibility of multiple public spaces, including public streets and online public discussion forums, blending both physical and digital public spaces with critical interrogations and questions.

Critical to each project was not only the artifact or artwork itself (the bus stop artwork and the invisibility suit), but also the physical location for each project. Starting these conversations through public art was a form of dissent for each artist and created avenues for meaningful and critical transactions between viewers and artists. These particular projects highlight the possibilities for activists to interrogate, create, and instigate discussions that carry forward issues of interest to the public. According to Desai and Darts (2016), "their public art asks us to think about the relationship between contemporary issues, art, social institutions and

individual agency outside the walls of schools or formal school systems” (Desai and Darts, 2016, p. 189-90). These projects highlight the possibilities of activist artwork in public spaces, that serve to interrupt and also seek meaningful transactions with members of the public on issues of a critical nature. They acknowledge the power dynamics at play and seek to interrogate power structure within public spaces and how those dynamics impact the public.

Chapter Summary

Designing and creating with multimodalities and multiliteracies encompasses a complex and multilayered process for learners. Bringing multimodal practices into the classrooms supports all learners and values their strengths as individuals and meaning makers in a variety of modes; embracing diverse literacies, experiences, and practices creates space for students to value their own work and express their understandings for public audiences beyond the traditional classroom. Embracing multiliteracies and multimodalities allows for the possibility to “position youth as critical agents in their own learning” (Thomas and Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 315). With a more expansive view of literacy and multimodal practices, students have the opportunity to create, reflect, and develop their own understandings of themselves and their own agency as learners. This empowerment carries through their work and the possibilities they have in creating work with intention and purpose, considering civic engagement and social justice issues within their narratives, counternarratives, and artwork. Carrying work forward into public spaces allows for more complex and dynamic interactions with public audiences, and the potential to move forward with critical explorations and social justice issues. Supporting students’ use of multimodalities creates opportunities for students to be empowered and develop their own agency as creators and as individuals with voices, and also empowers them to center the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups in public spaces for a wide variety of audiences.

Working within public spaces, adolescents are able to “design social futures” (New London Group, 1996) and consider the world they want to inhabit. These intentions become an integral part of the process of developing and then transacting with various audiences surrounding social justice issues. Student artists engage as “interrupters” (Biesta, 2012) and foster dynamic experiences in new spaces for learning. Students are able to work within their communities, engage with others, and create meaningful transactions based in possibility and hope for the future.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This project draws on multiliteracies and multimodalities situated within social justice pedagogies and public pedagogies, in order to explore the ways in which adolescents interact with, express understandings of, and generate artwork related to social justice issues. This chapter outlines the purpose of the research project and the alignment with the following research questions, followed by a rationale for the bound case study design utilizing both thematic analysis and mediated discourse analysis. I then discuss my role as a researcher, including the research context, participants, and setting. Following this, the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures are explored in more detail, particularly as each aligns with the research questions and goals of the project. Finally, I include validation, ethical issues, and structure of findings in order to clarify how the design and multiple analysis approaches contribute to overall outcomes.

Description of the Project and Research Questions

The purpose of this research project is to discover and understand the ways in which teachers and students within an arts-based learning space expressed their ideas and understandings of social justice issues with student-created artwork. Within the space of an art institute, this study focused on the sedimented learning experiences that occur through the course of creating and exhibiting artwork centered on social justice topics. The learning experiences was generally defined as the events and processes experienced by the teachers and students as part of the arts-based program.

Central Research Question:

- What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?

Research Sub-questions:

- How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?
- What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?

Research Approach and Rationale

This study is embedded within sociocultural theory at the macro-level, drawing on notions of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009), multimodalities (Kress and Jewitt, 2003; Jewitt, 2008; 2009), social justice pedagogies (Greene 1995; 1997; hooks 1994; 2013, Dewhurst, 2011; Cammarota, 2011) and public pedagogies (Biesta, 2012, 2014; Charmon and Dixon, 2021; Desai and Darts, 2016). In the interest of data analysis, this project utilizes both thematic analysis (Grbich, 2018) and mediated discourse theory (Scollon and Scollon, 2003; Wohlwend, 2020) in the analysis of visual media and artifacts. With the following central question: “What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?”, I hoped to learn how teachers and students constructed meaning and enacted their understandings by placing their artwork in public spaces for exhibition and transacting with audiences.

The initial venture into research centered on ethnography, spending time listening, writing, and observing in the field. Ultimately, these experiences influenced my research design and approach, and my fieldworking helped me develop relationships and an understanding of the art institute. This fieldworking experience led to substantial writing as a means of understanding the research experience as well as positionality and my role as a researcher. As my time in the classroom evolved, my research design naturally grew out of this experience. Examining the art institute as a case study was a natural evolution that fit with my ethnographic approach and the nature of the art institute as its own space within a larger educational setting. As the art institute explored different social justice themes over the course of each school year, natural boundaries formed with each thematic exploration. While my time at the institute covered the span of three separate school years, and three separate social justice themes, this research project evolved to focus on one theme, human trafficking (conducted during the 2018/19 school year), as a bounded case (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This bounded case study directs the focus on student artwork to a specified time period, yet also recognizes the importance of data collected across the entire research time, as teachers and students engaged in reflection and discussion of selected themes across multiple school years. Selecting a case study design and establishing boundaries, or “bounding the case” (Yin, 2018), allowed me to focus on data and creating a clear relationship between the case design and my research questions. Time boundaries and thematic boundaries became a natural design element, as data was collected across three school years and three different social-justice oriented institute themes. I also created boundaries in terms of participants with regard to design; as the work encompassed multiple participants from various places, including community organizations, district personnel, and parent volunteers, I focused on two groups of participants, actively participating teachers and students, as part of my

established boundary in my case study design, and this is reflected in my research questions. This narrowing of participants and my research questions also influenced data collection, which further created specific boundaries for this case study design. Within the larger scope of my case study design, my research questions, data collection, and my role as a researcher guided me toward specific focus on how participants leveraged semiotic resources and how they interacted with social justice explorations, including the development of student artifacts to share in public spaces.

Role of the Researcher

I have been a participant observer at the art institute over a three year period, though my role evolved in nuanced ways that reflected my participation and relationship building with participants at the high school. In my current context, I am a faculty member at a local university, and I am an outsider at Milner High School. Over time, I built relationships with teachers, administrators, and staff. In my second year, I found that the office staff no longer asked me where I was heading, and I have been told not to worry about a badge as they know who I am. I regularly engaged in conversations with the principal and teachers on campus. I attended multiple advisory board meetings and teacher meetings. At multiple points during meetings over the years, my presence evolved from one of quiet observer to a more active participant. Multiple teachers asked for my feedback and thoughts during meetings and consulted with me on possible teaching practices and literature selection. During one advisory board meetings, two teachers asked for my opinion of the presentation and thoughts on using social media to promote the program. Time, presence on campus, and relationships facilitated the evolution of my role in the program and my support of the students and teachers within the institute.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the school site, which was closed during March of 2019 and remained closed for over a year. The closure impacted the institute and my own involvement as a participant observer. While the school moved to distance learning and zoom meetings during my third year of observations, I was included in faculty meetings as teachers planned and developed curriculum. I was regularly included on emails and met with teachers, sometimes one-on-one through zoom sessions, in order to discuss current activities within the art institute and their support of students.

With several years of experience within the art institute, I had the opportunity to build a relationship with teachers through classroom observations, informal conversations and observation/participation in meetings. Just as Campano (2007) recognized the importance of the “second classroom” as an alternative and ideological space, I sought to spend time in both the physical classrooms as well as the alternative and ideological spaces in which relationships are created and nurtured. It is this space that includes “work of the students and teachers that remains for the most part, invisible and uncompensated, both in terms of funding and recognition. It includes the relationships that they build and nurture with one another as they share their life stories” (Campano, 2007, p. 40). The stories that I listened to and noted were foundational in building relationships with students and teachers and informed each step of my research cycles. I had multiple opportunities to collect data through classroom observations, interviews, advisory meetings, audiovisual data, and public artwork exhibits. Building relationships with participants creates the opportunity for in-depth interviews and conversations which have become significant pieces of data. Working with two teacher participants and analyzing multiple units of data allows for “patterns [as] the main outcome” (Yin, 2016, p. 202) of data analysis. These patterns are instrumental in answering my research questions. Further, my continued involvement with the

institute has facilitated relationships beyond the school year in which data was first collected, facilitating the possibility for reflective interviews with the participants.

Research Context and Setting

Milner High School is located within a large school district that serves a city of over 500,000 residents. The school district serves over 70,000 students and Milner High School is one of twenty secondary schools. This particular site serves a student population with significant socio-economic needs as well as a large number of English Language Learners and immigrants. The majority of students are Hispanic, Hmong, and African American* (<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>).

Milner High School is the only school site to offer a unique arts-based experience that allows students to explore relevant, social-justice based themes in various classes. Students in the ArtWorks Institute classes are 10th, 11th and 12th grade students. The lead teacher, Mr. Emerson (all names are pseudonyms), is an art teacher whose initial work at the high school led to the founding of the ArtWorks Institute over fifteen years ago. The institute has grown to encompass several teachers and classes in various disciplines. Teachers have elected to voluntarily participate in this institute and are deeply engaged with the students as well as the institute's mission. As the school site has evolved to include multiple academies for students, the incoming freshman have the opportunity to select the institute that is most aligned with their own interests. Students now enter the program as 9th or 10th grade students, and the ArtWorks Institute is officially recognized as a Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathway* within the high school. A CTE Pathway is: "A program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers" (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/>).

Students within the art pathway take courses which have media production and technical career skills embedded within the core high school curriculum, and the institute employs a social justice theme as part of this experience.

As the institute has evolved over the years, the teachers have experienced tensions along with possibilities for agency and choice. As the relationship between the district and the institute has evolved, teachers have had the opportunity to select themes with input and support from students and other stakeholders at the school site. In addition to being directly involved in the processing of selecting themes and topics, the teachers also worked closely with students over the course of the year as they prepare for public art exhibits in the spring semester. Deciding on the course for art projects and possible exhibitions/installations was a collaborative process involving teachers and students. Additionally, installing the various art exhibits within multiple spaces involved both teachers and students. With close involvement at each step in the process and a significant level of engagement for all participants, this site has potential for deep inquiry surrounding the topics of social justice issues with adolescents and public art exhibitions.

Participants

This research project involved multiple teachers, stakeholders, and students within the ArtWorks Institute. Mr. Peterson serves as the current principal at the site with several years of history in supporting the institute. Mr. Emerson, Mr. Vega, Ms. Sanchez, Mr. Thao are all past or current teachers within the institute who have dedicated time and energy to the students of the institute and the projects they have created. These four teachers represent a range of experiences, years of teaching, and involvement within the institute, including former and current teachers. Two teachers have also participated in the institute in the past but are now in different positions within the district, maintaining connections and relationships with the art Institute. Mr. Emerson is the founding teacher of the institute as well as a lead teacher with over fifteen years of

experience. He is an artist and a teacher; his own personal philosophy regarding artwork is present in his classroom and he embraces the concept of a dynamic art studio for students. He is also committed to his students' education and will push for access to books, resources, speakers, and resources on his students' behalf. He was a classroom teacher (and lead teacher) during the human trafficking year. Later, he left the classroom to work at the district level in curriculum support, but is in regular contact with current teachers in the institute and is involved in various district projects that are inspired by the art institute's work. Ms. Sanchez spent two years with the institute before moving to another site in the district where she continues to build on ideas developed in institute projects. She is passionate about creating rich literature experiences for her students and supporting their development as readers and writers. She employs technology in her teaching, drawing on digital literacies to enhance possibilities for students as writers and creators. She is also interested in community engagement and supporting students' involvement in communities beyond the school site.

Two teachers, Mr. Vega and Mr. Thao are current teachers within the institute, with three to four years of experience in the classroom. Mr. Vega has several years of experience teaching video production and uses technology to assist students in creating video, photographs, and media for projects as well as documenting student work across the institute. Mr. Thao teaches dance and textiles, creating student performances and building a textile curriculum that supports community involvement and service and he is in his third year of teaching.

The participants in this study have key commonalities as well as distinct differences, all of which will create a rich opportunity for further understanding what happens when teachers and students explore social justice issues and create opportunities for public art exhibitions. All of the teachers are passionate about student engagement, collaboration, and meaningful learning.

All are also committed to the institute’s focus on bringing “voice to the voiceless” through studio art experiences. Two of the teachers have years of experience with the institute and were instrumental in shaping the overall art institute; two other teachers are relatively new to the institute but eager to participate and collaborate with the faculty. Together, the faculty brings with them an array of experiences, both in and out of the classroom, and decades of collective teaching experiences at the site as well as other schools within the district. All of the teachers are also open and reflective in discussing their experiences with students and the process of creating artwork, making for rich discussions and interviews.

Dozens of students participate in the ArtWorks Institute each year, and my years of research led me to work with many of these students. I conducted classroom observations as well as informal and formal student interviews. Three students in particular participated in formal interviews and also consented to recordings of conversations and photographs of student work. These three focal students became part of my study and were instrumental in examining patterns and ideas across teacher and student participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected over a period of three research cycles (as outlined in Table 3.1). These cycles created three natural periods of data collection: initial, middle, and final phases. During each cycle, a different focus highlighted various aspects of data and built toward a final phase that emphasized reflection along with student artifacts.

Table 3.1: Research Cycles

Research Cycles	Initial Cycle	Middle Cycle	Final Cycle
Timeline	December 2018 – June 2019	August 2019 – June 2020	August 2020 – June 2021
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain familiarity with the ArtWorks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused study on teacher’s intentions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on final phase of teacher interviews

	<p>Program, Milner High School campus, teachers and students in the Institute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with teachers and students. • Form initial questions. 	<p>curriculum design, inquiry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop relationships with teachers in the Institute. • Observe process of early stages of thematic curriculum planning and continue observations through public art exhibits and culminating experiences in spring semester. 	<p>and observe planning stages of current and future years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize collection of artifacts (student artwork and performances) and incorporate artifacts as part of teacher reflections.
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/Teacher Interviews • Observation of Advisory Board meetings • Classroom observations • Photographs/videos of student artwork and performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/Teacher Interviews • Observation of Advisory Board Meetings • Multiple Classroom observations • Photographs/videos of student artwork and performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/Teacher Interviews • Observation of Advisory Board meetings, faculty planning meetings • Classroom observations • Photographs/videos of student artwork and performances

During the initial phase, an ethnographic approach using qualitative methods guided the data collection process, supporting the exploratory nature of this portion of the research cycle. This approach was appropriate given the desire to understand the nuances and complexities of students’ and teachers’ lived experiences within the art institute. As a participant observer, I immersed myself in classrooms within the art institute. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) describe the “core of ethnographic research: firsthand participation in some initially unfamiliar social world and the production of written accounts of that world that draw upon such participation” (1). With significant time in the field, stretching two and a half school years, I attempted to gather a variety of data from a variety of spaces within the art institute. I attempted

to capture multiple aspects and stages of the learning experiences and production of student artwork. While I continued to engage an ethnographer's approach throughout all three research cycles, the middle and final research cycles employed new data collection methods such as participant interviews, meant to complement and further my overarching goals of understanding the complexities surrounding the learning experiences within the art institute in a meaningful and authentic manner.

As my research evolved, I organized my research in distinct cycles which clarified my purpose, data collection methods, and types of data. Engaging in the act of inquiry lends itself to cycles that are cyclical and often recursive in nature and highlight different aspects of the research process. The act of organizing this aspect of my research allowed for clarification and purposeful planning. lisahunter, Emerald, and Martin (2013) write that "as part of the 'understand and plan' phase" it is important to "clarify your thinking, and therefore your action, as the project moves through its cycles" (p. 63). Refining and articulating the research cycles create this opportunity to clarify and understand. During this initial phase of research, often referred to as *reconnaissance* (lisahunter, Emerald, and Martin, 2013), I took field notes in order to build my understandings of the space, the participants, and the artwork that became a focal point as the institute made progress toward public art exhibits. This phase allowed me to develop inquiry questions and build relationships, drawing on ethnography as a framework to support these goals.

As my research progressed into the middle phase, I continued to add multiple sources of data and included interviews as another layer of data. The opportunity to observe classrooms, attend institute and faculty meetings, and interview teachers (both informally and formally), allowed me to analyze themes and findings across data sources and contribute to overall

knowledge of the institute as a whole. In the final cycle of research, an important addition to the data collection plan is the reflective interviews with teachers, incorporating previously collected artifacts as part of the reflection process. This creates a cycle in itself in which the participants explore a particular theme, develop projects, and publicly exhibit artwork, which mirrors the natural structure of the art institute's work with students. Mirroring this cycle and allowing for all aspects of the cycle within the data collection, including the reflective components, is important in authentically representing findings from this case. In considering the overall cycle of my research, several key concepts created the foundation for the multi-year process. Relationship building, participants' voices, and student work were all key elements which are found in each smaller cycle, and were also present with the types of data collected in each cycle. Each cycle informed following cycles and worked together to create a spiraling effect with regard to data collection and analysis; this spiraling effect allowed for deeper exploration and analysis with the progression of each cycle. For example, in the initial cycle my teacher interviews focused on two teachers, while I met other teachers in the institute and had small interactions with them during the initial cycle. Moving into the middle cycle, I spent more time in the additional teacher classrooms and began the process of informal and finally formal interviews. Finally, in the last cycle, I was able to complete formal and reflective interviews with each teacher, building on the relationship and time that I was able to spend in each teacher's classroom during earlier cycles. The bulk of the data consisted of classroom observations and participant interviews (informal and formal) in all three cycles. Collecting this data over three cycles (as outlined in Figure 3.1) allowed for a recursive nature to evolve, and the possibility of exploring data over significant time periods of research. It also allowed data to build over the course of the research cycles (see Table 3.2 for information on data collection and types of data,

organized by research cycles). Informal interviews and conversations with participants during the Initial Cycle influenced and led to more formal interviews conducted during the Middle and Final research cycles. The collection of student artwork also evolved, as I spent more time with participants and photographed earlier artwork that teachers and students referenced throughout the interview process, even including student artwork from earlier years prior to my initial beginning cycle.

Table 3.2: Data Collection and Research Cycles

Data	Research Cycle	Type of Data	Additional Details
Classroom Observations	Initial, Middle	Field notes, written memos following observations, informal participant interviews field notes, Institute documentation and artifacts delineating history and evolution over time	Weekly observations, informal interviews (3-4 for each cycle) and conversations, photos of past projects, documentation of Institute
Teacher Interviews	Early, Middle	Transcripts, audio recordings, informal interview field notes, written memos following formal participant interviews	6 teachers, multiple formal interviews throughout both research cycles (building on informal interviews and conversations). Minimum of 2 interviews for each teacher. Three or more interviews for three of participants.
Institute Meetings	Initial, Middle, Final	Transcripts, audio/video recordings, written memos following meeting observations	Approximately 8-10 meetings throughout all research cycles
Student Artwork and Performances	Initial, Middle, Final	Photographs, video recordings (researcher's own and publicly available through district, social media, and local news)	Over one hundred photographs and multiple video clips ranging from 1 min to 10 min each
Reflective/Art Based Interviews	Final	Transcripts, video recordings, written memos following interview	6 teachers, multiple interviews conducted during final research cycle which included artwork and reflection

Data Analysis Procedures

In accordance with the multiple sources and types of data, I employed both thematic analysis and mediated discourse analysis. Thematic analysis allowed me to focus on data that I collected with multiple participants and classroom observations; employing mediated discourse analysis with the student artwork allowed me to center the student artwork and examine how students’ transactions with social justice issues were sedimented within the artwork that they created. Each approach created an avenue to explore that contributed to my research questions and honored student artwork and participant voices. It was also important for me to consider the relevance of each type of data and its relationship to the research questions, particularly as it related to methods of data analysis. I aligned my data with a method of analysis that honored the holistic nature of the data and the potential for analysis that would contribute to my overall findings. These questions, data, methods, and rationale are highlighted in the following table (See Table 3.3 for alignment of data, research questions, and analysis) and demonstrate the affordances of multiple methods of analysis to support the research of student artwork and the art institute as a whole. These methods also align with my research design, utilizing a bound case study and examining student artwork nested within the case study.

Table 3.3: Research Questions, Data, and Analysis Alignment

Research Question	Relevant Data	Method of Analysis	Rationale
What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?	Teacher interviews, student interviews, classroom observations, Institute faculty meeting observations, art exhibit observations	Thematic analysis	Conceptual mapping in early stages of analysis to allow for open inquiry; exploration of themes (and codes) as part of mapping experience. Honors variety of data and allows for broader inquiry across multiple areas of the

			Institute/case.
How are the learning experiences, understandings, classroom practices, personal values, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice issues?	Student artifacts, photographs, videos of artwork (classroom and public art exhibits), student performances at public art exhibits, collected during the three research cycles	MDA (geosemiotics)	Utilizing MDA places student artifacts at the center of data analysis, acknowledging art as unit of analysis. Emphasizes importance of student artwork in the Institute as a whole; also values and honors the intentional transactions created by teachers and students in displaying artwork for various audiences in public spaces.
What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?	Student artifacts, photographs, videos of artwork (classroom and public art exhibits), student performances at public art exhibits, collected during the three research cycles	MDA (geosemiotics)	Utilizing MDA places student artifacts at the center of data analysis, acknowledging art as unit of analysis. Emphasizes importance of student artwork in the Institute as a whole; also values and honors the intentional transactions created by teachers and students in displaying artwork for various audiences in public spaces.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a highly individual approach to data analysis, as it is dependent upon data, process, and research questions. Braun & Clarke (2006) describe the process of thematic analysis as one which “identifies patterns (themes, stories) within data, and theorizes language as constitutive of meaning and meaning as social” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Thematic analysis involves grouping data, labeling, and conceptualizing data and its connections to literature and theory. This analysis honors a constructivist perspective of learning and serves to identify patterns and ideas within data. Grbich (2013) outlines various stages for thematic analysis, as researchers spend significant time rereading and reviewing data, often interacting with the data through annotations, highlights, and descriptive writings. The thematic analysis approach also values a complete set of data, as Grbich (2013) says that the “data should speak for itself initially before researcher-designed labels are over-imposed” (Grbich, 2013, p. 62), especially labels which are applied early in the analysis process.

Thematic analysis also includes specific processes to examining data (Grbich, 2013). In particular, conceptual mapping lends itself to broad sets of data in which it is helpful to have an overview as well as more specific areas of analysis. The idea of conceptual mapping is a visual process, often involving multiple bubble or concept maps (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This lends itself to the quantity and variety of data collected as part of the study; it will be possible to create multiple conceptual maps which will help illuminate patterns across and within the various data sets (See example in Figure 3.4 of concept mapping with two participants). There is flexibility in conceptual mapping, creating visual maps which also support the flexible and evolving nature of the research cycles. The conceptual mapping process also allows for the utilization of a second process, termed block and file (Grbich, 2013), which allows for more micro-analysis of specific chunks of data. This process involves grouping data under broad labels; this allows for data to be

maintained in significant sets, and the ability to display data in themes with specific quotes. In conjunction with conceptual mapping, this process allows for both macro analysis at a broader level with conceptual maps, and micro analysis utilizing the block and file approach to keep “large chunks of data intact” (Grbich, 2013, p. 63). This further allows for themes that will inform the findings of the research project. This process also allows for identifying and interpreting themes which will be relevant in conjunction with the analysis of student artwork and the public art exhibitions.

Figure 3.4: Concept Mapping for Interview with Mr. Vega and Ms. Sanchez



created with www.bubbi.us

Mediated Discourse Analysis

In valuing the student created artifacts as pieces of data, mediated discourse theory honors the artifacts as holistic pieces of art while also examining their placement in broader, situated literacies and contexts. Mediated discourse theory is “a framework for understanding how mediated actions are shaped by and aggregate into social and literacy practices over time” (Scollon, 2001, as cited by Rish, 2015, p. 13). This is grounded in sociocultural theory, as researchers recognize the cultural and situated meanings of literacies. Researchers engage in two levels of analysis: “(1) MDA is used on the micro-level to consider how mediated action unfolds and aggregates into social and literacy practices over time; and (2) nexus analysis is used on the

macro-level to map the constellation of social and literacy” (Rish, 2015, p. 13). This approach allows for a micro-level analysis of artifacts and interactions with material objects. This approach also allows for a broader macro analysis that places literacy events within the situated and cultural contexts in which they take place. Within the area of nexus analysis, geosemiotics created a more specific and nuanced lens in order to look “closely at design as storying with artifacts, drawing from Kress’ social semiotic approach to multimodality, Pahl and Rowsell’s artifactual literacies, and Ron and Suzanne Scollon’s discourses in place” (Wohlwend, 2020, p. 168). Geosemiotics is grounded in the study of various modes and signs which are used to convey meaning, termed social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This mediated discourse analysis theory creates possibilities for examining the nuances of student artwork as a unit of analysis; it also allows for the exploration of the artwork within the contexts of classroom spaces and public art exhibits which constitute their own specific literary events.

Focusing on student artifacts while utilizing nexus analysis and geosemiotics allows for the consideration of artifacts as potential sites of expression and engagement for the students and teachers involved in the art institute. It opens possibilities to explore experiences for both artists and viewers. The geosemiotics approach allows for analysis of the modes within the artwork, including color, language, gaze, etc. It also allows for analysis of the modes found in the placement of student artwork within public exhibition spaces. Wohlwend (2020) describes, “in social semiotic theory, a designer’s interest is shaped by situated ways of reading and making signs and a design’s function in a cultural context. In this way, interest encompasses a personal vision of the design itself and how to best achieve a social purpose within the cultural sphere” (p. 170). The nuanced method of geosemiotics analysis allows for analysis of intentions, engagement, and impacts while considering the perspectives of students, teachers, and viewers. It

also allows for examination of artifacts within public spaces, further developing an understanding of the dynamic transactions taking place when students share artwork in public spaces with public audiences in mind. The cultural context and the larger social justice ideas are critical in the artwork of the institute, and this approach allows us to explore the broader purposes in social justice artwork.

Ethnography is embedded within a geosemiotics approach, as Scollon and Scollon (2003) believe that “the understanding of the visual semiotic systems at play in any particular instance relies crucially on an ethnographic understanding of the meanings of these systems within specific communities of practice” (2003, p. 160). Further, “visual semiotic systems work as interactions among small or sub-systems, not as grand, overarching semiotic systems. These sub-systems operate quite independently of each other in a dialectical and negotiated way” (Scollon and Scollon, 2003, p. 160). These understandings of visual semiotic systems support the idea of analyzing student artwork at individual levels as well as looking at the broader discourses and interactions across the art institute, the various interactions with social justice oriented issues, and the public art exhibitions.

Also integral to the geosemiotics approach is the acknowledgement and the analysis of space, particularly with the public art exhibits and the spaces that teachers and students create for their audiences. Space is critical with the realm of geosemiotics, and this will be part of the analysis, particularly as it draws on understandings of public pedagogies. More specifically, a social geographic lens supports the analysis of artwork within public spaces, as "a geosemiotics--social geography approach creates a truer picture of the role of place (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and literacy tools (Brandt & Clinton, 2002) in literacy interactions, and highlights the role of these inter-actions in the social production of space" (Lefebvre, 1991, as cited by Whittingham,

2019, p. 54)." A geosemiotics analysis will be integral to the analysis of photographs and videos of student artwork and performances in public spaces.

Validation: Utilizing Researcher, Participant, and Reader Lenses

Creswell and Poth (2018) identify three lenses in which to consider validation: researcher, participant, and reader or reviewer. In addressing validation, I have engaged in all three lenses, with particular focuses on the following four ideas: thick descriptions as a reader, reflexivity as a researcher, and collaboration, engagement, and feedback as a participant. Using a researcher's lens, I paid close attention to my reflexivity as a researcher, continually evaluating my role, my potential biases, and my interactions with participants. I initially engaged in thick descriptions in my early inquiry phase, drawing on ethnography. These thick descriptions create an opportunity for readers and/or reviewers to evaluate the quality and authenticity of my research in these spaces. As my role as a researcher evolved into more of a participant's role, my validation strategies also evolved. I engaged in member checking and participant feedback through multiple interviews and informal conversations, which were connected. I specifically referenced earlier conversations and sought member feedback in clarifying and asking further questions in follow-up conversations and interviews. As my research progressed, I worked toward collaboration with the participants, supporting teachers with resources, conversations, and literature references. In the middle and final stages of my research cycle, I added additional types of data, further contributing to the validity of findings with multiple sources of data for triangulation and potential for thematic analysis. Further, using analysis methods specific to the type of data is an additional method in which the integrity and authenticity of the data was maintained.

Another key aspect in establishing validity within this research is the emphasis on the whole aspect of data, as opposed to partial pieces of data. I strove to collect data throughout the whole cycle of planning, teaching, and creating art exhibits, and I also strove to represent all artifacts in their entirety. Data is recognized in its entirety and original form; for example, student artwork is always analyzed as a whole piece of work and recognized as a complete artifact. No student artwork is represented in parts or eliminated in part from the data set. When possible, student artwork data was collected at various stages of the creation process, allowing for a holistic view of the creation and exhibition of the work. All student artwork is included as whole artifacts rather than partial pieces. Care is also taken to recognize, when possible, the space and location where artwork was displayed for an audience, again contributing to the authenticity and recognition of the data as existing in particular spaces with intention and purpose. As my research questions seek to understand what happens when students create artwork and teachers plan learning experiences, this is important to represent as the art is intended for viewing. Recognizing the transaction between students, teachers, and audiences is part of the validation process for my data collection and analysis.

A final important component in validation is the concept of transparency as a researcher. It is transparency and the idea of “public disclosure” that Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) address as an often overlooked idea in qualitative research, and one that can make a significant difference in establishing trustworthiness and validity. Documentational tables (Anfara et al, 2002) can include details that illuminate the alignment and connections between research questions, data sources, interview questions, coding processes, etc. This is one method to “offer a way of publicly disclosing methods and research processes as a new criterion for consideration by the qualitative research community” (Anfara et al, 2002, p. 30). If a study offers only

descriptions and findings, it is difficult for readers and reviewers to thoroughly examine, understand, and trust the findings; in order to do this, the process must be visible, as the “accountability of the researcher in documenting the actions associated with establishing internal validity (triangulation), theme development, and the relationship between research questions and data sources” (Anfara et al, 2002, p. 33) has a direct impact on the integrity of the research. In considering the integrity of the research and overall validity and trustworthiness, the study will include relevant and detailed documentational tables that highlight connections between research questions, data, analysis, and findings. The process will be highlighted through the use of tables and charts at different points throughout the process and findings sections.

Ethical Issues

The question of ethics arises in the initial research cycle and evolves throughout the process of collecting data, analyzing data, and sharing findings. First, in building relationships with participants, I spent significant time as a listener and as an observer. I shared my interest in spending time as a researcher. I also explained my research focus and my vision for what my proposed research time would look like in the classroom. I emphasized my willingness to listen and my hope that my presence would not detract from any learning experiences. Time and care were dedicated to respecting participants’ spaces and roles as educators. I obtained consent from all participants and used pseudonyms in all research writings. I explained potential risks, as in loss of confidentiality, as well as my plans to mitigate risks to the best of my ability. I also continued to ask permission for recordings at each interview, even after obtaining informed consent at each initial interview. I used this opportunity to remind participants that their involvement was voluntary and confirm their approval for recording devices at each stage. In this

way, I was comfortable that all of my participants continued to affirm their involvement in the research, and this created an ongoing dialogue with respect to my role as a researcher.

Ethical considerations impacted my approach to both time and data collection in each research cycle. Allowing for significant exploratory time in my first research cycle ensured that I was able to build relationships with participants as well as familiarize myself with the high school campus and art institute site. This relationship building time served to help me make decisions about how to collect data without disrupting the learning and creative processes at work in the art institute. As teachers and students became more familiar with my presence, I was able to observe without intruding and also able to take pictures and video during art exhibits without interrupting or drawing attention away from the student work. This was integral to my research questions, which are centered on the student and teacher understandings and literacy practices. Allowing for significant relationship building was important to the authenticity of data. As my research questions also address learning processes and interactions, observing multiple spaces (classrooms, meeting, and art exhibitions) allowed for the opportunity to gather rich data that carried the potential of unpacking the complex layers involved in creating student artwork.

In attending to procedural details, I obtained Institutional Review Board approval from Indiana University and the school district; I also sought site permission from the principal at Milner High School. Toward the close of my final cycle, I sought retroactive IRB approval for my initial observations and informal interviews at the institute, which were initially conducted as part of a class project. Upon obtaining IRB approval for use of the photographs/video of student artwork and interviews of students and teachers with informed consent, I was able to refine my research cycles to include each stage of my research. Throughout each cycle and at each interview, I obtained informed consent from my participants and allowed for time to review

consents and answer any questions before proceeding with the interview. In creating interview protocols for each interview, I focused on asking open-ended questions that honored participants' voices, seeking to disrupt common power imbalances in interview settings. As Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledge, "building trust and avoiding leading questions help to remove some of this imbalance" (p. 57). I also asked permission to record (either audio or video) for each interview and each meeting observation, even after receiving initial consent. My rationale for this was to continue dialogue about voluntary participation and encourage active discussion of my project, maintaining transparency. Following interviews and meetings, I checked with participants about additional details they may want to add or information they may want to exclude, always emphasizing that their participation was voluntary, and they had agency in data collection. Interviews to be conducted during the final research cycle also include discussion of earlier data collections and tentative findings, allowing for member checking opportunities and access to data.

Structure of Findings

In structuring my findings through this research study, it is necessary to take into account the two various methods of analysis and the findings that will correlate with each method. I structured my findings along with my methods of analysis (See Figure 3.5 for a graphic representation of my findings and structure). In Chapter Four, I focused on findings from the thematic analysis of data. In Chapter Five, I focused on findings from the mediated discourse analysis. In Chapter Six, I explored key themes and connections to public pedagogies and social justice teachings, including sections on implications for the classroom and for future research.

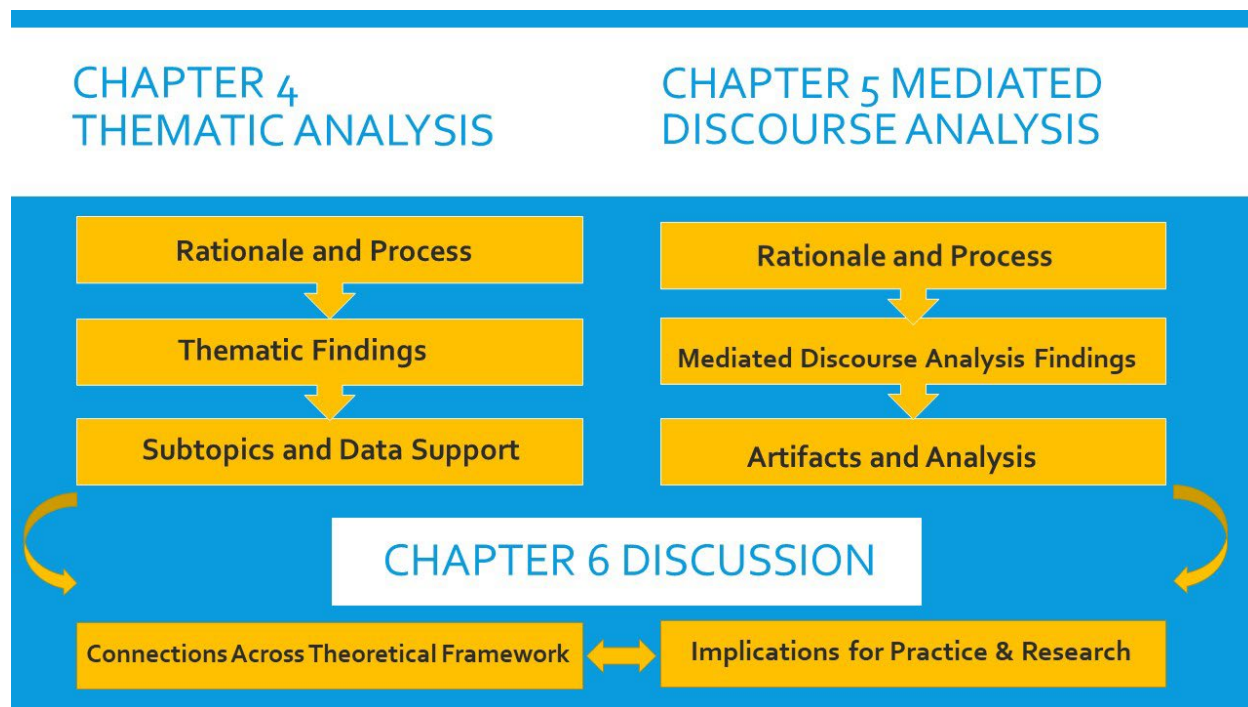
Chapters Four and Five include rationales and data procedures, including tables and figures to illustrate the connections and steps between data collection, research questions, and

analysis. This highlights transparency for my research process and creates a foundation for each finding. With regard to data collected and explored via thematic analysis in Chapter Four, I identified three key findings along with multiple subtopics. Each finding includes multiple points of data, including vignettes and significant quotations from participants' voices throughout the research. Including vignettes and participant voices honors the ideas of story and voice, both key concepts within the art institute.

As Chapter Five is dedicated to findings within the mediated discourse analysis framework, this section is organized by specific student artwork created within the institute. The chapter includes three pieces of artwork, analysis, and three findings centered on the mediated discourse analysis. Findings include visual pictures of artwork that accompany detailed processes and analysis. This analysis continues to honor and value the student artwork at the core of the institute and the work that the teachers and students engage in over the course of the year.

My final chapter includes key themes and connections across theoretical ideas, as well as discussions of implications for the classroom and for future research. I explore connections to public pedagogies and social justice teachings. I also explore the connections to classroom practices and the potential research opportunities for further work. Chapter Six is an exploration of theoretical connections that inform the findings of this research project and contain possibilities for extensions.

Figure 3.5: Structure of Findings Graphic



Outcomes and Significance

This study contributes to our understandings of social justice and youth activism, and the relationships with multiliteracies and multimodalities in public spaces. Examining their interactions with multimodal artwork in classroom and public settings adds to discussion about the myriad of ways that students engage with social justice ideas. This work values the voices of youth and their literary practices within community spaces, recognizing their agency and potential as change-makers. Mirra and Garcia (2020) recognize that, "In pushing classroom practice to shift alongside youth voice, we imagine these powerful civic actors are poised to construct a renewed public sphere that is grounded in deliberation and reflection - if we trust and support them along the way" (p. 318). The significance of this project lies in the understandings we can appreciate from the art experiences and the relationships to social justice pedagogies. This work will expand our understandings of the many literacies that students bring to social

justice spaces and how these interactions resonate in classroom, community, and public spaces. Importantly, this work is grounded in the ideas of hope and possibility for adolescents to shape the world in which they want to live.

Chapter Four: Thematic Analysis and Findings

Introduction and Rationale

The following chapter shares the results of student artwork and teacher and student explorations of social justice topics. These results are comprised of data collected through classroom observations, informal and formal interviews, media interviews, and researcher photographs and videos of public art exhibits. My thematic analysis was guided by the following questions:

- *What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?*
- *How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?*
- *What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?*

Thematic analysis allows for participant voice as well as the idea of examining concepts across participants and data, lending itself to the exploration of themes across the art institute and across participants. With multiple types of data, including teacher and student interviews, classroom observations, public art exhibit conversations, faculty and advisory board meeting observations, and photographs/videos of student work, thematic analysis allowed me to analyze ideas, patterns, and themes across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I focused on key terms, phrases, and ideas that created a broader picture across participants and contexts. For this thematic analysis, I relied heavily on student/teacher interviews, classroom and art exhibit observations, and advisory board meeting observations.

As I focused on thematic analysis, I utilized data from six participants (See Table 4.1 for information about participants, roles, and relevant data sources) and analyzed multiple sets of data. While my dataset contained data from multiple people involved in the institute, including teachers, students, and administrators, I selected four teachers and two students for my focus; I also decided to use a combination of interviews, field notes from classroom observations and public art exhibits, and publicly available media as well as my own photographs and videos of student artwork in answering my central research question. Each teacher was part of the art institute but also represented four different disciplines within the high school. Their experiences within the institute also represented a diverse range, with two to fifteen years of teaching experience, as well as varying leadership roles within the institute. I conducted two formal interviews with each teacher (three for one lead teacher) and multiple classroom observations that covered the span of more than one school year. This allowed me to build relationships with each teacher and spend time in their individual classrooms. With multiple pieces of data for each participant, I felt confident in examining data for patterns and insights across data sets and also together as a whole data set.

I also selected two students as focal points for this analysis; both students graduated during my final year of research and both students spent multiple years in the art institute. Part of my rationale for including these two students was the rich set of data, including interviews, with both students. I established relationships with each student during my first semester in the institute and continued to observe their artwork and record conversations over the course of the following school year. I also observed each student in public art exhibit settings, which was central to the purpose of the art institute and a key point in understanding student processes and thinking throughout the preparation and the final art exhibits.

Table 4.1: Table of Participants and Relevant Data

Participant	Role	Relevant Data Sources
Angel Vega	Teacher (Social Science); More than Six Years in Institute	Two formal interviews over one year period; art institute video footage/productions
Michael Emerson	Teacher (Art); Lead Teacher and Founder of Institute; More than Fifteen Year in Institute	Three formal interviews over two year period; weekly classroom observations for one semester
Matthew Thao	Teacher (Dance and Textiles); Two Years in Institute	Two formal interviews over one year period; monthly classroom observations for one year
Hilda Sanchez	Teacher (English Language Arts); More than Four Year in Institute	Two formal interviews over one year period; monthly classroom observations for one semester; four student performance videos involving teacher and three students (publicly available)
Melinda Smith	Student; Four Years in Institute, grades 9-12	Two formal interviews over one year period (including one reflective interview post graduation); weekly classroom observations for one and a half years (3 semesters); artwork photos (researcher's and publicly available); artwork videos from two exhibits
Ying Lee	Student; Three Years in Institute, grades 10-12	One interview; weekly classroom observations over one semester; artwork photos (researcher's and publicly available); artwork videos from two exhibits; two publicly available media interviews and photographs

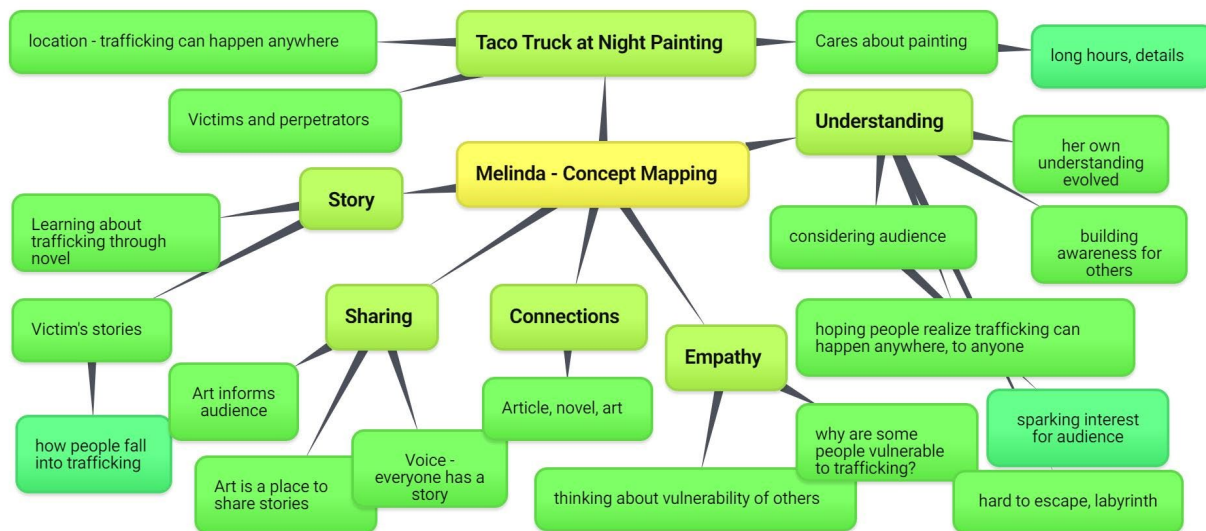
Themes and Coding

As outlined in Chapter Three, I utilized thematic analysis to analyze transcripts of student and teacher interviews, informal classroom conversations, and observational notes from classroom observations and art exhibit observations. Spending a significant amount of time at this campus over a three year period allowed me to collect a variety of data and build

relationships with all six of the participants identified in Table 4.1. I drew from weekly observations that took place over a year and a half in two art classrooms; I also drew on monthly class observations in video production, textiles, and dance classes. I conducted at least two formal interviews with each teacher, with each interview roughly a year apart, allowing me to also use reflective art pieces and discussions in final interviews. I also drew on photographs and videos, both publicly available and my own research photographs, as a way to enhance my thematic analysis and make connections across the data set with my findings.

I utilized concept mapping (Grbich, 2013) as a first step in my thematic analysis process (as discussed in Chapter Three). Concept mapping allows for ideas, themes, and patterns across data sets. I created concept maps for each participant as a first step in my data analysis (See Figure 4A: Concept Mapping: Melinda). With this concept map, I utilized Melinda's language and quotes from her two interviews as well as classroom observations (one semester in her 11th grade art class and two semesters in her 12th grade art class until the Covid-19 pandemic closed school in March). This concept map illustrates my process in examining key concepts and ideas in her data. In creating my concept maps, I drew from participant language as well as my own labeling of concepts and ideas. With concept mapping, I was able to create and view a broader picture of my data set and identify key, recurring themes and ideas. I used my participant concept maps to create an overview of my data and from there, identify and create preliminary ideas that would become the foundation for my findings.

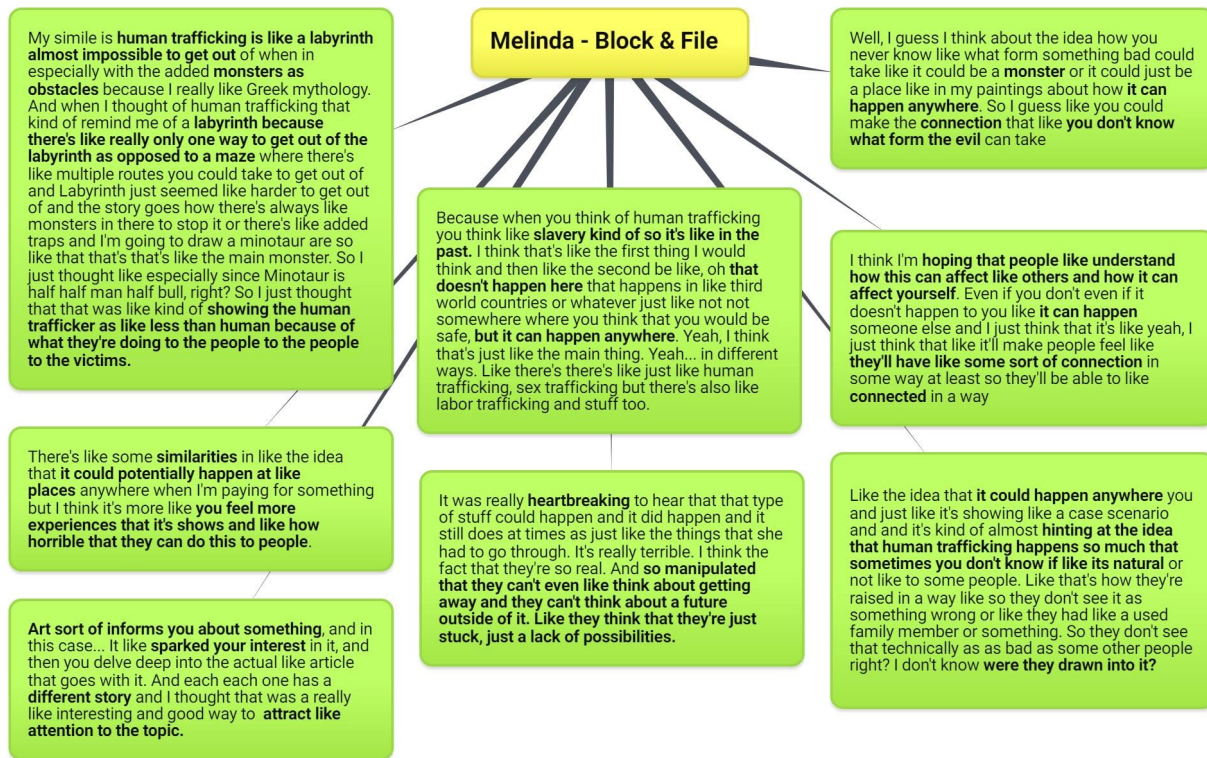
Figure 4A: Concept Mapping: Melinda



The disadvantage of the concept map was the loss of direct quotes and more lengthy descriptions and discussions. The concept maps did not fully capture participant voices and more nuanced understandings. As Gbrich (2013) discussed, “the disadvantage [of concept mapping] is that these brief words and phrases tend to oversimplify and decontextualize issues and you need to keep going back to the database to get the fuller story” (p. 65). With this limitation in mind, I used my concept mapping exercise to lead me into a block and file approach (Grbich, 2013). This step allowed me to “keep fairly large chunks of data intact” (Grbich, 2013, p. 63) and highlight key moments in interviews and observations. I created a block and file map for each participant (See Figure 4B: Block and File: Melinda), capturing important moments and chunks of data, using bold type to highlight important sentences, phrases, and ideas. The block and file map for Melinda shows the next step in my analysis after utilizing concept map; it also shows the benefits of using both approaches. The block and file approach gave me a method for organizing

chunks of data and keeping portions intact, especially with regard to participant stories and discussions.

Figure 4B: Block and File: Melinda



The limitations in a block and file approach include the amount of data and the organization of unwieldy chunks of information. It is also more challenging to see a broader picture in using block and file. But utilizing both concept mapping and a block and file approach created several advantages in my thematic analysis process and honored the data set that I gathered. I was able to use concept mapping to see a broader picture while my block and file maps highlighted key points of data in chunks that were manageable and also critical in unpacking the concepts found in my first round of mapping. This allowed for movement “between detail and overview” (Grbich, 2013, p. 65). This also minimized the limitations of each

approach. I was able to examine themes and ideas while also drawing on detail, quotes, and nuanced observations that ultimately strengthened my findings. Both approaches played an integral role in supporting my work and examining data in an authentic and meaningful way.

Findings

This analysis led to three distinct findings centered around the central research question: *What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?* and sub questions: *How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?* and *What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?* The three findings are:

- *Finding One: The significance of narrative in personalizing and generating artwork.*
- *Finding Two: Creating conditions that support student engagement.*
- *Finding Three: Hope and empathy as intentional and significant points of reference with regard to teacher planning.*

In the following sections, I will share each finding and supporting details from the research analysis that illustrates how participants interacted with social justice issues and shared their work through public art exhibitions.

Finding One: The significance of narrative in personalizing and generating artwork.

Multiple participants expressed the value of story and narrative, recognizing how narrative plays a pivotal role in the art institute and in the wider expanse of interacting with social justice ideas. These concepts were clearly part of how students and teachers interacted

with social justice ideas, as well as part of the processes and tensions surrounding artists, participants, and their transactions with the artwork. The ideas of voice and narrative are prioritized in the mission statement of the institute, “voice to the voiceless.” This idea is present in participant discussions, art exhibits, and throughout multiple classroom and community interactions, valuing voices and stories. Participant language indicates the importance of narrative, voice, and personal, individual stories in the creation of meaningful, authentic artwork as part of the students’ learning experiences. This language comes through in participant discussions, interviews, classroom interactions, and community work. Table 4.2 highlights key multimodal discourse, language and stories centered on voice and story, highlighting how narrative is pivotal in personalizing and also generating student artwork. For each participant, I created a column to highlight the discourse centered around Voice and Narrative and a second column to highlight discourse centered around the Creation of Artwork. Finally, I created a column to highlight key quotes and stories that support the finding regarding the significance of narratives in this work.

Table 4.2: Key Multimodal Discourse, Language, and Quotes Related to Narrative and Voice

	<i>Voice and Narrative</i>	<i>Creation of Artwork</i>	<i>Quotes and Stories</i>
<i>Angel Vega (social science teacher)</i>	Story, share, human element, connection, personal, understand, vulnerable, experience, poignant	Create, express	The significance of story in the institute and in how teachers value story: “I’m about having a voice for their story absolutely...and that’s showing the complexity of their their lives their lived experiences. That is exactly what we have tried to do it from the very beginning is connect to stories. There’s been different iterations of it. But the idea that your

			story matters, you are the hero of your own story or of your own journey, everyone’s story matters.”
<i>Michael Emerson (art teacher)</i>	Voices, voice, letters, language, Story, personal, authentic, narrative, people, understand	Inspiration, share, create	Engaging students with story and supporting their work as authors: “You can just take a section of it give it to a student and say, you know read this story and they would make a piece of art off of thatall the while they were exploring different kinds of media to do their painting because it took a full semester for all that, right? And then we get authors chair we would have groups and they would read their stories and was really cool how that was done. And it came over to the art department and we spent a couple weeks students going through and seeing they worked in teamswhat they wanted... what story they wanted to do.”
<i>Matthew Thao (dance/textiles teacher)</i>	Voice, share, stories, personal, believe, personal, understand, connect	Possibilities, share	Engaging students with stories, video stories about domestic violence and connecting to dance: “Because these kids are affected by that and I think my students knowing that they are actually watching this video... Okay, just within domestic violence, but not like human trafficking or anything like that too. But tying all that in and like they were even more emotional too...but that was my way of trying to get them to understand story telling , the stories that they will tell through movement for Rise Up the dance by all of by all of my dancers standing

			strong together, right?”
<i>Hilda Sanchez (ELA teacher)</i>	Listening, storytelling, many voices, hope, redemption, story, complexities of people, vulnerable, connections, empathetic	Creating with images and stories, storytelling	Bringing story into the classroom, showing many perspectives and versions of human trafficking: “I mean in human trafficking I brought the story of Seth, you know, and and Seth was having these relationshipshomosexual relationships, and then I brought up Miranda Soto who came in to talk about LGBTQ and her being a different, outsider. I was bringing in people in the classroom to share their stories”
<i>Melinda Smith (student)</i>	Victim’s stories, sharing, vulnerability, heartbreaking, connections	Create, share, community	Story, art, and sparking interest: “Art...it informs you about something, and in this case it like sparked your interest in it, and then you delve deep into the actual like article that goes with it. And each each one has a different story and I thought that was a really like interesting and good way to like. attract some attract like attention to the topic.
<i>Ying Lee (student)</i>	Story, listen, learn, vulnerability	Share	Sharing stories: “I hope people will listen to Peaches’ story, like read it and learn from it.”

Voice.

Narratives and stories are first recognized in one of the themes and repeated mantras of the institute, “giving voice to the voiceless.” This notion is highlighted in the institute’s

literature, website, and themes. The words “voice to the voiceless” are often included in the titles of art exhibits and the institute’s own publicity, demonstrating its importance in sharing this work and the voices of others. First, this recognizes the limitations of voice for various groups of people. Not all members of society have a voice that is shared in meaningful ways, and the institute recognizes part of its mission and vision to create spaces to share the voice of those who are often voiceless and left without a space to share their stories. Further, this theme also recognizes the opportunity for changing this current experience; it invites participants to actively create spaces to “give voice” to those who are “voiceless” in society. This creates an avenue for student participants that is empowering, recognizing the possibility of student artists to create such a space and value the voices of others. Thereby, it values the voices of all members of society in recognizing and creating the space to share all voices. This focus and the ensuing experiences also validate the power of narrative to inspire and enact change.

Individuals and Stories.

The personal aspect of story played a pivotal role in supporting the development of artwork for the students within the institute. Teachers intentionally planned to use narratives throughout the various cycles of building background knowledge, exploring topics, and creating artwork. As part of the human trafficking exploration, students began the school year with a story from *The Atlantic*. As explained by the lead teacher, this was purposeful in creating an opportunity for students to read personal stories of those impacted by human trafficking, particularly those of similar ages. These non-fiction pieces centered on true stories that highlighted people involved in human trafficking. The piece “Survivors of Human Trafficking in Their Own Words” by Rebecca Rosen, published in *The Atlantic* on March 12, 2018, includes personal stories of Nena, Natalicia, and Judith, (all pseudonyms) that relate their journeys into

and out of labor trafficking. These stories used participant's words to detail their journeys, paint a picture of their lives as victims of human trafficking, and the circumstances that helped them leave their situations. These first person narratives included vivid details and descriptions of how trafficking impacted their mental health and their identities; each story also took place in the United States. Students in the institute also read a piece in *The Atlantic* which preceded these narratives, a piece by Alex Tizon titled "My Family's Slave," which told the story of Lola, a woman who left her home in the Philippines to work for a family in the United States for over fifty years. These stories all highlighted the complex stories of victims and illustrated how human trafficking happens in the United States, not only in foreign countries. Drawing from these narratives, students saw the very human nature of human trafficking, and learned how these victims often did not have a voice. In this way, they began their journey to consider the voices of the voiceless and help others learn about trafficking. Story and narrative connected students with personal, authentic stories, and also presents various views/experiences within trafficking. Story helped students build background knowledge about human trafficking and also sparked their interest in the topic. Story was a significant part of this first cycle in the institute's explorations. This initial reading acted as a catalyst for further inquiry and sparked student interest and engagement with the topic. These articles formed a solid foundation for students as they ventured into the reading of a novel and learned more about trafficking. Further, the personal stories from the Atlantic article also paired with the reading of Patricia McCormick's *Sold* in order to show aspects of both labor trafficking and sex trafficking. The novel *Sold* tells the story of a young girl, close in age to most of the high school art institute students, and her journey into human trafficking and subsequent escape from her captors. These readings also highlighted how young adults were impacted by human trafficking, creating connections for students who did not know

about trafficking or how it impacted people their own age. It was after these initial cycles of story exploration that students began to write and create their own narratives and stories of people involved in human trafficking, moving forward in yet another cycle of exploration and creation. Students then began to write stories, create monologues, start paintings, and brainstorm performance ideas based on *Sold* as well as their own stories. At each point in these cycles, story and narrative served as ways for students to learn, explore topics, and also create.

A key element in selecting and creating reading experiences for students was the idea of relevant narratives. Teachers were intentional about selecting narratives of young adults, similar in age to the students in the art institute. For example, the lead teacher frequently works with a local children's bookstore in selecting appropriate narratives and for the human trafficking year. During the Southeast Asian refugee year, teachers selected *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Kalia Yang as their primary work, as the author told her family's story of immigrating and her own discovery of these histories as an adolescent. Teachers felt that students would be able to relate to the story and Mr. Emerson reached out to the author and arranged a school visit so that students could meet Yang. Knowing that students would be able to meet the author influenced his decision to select this book, as he wanted to create a memorable and personal experience for students. During the human trafficking year, they selected *Sold* by Patricia McCormick. They selected this young adult novel in part because of the age of the protagonist, a thirteen-year-old girl. Mr. Emerson stated "we wanted students to read about someone their own age, so we found a book that would work and show them a relevant, timely story. Not just any story about trafficking but one about someone they could relate to." Teachers also discussed the concept of reading stories that would provoke further inquiry and interest; they sought high-interest, engaging narrative that would highlight the complicated and provocative

stories surrounding those involved in human trafficking. Art instructor Michael Emerson explained that reading “powerful” stories would capture the student’s attention and engage them in understanding broader issues in human trafficking; in this sense, narrative served as an entry or access point to the social justice topic of human trafficking. These ideas led to the selection of *The Atlantic* articles as well as the novel *Sold*, by Patricia McCormick. While each of these selections focused on individual stories, each reading piece connected students with broader stories and understandings of human trafficking, highlighting the significance of story in building knowledge, engaging students in learning, and also creating understandings centered on social justice issues.

Narrative as a Generative and Shared Experience.

Story acted as a driving force in creating artwork; it truly became generative in its power to inspire stories and artwork with the various participants. This is seen through the relationship of story to the evolution of institute projects over time as well as the evolution of artwork and projects during the course of one thematic study. Story is highlighted in the institute’s theme and website, including the stories behind the artwork and themes. Story also drives the selection of themes, as explained by Michael Emerson, stating “When we find a compelling story, we know there is more for the students to do, to explore.” The student artwork also draws on the generative nature of storytelling and honors the ways in which stories inspire and lead to the creation of new artwork.

Through multiple studies over the past ten years, including the Japanese internment project, foster youth project, incarceration project, drought project, immigration and Southeast Asian refugee projects, and human trafficking project, students embarked on interviews of multiple members of the community as well as read stories through novels and non-fiction

pieces. In this way, they explored multiple stories as a way to learn about others and learn about their topics. The lead teachers valued stories of participants and demonstrated this value to students in how they prioritized stories and facilitated collecting and retelling stories. The interviews and time spent “in the field” became central to their work in creating art, as it inspired artwork. Stories also became a source of inspiration for creating multi-modal artwork including painting, performances, spoken word poetry, and sculpture. With the immigration project, students in art classes read the stories that students wrote as part of their English Language Arts work, and then used those stories to find inspiration for their paintings and murals. Students used quotes from their peers’ work and sometimes their own writing as well, which was incorporated into their visual artwork. This was apparent in the immigration, foster youth, Japanese internment, and southeast refugee projects. Interviews with individuals inspired artwork and participants’ own voices became part of student artwork. Michael Emerson saw the use of stories and multiple modalities as generative concepts, and as an opportunity to “juxtapose images and text” in a way that honored story and voice of many participants. In the Civil Rights project, students read stories about teenagers as part of order to work on the Mississippi project. Teachers intentionally included stories about kids of a similar age so that students could learn about what life was like for teenagers living through the Civil Rights period. Students pulled language directly from authentic letters written by people involved in the civil rights movement, and this language went into wood carving. Recognizing connections between stories and artwork, Michael Emerson stated, “we saw the potential of literature and stories, to come alongside the art part and really inspire the art.” Stories and artwork are inextricably linked in the institute, recognizing the power of story, voice, and visual artwork as a medium to share voices of the voiceless.

In multiple conversations, lead teacher Michael Emerson highlighted an idea of Susan Black's, "How can you hate me if you know my story?" He saw this idea as a central concept that impacted his planning of learning experiences and goals for student outcomes. He wanted students to see people and identities rather than abstract idea, and this influenced his decision to highlight personal stories as part of the student work. This again emphasizes the personal nature of stories, particularly around the idea of hearing the voices of various participants and valuing their experiences. Another aspect of this quote that connects with the finding of narrative as a means to support voice and generate artwork is the concept of *change* that this statement allows for; the implication is that in learning about someone, the listener's feelings may change or evolve. Video production teacher Angel Vega discussed the unique effect of stories in how participants learned about complex social justice topics, emphasizing how stories made abstract ideas more concrete and human. He said "It's a lot harder to have certain views because now there's reasons, there's a story, there's somebody that is affected....but the more we know about somebody's story, the less abstract they become." This idea reaches across individual participants as well as larger ideas. In particular, Mr. Vega recognized how individual stories highlight the individuals those affected by immigration and drought, helping students understand problems and learn about individual experiences.

Stories built shared experiences for teachers and students while also creating community and strengthening bonds between teachers and students within the institute. Angel Vega described starting one project with students in a circle, sharing their stories, and his own sharing of stories. Through this, he shared his vulnerabilities and invited students to share as well, if they were willing. Multiple students told personal stories, given the safe and comfortable classroom environment that he created through the sharing of personal stories and connections to the

institute's topics. Angel said, "the stories that came out and the connections that were made on that first day were absolutely amazing and they had buy-in they had buy-in for the book, and buy-in for the project because of that and I felt as if we were together and not just a teacher-student dynamic, like we're all learners together." In this way, teachers and students bonded through their stories and vulnerabilities as they began to explore the topic of incarceration and read the selected text together. Mr. Vega built engagement and relevance for the memoir the students were about to read and supported the sharing of personal stories as relevant, meaningful, and valuable for all students. He shared his own stories and disrupted the traditional teacher-student dynamic, instead sharing his own vulnerable stories and building connections with students.

This process of sharing, collecting, and retelling stories honored the unique and personal stories of participants and valued their experiences in a meaningful way; these stories also served as an avenue to build student engagement, relevance, and human connections. Students and teachers were not only immersed with the social justice topics of the institute; they were also engaged with the ideas and through this engagement built strong teacher-student relationships within the classroom as they worked together. Stories were also a source of hope within a place of often challenging and at times, dark topics.

Stories facilitated positive and safe spaces for students and teachers to build relationships, share, and reflect among themselves and with others throughout the institute. This also relates to the idea of art and story as a method of healing and of hope, beliefs that multiple participants referenced in discussing stories and narrative that they explored and shared as part of their work within the institute. Teacher Hilda Sanchez referred to "hope" and "redemption" as important part of stories, emphasizing that these concepts are always parts of the student explorations and

support the idea that learning of these stories allows students to believe that they can “do something” with these ideas. These became possibilities of healing for participants as well as opportunities for building relationships. Hilda Sanchez explained the impact of a positive space for students to share, as several of her students participated in the foster youth exploration and shared their stories. She described the experience as “important” for students to be able to share and “be okay with others listening to them and being vulnerable.” Stories became places for positive connections and places to share, explore, and build relationships with others, in Ms. Sanchez’ classroom as well as the institute as a whole.

Finding Two: Creating conditions that support student engagement

Through multiple avenues, teachers intentionally create conditions to support student engagement in various ways. Teachers recognize and prioritize student engagement, believing it to be a critical part of the institute. Student engagement is supported and fostered as an integral and valuable part of the art process. With engagement in mind, teachers plan and create learning experiences and opportunities that support meaningful involvement. This is facilitated through engaging, provocative social justice oriented topics, relevance and timeliness of learning experiences, multiple opportunities for various engagement with ideas and topics, emphasis on narrative, and authentic audiences as part of public art exhibitions. The art exhibits are also treated as professional, authentic experiences and approached in a way that supports student engagement in various aspects of the artistic process. Across participant language, stories, and discussions, key patterns demonstrate how teachers intentionally create and support relevant, authentic student engagement through various learning experiences. Table 4.3 highlights the multimodal discourse, stories, and key moments that illustrate how teachers support various

means of relevant and authentic student engagement. The first column highlights discourse centered around general engagement while the second column focuses on participant language more specific to the ideas of sharing and empathy. The third column highlights key quotations and stories from each participant that connects with student engagement.

Table 4.3: Key Multimodal Discourse and Language Related to Creating Conditions for Student Engagement

	<i>General Engagement</i>	<i>Sharing/ Empathy Ideas</i>	<i>Quotations and Stories Connected to Engagement</i>
<i>Angel Vega (social science teacher)</i>	Connect, relevance, buy-in, provocative, intensive, passion, student voice, new, possibilities	Voice, care, people, community	Supporting and cultivating engagement with purpose: “it's absolutely about that engagement through experience with others like at the Gala listening to them perform and explaining what they're doing....talk about their artwork.... Kids are obviously very shy and afraid to do those sorts of things but training them to be able to make that happen and then after a while it just becomes part of this ability to share their story or least that component of this story, right? So again done on purpose though. It's not by accident that these things happen. It's by design .”
<i>Michael Emerson (art teacher)</i>	Build, create, fruitfulness, relevance, wonderful experience, work, relaxing, voice, vibe	Feel, empathy, care, community, opportunity	Engaging students with ideas and speakers as part of art cycles: “After the speakers, I remember them going up and talking to the speakers and engaging in conversation. They wanted to ask questions you know. Just talk.”

<p><i>Matthew Thao</i> (<i>dance/textiles teacher</i>)</p>	<p>Ownership, engage, voice, connecting with others, relevance</p>	<p>Empathy, care, community, relationships, helping, share</p>	<p>Engaging students with videos:</p> <p>“Yeah, to be slaves were in or other situations to and just showing them this video you'll like some of my students they were emotional about it and they understood what was going on and I told him that you know, like this is still happening today on the other side of the world”</p> <p>Engaging students with audiences, supporting relevance and ownership:</p> <p>“What are their reactions going to be like are they? Where are they going to feel something at the end of it? And do something?”</p>
<p><i>Hilda Sanchez</i> (<i>ELA teacher</i>)</p>	<p>Ownership, connections, commitment, resonate, create, creative freedom, engaging with others</p>	<p>Social justice, care, community, gathering, volunteering, service, audience, inviting families</p>	<p>Supporting ownership and engagement:</p> <p>“I really want them to move away with just reading the presentation like kind of like owning it. I think most of them wrote up their reflection and their evaluation said that they understand a little bit more about human trafficking and the stories we read.”</p>
<p><i>Melinda</i> (<i>student</i>)</p>	<p>Connection, people, audiences, awareness</p>	<p>Vulnerability, victims, sharing</p>	<p>On being engaged with artwork:</p> <p>“Yeah, I kept the taco stand painting for myself. It was my first oil painting, so it was like emotional attachment. I really cared about that painting so I had to keep it.”</p>

<i>Ying Lee</i> (student)	Learn, read, people	Care, watch, audience	
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Relevance and Engagement.

Teachers recognized the importance of relevance and engagement in planning and supporting learning experiences for students that would hopefully lead to student engagement in various ways. Relevance is valued as a key concept and recognized as part of the process of building student engagement with topics and projects. The word relevance was repeated multiple times in the process of creating and discussing learning experiences. Michael Emerson, Angel Vega, and Matthew Thao all used the word *relevance* specifically in their discussions of the art institute. Angel Vega stated, “we always thought about whether something was truly relevant for our students.” Through relevant topics, students saw a reason and rationale for engaging in the work and learning about the topics. The real-world connections and immediacy of the topics (including geographical and physical) meant that students had multiple opportunities to see the connections to their own lives, again building relevance and engagement. Ideas that students care about are prioritized and supported in the program, recognizing how important it is for students to be engaged with their work, as they produce and share artwork. An example of this is how the topic of Southeast Asian refugees was selected; as students worked on immigrant stories of people coming from Mexico to California, several Hmong students approached Michael Emerson and told him, “our families have stories too.” It was this moment that sparked an interest, initiated student-teacher conversations, and led teachers to announce their new focus on stories of Hmong refugees. This relevance and engagement was an important part of the students’ experience and teachers knew that this new topic would be relevant and engaging for students, leading to meaningful artwork.

Teachers also support student engagement through their intentional planning of meaningful art exhibits that include public audiences beyond the classroom. Every year, teachers and students plan three separate public art exhibits, including a downtown art gallery, a local art center, and a community or school exhibit. This intentional emphasis on art exhibits has multiple impacts on student engagement and artwork. First, this idea emphasizes that students are truly artists and it values their artwork as meaningful and important. It also emphasizes that this artwork is meant to be shared with others, placing a higher importance on the art exhibits rather than the grade given for the class. In this way, the artwork is valued beyond the classroom and given a distinct purpose beyond traditional grades and assessments. Students understand that teachers value their artwork beyond the classroom and view their artwork as “museum worthy,” as teachers emphasize in their conversations and their planning. Sharing the student artwork through multiple public exhibits creates relevance and purpose for the students’ artwork. It supports relevance and encourages students to take ownership of their work. The students engage in settings where they take ownership and responsibility for their artwork, displaying it and also discussing it with others. This encourages reflection and thought on the part of the students’, further enhancing their engagement with their artwork.

Relevance and student engagement is also supported through student choice. In discussing the women’s empowerment projects, dance teacher Matthew Thao observed that students were engaged in their selections of “Sheroes” by actively citing three rationales for their selected hero that related to their own personal beliefs and values. Students were able to articulate their rationale in written and oral presentations, sharing their reasoning with their classmates and directly relating to their own lives. This process supported student engagement because the students were focused on people they cared about and related to their own lives.

Matthew Thao honored the students' selections and showed students that he cared about their own voice in these choices. Some students selected family members while others selected celebrities who emulated characteristics they valued, for example, determination, bravery, strength, and wisdom. Students researched the lives of their selected "Sheroes" and shared them through various mediums in their dance and textiles courses, and then finally through art exhibits. Allowing students to create and choose their own projects facilitated engagement and high-quality work, and Matthew Thao highlighted the ideas of choice and engagement at several points during the year. Matthew wanted students to care about their work and believed that the rationales were an integral part of the process in support this care and engagement; this was intentional on his part as a teacher. Knowing that students would share their thinking also increased their engagement with their project and students dedicated time to these written and oral rationales.

Commitment and Ownership.

Students regularly engaged in work outside of traditional school hours, demonstrating their engagement, commitment, and ownership of their projects. In Mr. Emerson's classroom, it was not uncommon to find students coming in during lunch time, after school, or on a Saturday morning (Mr. Emerson regularly opened his "studio" for students at least two Saturdays a month, again prioritizing student engagement outside of traditional school hours). During the civil rights project, the wood carving projects were very time intensive and many students came in on Saturdays to work on their carvings. Mr. Emerson described how the "carving process was so relaxing for students" and the students enjoyed their time working with the wood. During the exploration of Southeast Asian refugee stories, the author of the book *The Latehomecomer* visited campus and offered to have lunch with students. Over twenty students voluntarily

gathered at lunch time to spend time with the author, after hearing her speak during class time. This was another instance of student engagement beyond the traditional classroom spaces, again demonstrating how critical student engagement was in building meaningful learning experiences for students and how this was intentional on the part of teachers.

Teachers facilitated choice at various points throughout the learning and art cycles, again supporting a deep level of student engagement and ownership. Each year, bound by theme, included artwork in a variety of mediums depending on student choice and interest; possibilities ranged from traditional canvas painting, recycled door murals, three dimensional projects holding sculptures, wall murals, etc. Teachers and students engaged in finding and creating art that was inspired by the topic and also by materials available via community involvement, donations, etc. During the human trafficking year, students also selected various mediums through which to work and display their projects. This included oil paintings, human silhouettes, and various pop-up and three-dimensional art projects. David and Ying both selected human silhouettes for their projects, and discussed their rationales at length during class time and during their interviews. Ying shared how she felt “connected” to Peaches and hoped that others would see Peaches as a real person, as she did. This decision to paint a silhouette was meaningful for Ying, as it also was for David. He wanted to highlight and personalize the agricultural work that is often invisible, and felt that painting a field worker would help share this important story. Students were able to choose, create, and select characters and stories that resonated with them personally as part of their chosen projects. This is also seen as some students chose to write and perform monologues about people involved in trafficking. Daniel, a student in Mr. Emerson’s art class, chose to perform a monologue from the point of view of a trafficker, not a victim of trafficking. He decided to do this after learning that many traffickers were also

victims themselves and he wanted audiences to see the humans behind trafficking and the many victims. Performing this monologue was powerful for Daniel, and he spent multiple class sessions practicing his work in front of friends and classmate, and in front of a camera as well. Eventually, with Ms. Sanchez' encouragement, he performed his monologue at an education conference and also at the local art center exhibit. Student choice in modalities supported rich and deep engagement and fostered student ownership of the projects.

Students in performative art classes focused on dance and textiles, choreographing and performing dance alongside selected music. Mr. Thao's students chose to dance to a piece of music that the teacher described as "moving" and "powerful," highlighting the emotion that students felt about the horrors and difficulties of human trafficking. The music included dramatic crescendos and then periods of quiet, calming interludes. The title "Still I Rise" spoke to students' thinking about how it is possible to rise out of human trafficking. Selecting the music and choreographing the dance movements became a way for students to share their understanding and their own emotions in the project.

Community and Public Art Exhibits.

Through intentionally planned experiences, teachers in the art institute created their own communities both in and out of the classroom, as students explored what human trafficking meant in their own personal communities and beyond. This sense of community fostered engagement and relevance for students, which was mentioned in various iterations by teachers as well as students. The community building incorporated relationships and the notions of service and helping others. Students mentioned the idea of helping and thinking about "people" and "audiences" that might be impacted by trafficking. Teachers also mentioned "community" as an importance aspect of building engagement for students and helping them see the relevance of this

project in their own hometown. During the human trafficking year, teachers brought in local community organizations dedicated to helping victims of trafficking and helped students learn about these local groups. Similar events happened during the immigration year and the foster youth/incarceration years. During the year that students explored local red-lining history and local geography, the lead art teacher specifically introduced art projects and photos based on the local venues around town, again highlighting community and space for students. The teachers at the institute were thoughtful in engaging students with the local community and encouraging a sense of belonging and ownership.

Sharing artwork in public art exhibits also supported student ownership of their own work, and the teachers encouraged students to take pride in their work and also see themselves as artists. These exhibits also supported sustained inquiry and engagement with social justice oriented topics. As Michael Emerson noted, this created the opportunity to “really dig deep and push forward” with ideas and concepts. Sharing through public art exhibits created a space for meaningful and sustained engagement with projects, further supporting student engagement and ownership of their work within the community. Teacher Hilda Sanchez focused on the purpose of student performances, stating that the “whole performance was to engage with the community about this idea,” emphasizing how community was an integral part of the students’ engagement with the topic and their experience in sharing their work with others. This became a dynamic and active engagement, on the part of the community members and students, facilitated by the community art shows and performances. This community engagement was critical to the institute’s vision, the teacher’s intentions, and the students’ experiences sharing their artwork in public spaces.

Melinda and Ying: Student Engagement at a Personal Level.

Melinda and Ying both expressed not only interest, but also deep engagement and passion regarding the topic of human trafficking; in both cases, teachers intentionally supported the students' engagement. Melinda's art teacher asked students to create a simile for human trafficking, and Melinda's response to this assignment demonstrated her engagement, her insights, and her passion for the work that she engaged in with this theme. She described human trafficking as a labyrinth, describing how this was an apt comparison because of the difficulty in getting out of a labyrinth. Melinda enjoys Greek mythology and said this was the first idea that came to mind when thinking of an appropriate simile. There are often obstacles and monsters in a labyrinth, and these represented the challenges for victims in escaping human trafficking once they are trapped. She also described the perpetrators as "minotaurs," half human and half bull, "showing the human trafficker as like less than human because of what they're doing to the people to the people to the victims." Melinda also described how there could be monsters in unexpected places, or people don't realize that a monster is there until it is a problem. She described how sometimes people "don't know what form the evil can take" and this was an important understanding for her about human trafficking. Melinda's dedication to this simple assignment demonstrates her deep level of engagement. Her original assignment was to create one page in her art portfolio for a simile. But her simile project grew into multiple pages and finally a large pencil drawing of multiple minotaurs, monsters, and an elaborate labyrinth on a canvas. This was beyond the graded assignment and demonstrates her interest and engagement with the theme of human trafficking.

Ying also demonstrated personal engagement with the topic of human trafficking in various ways. When Mr. Emerson asked for volunteers who would be willing to discuss trafficking with local media outlets, Ying quickly raised her hand and volunteered for an

interview. She spent time after class discussing the media interview with Mr. Emerson before her scheduled interview. Ying also stayed after school on multiple occasions and came in at lunch time to work on Peaches. While some students paired with students in English Language Arts who would then write the story of their silhouette's character, Ying decided that she wanted to write Peaches' story herself. She cared deeply about Peaches' backstory, wanting to make it an authentic and realistic story, and to also show Peaches as a vulnerable young woman who wanted to leave the life of trafficking. Ying wove in details and ideas that she learned from her reading of *Sold*, about a young girl sold into sex trafficking, and also details that she learned about during the trafficking workshop hosted by local law enforcement at the high school.

Melinda and Ying both demonstrated personal engagement with their work, as did others within the art, dance, textiles, English language arts classes. The teachers consistently recognized this engagement and supported it as well, encouraging students to share their work, become involved with community, and share their work with multiple communities. Daniel's monologue, the Civil Rights wood carvings, author visits, the dance performances, and the selection of relevant topics all demonstrated the many ways in which students who truly and passionately engaged in their work and invested in the projects they selected, completed, and shared with others.

Finding Three: Hope and empathy as intentional and significant points of reference with regard to teacher planning

As teachers plan learning experiences within the institute, multiple ideas form a central core to their intentions and vision. Hope and empathy are two central ideas that are found throughout the institute, throughout the teacher's intentions, and within the planning and learning

experiences. These concepts were found throughout teacher and student interactions, as well as with the processes of creating artwork and the tensions surrounding these interactions. These experiences support long term possibilities for all participants and avenues for understandings of social justice topics as well as developing empathy and cultivating hope. In Table 4.4, key language, stories, and ideas are highlighted that illustrate how empathy and hope are centered within the institute across learning experiences, community engagements, and personal interactions. The first column includes key words related to general outcomes including hope and empathy; the second columns focuses more specifically on discourses related to notions of hope and empathy while the third column includes key quotations and stories drawn from participant interviews that connect with hope and empathy as significant points of reference in the institute.

Table 4.4: Key Language and Participant Quotations Related to Hope and Empathy

	<i>Key Words Related to Hope and General Outcomes</i>	<i>Notions of Hope, Empathy & Personal Beliefs</i>	<i>Quotations and Stories</i>
<i>Angel Vega (social science teacher)</i>	Transform, change, powerful, enlighten, deeper conversations, imagine, hope, student relationships, reflect, process, critical, agency, empower, overcome, healing	Personal transformations, change, hope, empathy	Establishing hope as part of social justice topics: “So one of the things we always try to do is try not to leave it aswe obviously have very dark topics. But how do we leave it with some hope because of unless you have hope you're not going to try to change things. Right? And so we always try to leave it with some hope in there. So this is looking at social justice through a slightly different lens.”

			“How do we create something better out of it?”
<i>Michael Emerson (art teacher)</i>	Deep thinking, collaborate, transform, potential, rigor, design, healing, opportunity, confidence	Activist, transform, change, empathy, perspectives	<p>On realizing that empathy should be a critical component for the institute:</p> <p>“So we gathered all the students up and they [homeless visitors] would tell their stories very poignant, emotional stories of why they were there. And and I really learned from that how important it is, you know that whole empathy, you know that how my students interact with them because a lot of them were not sympathetic. So even though it's a poverty school for some reason they would look down on homeless people and not really see their story. So we had to change that. I knew hearing their stories was important.”</p> <p>“You shouldn't be one sided, you should present both sides and that would stimulate conversation expand some thinking. In creating empathy. And I hope we accomplish that.”</p>
<i>Matthew Thao (dance/textiles teacher)</i>	Strong, foundation, appreciation, power, share, grow, change, meaningful projects, empowering others and selves,	Change, grow, hope, empathy	<p>Prioritizing empathy:</p> <p>“In one word, empathy. I hope students have empathy for others when they graduate from our school.”</p>

	confidence, service learning, voice		<p>“And then with This Is Me that routine was like, for example, one of the words on there was ‘I am I Am Bruised I am brave’, so the song had hope in it too.”</p> <p>“There's more to life than just books and studying. I think that's why a lot of my project based learning turns into service learning projects to give back.”</p> <p>“So again teaching them how to have empathy and you're teaching them to give back to their fellow peers.”</p>
<i>Hilda Sanchez (ELA teacher)</i>	Grow, blossom, ownership, pride, possible, involvement, conversations, social justice, heal	Impact, potential, support, express ideas, perspectives, community	<p>Supporting hope, community, and empathy:</p> <p>“basically it was an awareness piece that there's multiple sides to the complexities of human trafficking and that this is a real issue and we are bringing light to the voices. That in itself was a community engagement.”</p> <p>“I think that some of the goals are to articulate like in a social issue to come up with ummmm with viable solutions, even just talking about it like communication. Like I find that they can communicate these stories to other people, they can obviously communicate</p>

			artistically too, so part of our communication is through images”
<i>Melinda (student)</i>	Awareness, heartbreaking, connection, vulnerable	Affecting others, new ideas for others/audience, affecting yourself, feeling connections	On finding hope and beauty in dark social justice topics: “because the topics that are being talked about are pretty dark they're very real and a hard situation for those people who go through it. But art kind of not makes it less dark but shows that there can still be beauty through overcoming it and that's just something that for me it's an experience not that it can be good for something, because human trafficking and all that is not good and like the situations that you have to go through are terrible but that through something creative can be something beautiful. ”
<i>Ying Lee (student)</i>	Understand, awareness	Change, vulnerability	Hope in creating art: “I hope that the girls like Peaches find a better life, a way out or something to help them, that it's not forever.”

Hope, Possibility, and Advocacy.

The idea of hope is foundational to the institute’s vision of exploring social justice topics and creating learning experiences centered around voice. Teachers intentionally discuss hope and their vision that while the institute may tackle topics that are challenging, complex, and complicated, they always approach these topics with the ideas of hope and possibility for change.

The words *hope, potential, growth, imagine,* and *possible* all support the concepts of hope and how this is valued and prioritized in the students' experiences. Recognizing the importance of hope in challenging and difficult topics is a central component in how teachers plan learning experiences and consider the outcomes for all participants. As Angel Vega described, many of the institute's topics are dark and challenging, which means it is important to include avenues for students to envision change. These dark topics create tensions for teachers to work through and consider. Angel Vega connected the notions of hope and change, stating "How do we leave it with some hope because of unless you have hope you're not going to try to change things. Right? And so we always try to leave it with some hope in there." Hilda Sanchez shared her view that hope is a necessity in exploring social justice topics, stating "There's always hope and that if you can talk about it or draw it and identify it or at least know that it exists and you're more or less going to be able to do something with that." Hope then becomes the necessary component to envision possibilities and change for the future. Both Angel Vega and Hilda Sanchez also connected the concepts of hope and possibilities to the idea of empowering students as agents of change, furthering the idea of significant outcomes beyond the traditional classroom spaces. Angel explained part of his mission as a teacher as "empowering you [students] to either overcome the situation or to help change the situation." This supports the notion of student empowerment as an intentional and direct outcome of the artistic explorations and learning experiences in the institute, along with the idea of hope for future outcomes and changes.

In planning the initial learning experiences centered around human trafficking, Michael Emerson discussed the first reading of a human trafficking article as pivotal because it was a powerful story of a young person involved in trafficking. Another major reading for students was *Sold*, by Patricia McCormick, which tells the story of a young girl brought into sex trafficking.

Both of these stories centered on individuals and created rich, complex, and nuanced reading experiences for students that ultimately served to highlight trafficking and help them see individuals caught in a larger societal issue. These stories were referenced multiple times by teachers and students as pivotal in understanding the nature of human trafficking. Mr. Emerson described this as a way that students came to feel concern for others involved in trafficking and created a space for students to feel empathetic toward human trafficking victims. One student described how her awareness of the vulnerabilities that led to trafficking impacted her life as a high schooler, stating that she was more aware of students who did not have friends and tried to befriend new students on campus. These shifts are significant in students' realization that trafficking can happen in many places, including their own communities, and that their peers can be vulnerable to becoming a victim.

In seeking to center hope within the institute's work, community involvement became an important avenue that emphasized possibilities and direct action based on hope for change; community became an important aspect of the learning processes and the tensions surrounding the topic and the artwork. Multiple possibilities arose in terms of community related outcomes for students, including service work and partnerships with local non-profit organizations. Over the course of several years, students worked with local advocacy groups and participated in fundraisers and community events that focused on education regarding trafficking and homelessness. These activities also fostered potential advocacy roles for students beyond their high school years, and several graduates have continued to be involved in community work and advocacy during their college years. Mr. Emerson articulated how proud he was of his graduates developing their own voices and beliefs, sharing that while he did not agree with all of their political views, he was pleased that they developed their own voices and became advocates for

causes that they found to be important. Mr. Emerson stated, “I am so proud that they found their voice and they're expressing their voice and they're working, you know, diligently and so I mean I'm very excited about that.” He saw this as an important outcome from the art institute work in that students saw their own potential to enact change in causes that they were passionate about, finding and expressing their own voices.

Empathy and Social Justice.

There are direct connections between empathy as an important and intentional planning element and the idea of social justice. Teachers were intentional in creating ways for students to consider perspectives, cultivate empathy, and explore social justice issues. There is a personal and human aspect to the learning experiences and perspectives that created a multi-faceted impact. These impacts were critical in raising awareness, empathy, sympathy for others, and new understandings of complex topics. Empathy is a core idea highlighted by multiple participants, including teachers and students, and connected with how teachers planned learning experiences and explored the tensions surrounding topics such as human trafficking. Matthew referred to empathy and sympathy multiple times, sharing his hope that students come away with more empathy and understanding for others. When asked what he thought about student outcomes, he stated, “In one word, empathy. I hope students have empathy for others when they graduate from our school.” He continued to state that he hoped students thought about their lives beyond high school and beyond their own experiences. Matthew discussed wanting students to connect with service-learning projects and become directly involved in supporting their community. He specifically mentioned donating items that students sewed including dresses and purses for high schoolers wanting to attend dances, making masks for others at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and spending time volunteering at local organizations, “I want them to contribute to

society, to really participate.” Matthew emphasized the importance of students helping their peers and those in their community, engaging as active participants in various aspects of the community.

Michael Emerson also discussed empathy at various points, emphasizing the importance of students’ experiences with multiple sides and perspectives with social justice issues, stating “it’s all about empathy.” He stressed the importance of presenting multiple sides of an issue and engaging students in conversations that pushed their thinking and understanding of various issues. This was an “important part of being a good human being....to have empathy and look at all sides.” That was a clear goal in how he articulated outcomes for students, stating “empathy is at the heart of solving problems because you have to go out and you listen and you take what you hear, to create a solution. And it all comes from empathy and listening to another point of view.” Mr. Emerson stressed how this empathy was part of his planning process and his thoughts about what students may gain from these experiences. He centered stories and multiple perspectives as a way to cultivate empathy and help students see many ideas and complications of each topic. This empathy focus was apparent in his curriculum development and student learning engagements as well.

Teachers were also careful to cultivate empathy and emphasize narrative as part of the learning process, further developing student engagement with social justice issues and ideas. Matthew Thao and Michael Emerson both discussed the concept of examining multiple perspectives and “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.” Matthew Thao stated, “I want students to think about others as they learn about trafficking.” The concept of story was also critical to building background knowledge about human trafficking along with empathy. Students had the opportunity to discuss and write about the story of Lakshmi, a young girl sold

into slavery in the novel *Sold*. Reading the story about Lakshmi, a young girl just a few years younger than many of the students in class, showed how youth created a vulnerability that made her more susceptible to trafficking. She had no agency or ability to make decisions, escape her physical confinement, or support herself on her own if she were able to escape her captors. Students felt a great deal of empathy toward Lakshmi, emphasizing her age and the heartbreaking details of her story. She was harmed both physically and emotionally, which was a point that resonated with students and created an avenue in which they felt a great deal of empathy for her character.

Reading the novel *Sold* was not the only way that teachers created an opportunity for students to develop empathy for victims of trafficking. Through multiple learning experiences, teachers intentionally used narrative to personalize trafficking and draw attention to victims, further creating empathetic experiences. Students wrote stories about trafficking, including monologues from the perspective of human trafficking victims and also those involved in trafficking others. They wrote extensive back stories for their fictional characters, thinking about their personalities, characteristics, vulnerabilities, and experiences that led them into a life of trafficking. Students performed these monologues for classroom audiences as well as audiences at an education conference and two public art exhibits. These processes cultivated empathy for students, teachers, and audiences, personalizing the invisible faces and voices of trafficking and bringing those stories forward into the world. Students, teachers, and participants alike described their feelings around these stories, highlighting how empathy was fostered during the course of the year.

An Avenue of Transformation: Art as Healing.

Michael Emerson and Angel Vega both used the word “healing” repeatedly in discussing potential outcomes for students as part of the art process. They recognized that in exploring, discussing, and creating artwork, students may also be working through their own experiences and sometimes traumas too. During the foster youth exploration, some students chose to share their own personal stories with the class as the class worked on projects to share for the end of year exhibits, including trash-bag representations of foster youth belongings and the processes of moving from home to home. This was seen as a way for students to share their own stories and gain a sense of healing in having their stories and experiences supported by others. This process was also about students learning that others are experiencing similar stories and building connections as well. Angel Vega stated that it’s important that students know what “they’re going through and so showing that know there are other people going through it in various ways, right? And so what is your story? ... We believe that art is healing and so even if it’s reliving traumatic experiences, whether it be an immigration story or an incarceration story that just through the process of going through the writing process, the visual art process, that that in of itself as a therapeutic process, right? So being able to guide our students through that is amazing and in the end, I think that they understood that healing process.” Again this circles back to the concepts of possibility and hope, creating spaces for students to imagine new possibilities. Michael Emerson talked about helping foster youth share their stories and be supported by their classmates. Angel connected these stories to the healing process and the idea of growth and new possibilities, stating that “art is healing, how you want as professional educators to guide them through these emotions and thoughts and continue to ask, how do we create something better out of it?” This continuing question of creating something better is directly related to the notion of healing for students and all participants as they explored challenging and difficult topics. Michael expressed

this as “potential” for “positive trends and transformations” for all of his students who shared their own stories for the foster youth, immigration, and refugee projects.

Cultivating empathy also involved connections to personal beliefs and understandings, for students as well as teachers, as part of the learning experiences. Mr. Emerson discussed his own shifting personal beliefs and understandings of multiple perspectives surrounding social justice topics. He described it as “reshaping” his thinking about illegal immigration and how the process of exploring immigration over the course of the year helped him see “multiple sides” of the issue. He recognized that his initial thoughts on immigration were somewhat one-sided prior to his explorations of immigrant stories alongside his students. The stories impacted his understandings of immigration, the reasons that spurred immigration, and the complicated nature of immigrating to another country. He also explained this is “something that I wanted students to really delve deeply into both sides of the story and one of the projects that we did... they have two sides.” This concept of multiple sides and perspectives is critical to the personal aspect of institute outcomes, helping students explore complicated issues that are relevant, authentic, and based in human experiences.

A further connection related to developing empathy was with regard to “deeper conversations,” “change,” and “reflection” as a teacher according to Angel Vega. Mr. Vega used all of these words in discussing his own transformations as a teacher as a result of his student interactions and reflections. In sharing a powerful story from his time at the institute, Mr. Vega discussed a student participant at a community meeting at the Civil Rights project year. This Milner High student had to leave the meeting to catch a bus, but decided to return to the meeting to talk further, saying “I don’t care if I miss my bus, I’m going to come back because I need it to say these things right? So she told us a little bit more and so much of what she said just changed

my thinking not that I thought the opposite way, but it just enlightened me.” This student, Aliyah, felt strongly about sharing her experiences as an African American student at the school, and Mr. Vega’s realizations here were “enlightening” both as a person and as an educator. Aliyah stated that “There's not one black experience that there's multiple black experiences, why is it again going back to that story? Why is it that our story is just about slavery? What about all those other positive things? That's part of our story too, but it seems like in curriculum our story is always framed in slavery and then Martin Luther King and then that’s it, that’s all we do in school.” Angel Vega stated that “things like that really changed how I view and really think about things like civil rights, things like our curriculum and how it frames people of color. It really led to a lot of deeper conversations, like off the record of teacher conversations about life, about family. But it just led to those deeper moments that eventually leads to better connection between myself and the student.” Several important ideas are found in Mr. Vega’s comments, including empathy, student relationships, new and more complex conversations about curriculum, and significant ideas about family and life values. While Mr. Vega didn’t experience a dramatic shift in beliefs, he experienced a new perspective that led to empathy for students who experienced racism at school and sought to make changes. This empathy and new perspective led him to examine school curriculum with a more critical eye and an emphasis on how students are experiencing curriculum, particularly with regard to how it frames and treats people of color. These new perspectives, insights, and conversations had ripple effects that impacted his own empathy for others as well as his personal values and his relationships with students in his classes.

Art Exhibits and Audiences.

Through various participant discussions, the idea of authentic audiences was a critical component to how teachers intentionally emphasized the ideas of hope and empathy. The idea of authentic audiences is a significant feature in the institute’s design and mission, as teachers intentionally plan public art exhibits and students always work toward the goal of sharing their artwork outside the classroom. These art exhibits are ways that teachers supported the notion of hope. Planning and creating art exhibits included discussions around possible outcomes for audiences and also for students. These exhibits supported raising awareness of issues and also showing audiences possibilities for the future. The exhibits also supported narratives and stories in ways that reinforced multiple perspectives and the notion of empathy for others. As Angel Vega discussed, the endpoint was never the classroom, but “it was always set up so that you are going to have to go out and show this to an authentic audience.” Various mediums are supported in public art exhibits, from writing to visual artwork, to spoken word performances, dramatic monologues and dance performances. All work produced in the institute was intended for at least one public art exhibit, if not multiple, and students prepared for these art exhibits intentionally. The planning of these exhibits included direct conversations between teachers, students, and community members about outcomes and potential impacts for audiences. Students used words such as *audience*, *affect*, *awareness*, *connections*, and *change* when discussing public art exhibits. As Angel Vega explained “your story whether it's the writing poetry or visual is going to be shared with somebody and so that's a really that's a next-level thing for students to know that somebody in the public is going to be looking at this.” This knowledge was critical for students and also supported outcomes for both students and public audiences, including raising awareness, hope, and empathy. As Mr. Emerson explained, the vision of the institute always included the concept of students presenting “their artistic solutions to current and relevant local

issues.” This positions students as having relevant and meaningful voices, able to bring about impact, change, and ideas within their communities. Out of tensions, new ideas and solutions arise. The idea of solutions is again highlighted with the acknowledgement and belief in hope and the possibility of positive change in local spaces. These concepts are further cemented with the students’ own words, again referencing hope, awareness, change, and audiences in their own discussions of sharing artwork in public spaces.

At a public art exhibit at an outdoor venue, student Melinda Smith shared her artwork, discussed her process, and expressed her ideas and understandings surrounding human trafficking. This interaction highlighted several key concepts found within the institute, including awareness, hope, and empathy. While discussing her oil painting of a taco truck stand at night, Melinda discussed broader concerns regarding trafficking with an intention of creating awareness and knowledge about local trafficking. Melinda used words including *awareness*, *understand*, *connections*, and *affect*. Thinking about audiences was part of Melinda’s experience in preparing for the exhibit and her process of creating artwork, just as she was also thinking about hopes for changes in the future and her empathy for victims of human trafficking. She explained that she was drawn to a photograph of a taco truck at night and decided to recreate it as a painting because she wanted people to consider how trafficking can happen in ordinary locations that they might frequent without realizing that trafficking is happening in the area. She also shared her hopes for changes for victims of human trafficking, and her interest in supporting local organizations dedicated to fighting trafficking. She also shared her hopes that people would learn more about those who are trying to leave trafficking and how they might get help from others. Melinda’s interactions in sharing her own artwork highlighted several key ideas that were

intentionally part of the academy's vision and the teacher's planning, including hope and empathy.

Conclusion

These findings illustrate the complex ways that teachers, students, and community members interact with social justice topics and foster meaningful transactions. The variety of modalities, topics, and public sharing possibilities create multiple opportunities for students to share their voices and consider the voices of those who are often "voiceless." Honoring narratives creates a space for marginalized populations to have a voice, to be recognized, and to be heard in public spaces. Narratives also personalized abstract issues for students, creating engagement and interest for participants. Further, creating opportunities for students to use various modalities supported engagement and choice that ultimately supported deeper and more meaningful learning opportunities. This artwork utilized narrative and voice in a way that facilitated authentic learning experiences for students, teachers, and other participants. The experiences supported the cultivation of hope and empathy, highlighting the teacher's intentions and supporting dynamic experiences for all participants. Bringing artwork into public spaces created opportunities for new engagement, new voices, and new possibilities. These experiences supported and facilitated meaningful learning experiences in and out of the classroom, developing students' understandings of social justice issues and the connections to their own lives.

Chapter Five: Mediated Discourse Analysis and Findings

Introduction and Rationale

In continuing to explore the question, *What happens when students and teachers use expanded, contemporary literacy practices, including semiotic resources, to explore and engage with social justice issues through public art exhibitions?* I examined two sub-questions: *How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?* and *What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?* In order to best answer these questions, I utilized mediated discourse analysis to examine student artwork and also honor the notions of place as a critical aspect of sharing public artwork. A geosemiotics approach allows for analysis of design and modes within the artwork, including color, language, gaze, etc, as well as intention and placement. This also supports the notion of “design as storying with artifacts, drawing from Kress’ social semiotic approach to multimodality, Pahl and Rowsell’s artifactual literacies, and Ron and Suzanne Scollon’s discourses in place” (Wohlwend, 2020, p. 168). Mediated discourse analysis honors student voices, the voices of those they wished to acknowledge, and the situational and public aspects of creating artwork to share with authentic audiences.

The following chapter is organized by artifact and analysis. I selected three artifacts for analysis, and my selections were informed by my thematic analysis work. All three artifacts were produced during the same semester while students explored the topic of human trafficking. All three artifacts were produced by students who demonstrated engagement and actively participated in public art exhibits with their work. All three pieces were shared in different locations, including an art gallery, a downtown street, and a hotel. Further, all three students

participated in various interviews during the process, with myself as a researcher and also in public media outlets. All three pieces represented individual work that could be analyzed alone, though all were part of the broader human trafficking experience and public art exhibits. With these selections, I organized my analysis first by artifact and then by findings and themes shared across the data analysis, returning to each artifact to discuss in detail. I shared a photo of each piece of artwork as well as the artwork as accompanied by my own analysis and geosemiotics work. Finally, these findings are discussed further along with thematic analysis findings in Chapter Six.

Artifact 1: Taco Truck Oil Painting

Figure 5.1



Context and Multimodal Artifact 1

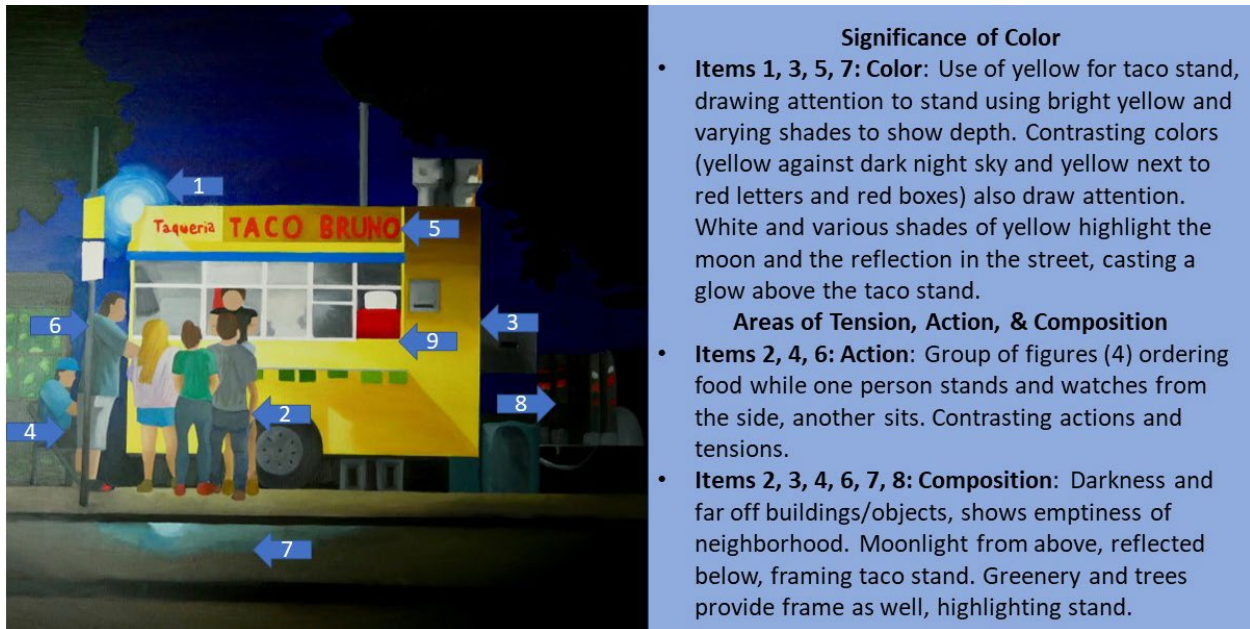
Pictured (Figure 5.1) is an oil painting of a taco truck at night, created by Melinda, a student in the ArtWorks Institute. This picture was inspired by a photo taken by Mr. Emerson, a lead teacher in the institute, from a collection of photos that he took in his own exploration of human trafficking. He photographed places that could be potential locations of trafficking, even though they might not be recognized as typical trafficking spots. These locations were interspersed with pictures of known trafficking locations, including motels and public parks.

Melinda selected this particular photo in part because of the location, a taco truck that had some anonymity (as there are multiple taco trucks in the area) but also because it was an unusual location. She explained that she didn't want a typical motel or place known for trafficking; instead, she wanted a location that would surprise audiences and help them think about trafficking in a new way. She was also drawn to the taco truck painting because of the popularity of taco trucks with youth in the community. Recognizing the prominence of taco trucks and the "everyday aspect" to this type of location was another important aspect that influenced her selection of a subject. This "everyday aspect" (Melinda, student interview) also inspired how she painted and represented the taco truck, drawing on her own personal experiences and her own interactions with taco trucks in the community.

Melinda worked on her taco truck painting over a period of three months, taking breaks in between painting to let oil paints dry. She worked on the painting multiple times a week, allowing paints to dry between classes before beginning another coat of paint. The length of time that she worked on the painting is a significant element to her experience and the final art product. The moon portrayed in Melinda's painting took her several weeks, as she worked on different layers of colors to achieve a specific look and effect. Melinda wanted the moon to have a glowing effect and she used various colors and techniques in working on the light. In other elements, she wanted clear boundaries and selected contrasting colors as she worked on borders. She kept a copy of the original photograph at the upper right edge of her canvas, referring to it on a daily basis as she painted and considered her final product.

Artifact 1: Taco Truck Oil Painting with Analysis

Figure 5.2



Discussion

In utilizing mediated discourse analysis, several areas of note are highlighted with this artifact (see Figure 5.2), including use of color and contrast, positioning of human subjects and objects, tensions, language, and public sharing of the artwork. The use of color and contrasts within the painting highlight Melinda's intentions regarding awareness as well as the connections to local public spaces. The use of color also reflects Melinda's desire to encourage audience reflection and impact outcomes at a personal level. Melinda used the color yellow throughout the painting, from the moon to the taco truck itself, to the street sign. This color use was intentional as she described the natural tendency for viewers to notice the yellow early in their encounters with the painting and the idea that using multiple yellows throughout would hold viewer's attention (Melinda, student interview). Melinda used yellow for the center of the moon, and a

combination of yellows and whites to show the glowing light affect around the moon, which draws the viewer's attention to the moon and light.

Contrast is another element that Melinda used to draw attention to particular details and highlight certain ideas within the painting. The dark trees contrast with the moonlight, the yellow taco truck contrasts with the dark night sky and the gray, shadowy buildings in the distance. The bright colors of the people and their clothes also contrast with the darkness and shadowy buildings surrounding the taco truck. The viewer's attention is drawn to the yellow taco truck and the people standing in front of it. The setting around it (trees, buildings, sidewalk, etc) serves to create contrast and frame the important elements of the taco truck painting.

The positioning of human subjects is another important element to consider in light of artist's intentions and geosemiotics analysis. In discussing the composition of the painting in her interview, Melinda shared her vision that the four younger subjects (perhaps teenagers) were in the middle of being observed by the man standing and the man seated. There are six people outside the taco stand while one person is inside. There is one person sitting, wearing a baseball cap, and his gaze points slightly downward. There is a mysterious element to this one person sitting and not interacting with the others. One man is standing, potentially older than the youths standing in front of the window. The clothing, size, and close nature of the four youths standing directly in front of the window potentially indicate a younger age than the man standing and the man sitting down. Another element of note is the hidden nature of one of the youths; at first glance there are three youths standing and facing the taco stand. But upon closer inspection, there is actually a fourth figure whose legs are visible, along with part of his/her head. One of the youths appears to be a boy while two appear to be female and one has long hair and is wearing a skirt. Another female has her hair pulled up and wears blue pants. The colors used throughout the

clothing and hair draw the viewer's attention to the people as a central part of the picture. The youths are standing close together, mostly obscuring the fourth person. Finally, the other person who stands apart and yet is part of the group is the one person working inside the taco truck, alone. This solitary person is engaged in a task, not waiting. There is a tension in pairing these people together, a group who are waiting, another who is sitting, and one who is alone and occupied. This idea was part of Melinda's experience in painting this work and considering the larger context and story behind this scene. This potentially raises questions for the viewer about what this could mean in the context of human trafficking.

Finally, there are multiple tensions and the use of mirroring and framing which further reveal the artist's intentions and create interest for the viewer. The reflection of the moon in the street draws attention to an element that could otherwise simply fade into the background and go unnoticed by the viewer. Instead, it appears that there is a bit of water in the street, next to the sidewalk where people stand, and a bit of the moon is reflected in the water. This creates a mirroring effect, reflecting the moon in a second location. The moon is visible above and below the people, again framing the people in front of the taco stand and drawing the viewer's attention to this focal point in the painting. It also frames the taco truck, with light above and below from the streetlight, moonlight, and reflection. There are shadows falling across the taco truck caused by the streetlight and moon, but the section with people is the most visible and well-lit area. The greenery and trees found at the edge of the painting provide another framing element, highlighting the truck within the empty and dark neighborhood. On the left side of the painting, a streetlight or post creates some division among the people and also frames the youths in front of the stand, creating another visual frame drawing attention. The figure who is sitting is outside of this frame, and as he is the only one not standing, this creates a tension with his differences and

his location outside of the natural framing. The words on the taco truck are in Spanish and this is the only language the viewers can see. The lettering is red, which contrasts with the yellow truck and also mirrors the red inside the truck behind the person working inside.

This painting (Figure 5.1) was displayed in multiple locations by the student artist, first in an art gallery location as part of an exhibit on human trafficking titled “After Dark: Breaking the Chains of Human Trafficking.” Later, this same painting was shared at an alternative venue, a local house which was donated for community use by artists and serves as local art center. The house was used to display many of the pieces from the original human trafficking exhibit, and this oil painting of a taco truck was selected to be a focal piece outside the entrance to welcome viewers to the exhibit. Melinda stood next to her piece (placed on an easel) and discussed her painting with viewers before they entered the exhibit space. The taco truck painting was used in an unusual way to welcome guests to an art exhibit, placing the painting outside in a space that invited viewers to interact directly with the painting. With Melinda next to the painting, this further invited viewers to interact and consider the artist’s intentions. The placement and inclusion of the artist disrupted this space and caused viewers to stop, pause, and potentially interact and talk with the student artist, before encountering other artwork on trafficking displayed inside the house.

Figure 5.3

Artifact 2: Displaying Peaches on a Downtown Street



Context and Multimodal Artifact 2

Pictured here (See Figure 5.3) is a life-size silhouette of “Peaches,” a fictional character who is a victim of human trafficking. Peaches arose out of Ying’s work in the art institute; as a high school senior, Ying, spent the 2019 year exploring the topic of human trafficking in various classes and working toward various public exhibitions of artwork related to the social justice topic of human trafficking. Ying created Peaches over a period of several months, painting and working on the silhouette every day during her art class. First, she created a drawing and wrote Peaches’ story, using her insights from the trafficking workshop she attended and her reading of

the book *Sold* by Patricia McCormick. Ying created a complex backstory for Peaches and thought about the characteristics and situations that created vulnerabilities for Peaches which eventually led to her trafficking. Ying had the life-sized silhouette of Peaches laid out on a table and each day would select an area to paint, slowly moving all the way up her body and then working on second, third, and fourth coats as she worked to achieve the image she had drawn originally. Periodically, she would refer to her original sketch and adjust colors and details. Ying worked painstakingly on the skin tones for several weeks, trying to achieve a natural skin tone that contrasted with her clothing and colors. Finally, when Peaches was finished, the art teacher had a duplicate made by a local printing company and Peaches was ready for display in public. As seen in Figure 5.3, students displayed these life size silhouettes throughout the local downtown community, evoking guerrilla street art, which appeared unannounced in spaces beyond traditional art locations. While the lead teachers did in fact obtain permission and permits from the city, they still referred to this work as “guerrilla art” and discussed these ideas with students. Mr. Emerson showed pictures of street and guerrilla art from various locales with students and fostered discussions of how this art would pop up in their downtown spots. These “pop-up” pieces became part of public spaces and fostered interaction with various community members. Peaches was placed near a bus stop in a downtown area, disrupting traditional spaces where people wait for a bus stop or a taxi.

Figure 5.4

Artifact 2: Displaying Peaches on a Downtown Street with Analysis

Elements of Disruption
Items 1, 3, 4, 6

- Placement near bench & covered shelter, at edge of “waiting space”
- Cell phone, asking viewers to see her as person not portrait, mid-action with background story

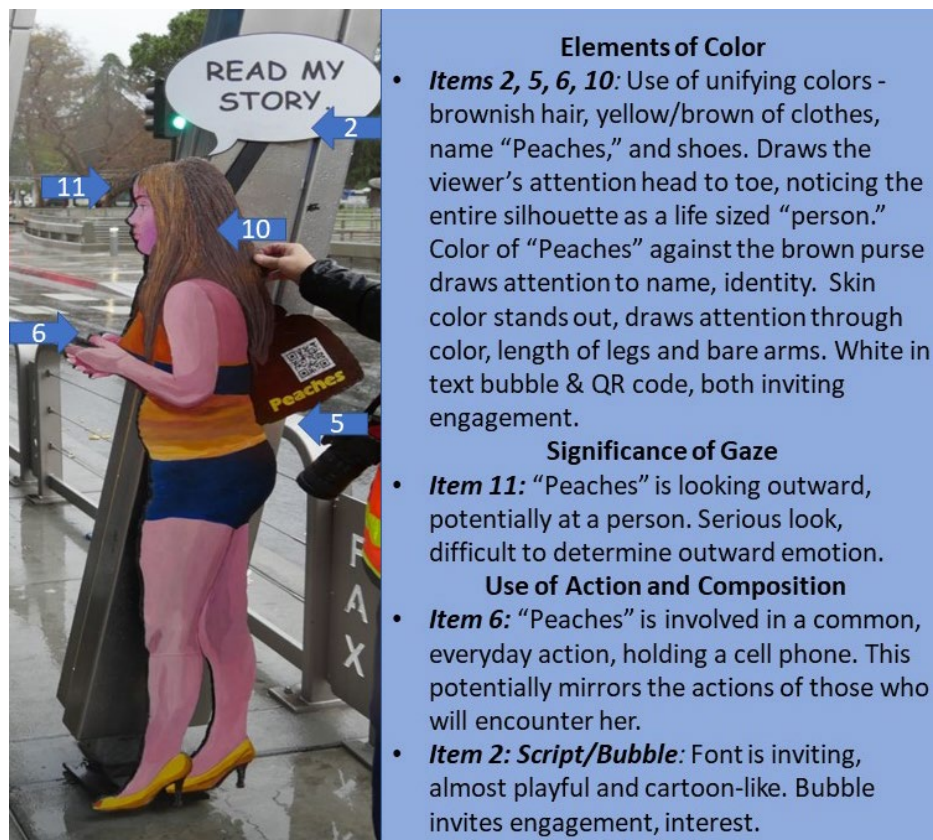
Fostering Engagement & Interaction
Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8

- “Read My Story” Bubble
- “Peaches” Name & QR Code
- Placement in high traffic area, median, bus stop & shelter/bench

Tensions: Items 6 & 9 Mirroring of observers/audience, mirroring of action (man with cell phone/Peaches), Items 1 & 8 Visibility of trafficking and Peaches’ story in a highly visible public space with day & night traffic

Figure 5.5

Artifact 2: Peaches Silhouette with Analysis



Discussion

Multiple elements within Peaches silhouette as well as her placement in a public space allows for examination of how the artist interacted with and created this art, as well as how audiences could potentially interact with Peaches on display. This life size silhouette of Peaches was displayed in a local area with high visibility, disrupting traditional spaces where people congregate. Examining Peaches as well as her placement in this public space (see Figure 5.4) highlight elements of disruption, various tensions, artistic elements of color, gaze, action, and also specific concepts that foster engagement and interactions for the artist and viewers.

In creating Peaches, Ying used specific colors and details to show Peaches as a person, relying on color, gaze, and action to personalize Peaches for viewers (see Figure 5.5). Ying used

unifying colors, seen in Peaches' brownish hair and the yellows, browns, and tans of her clothes. The name "Peaches" is painted in yellow, which coordinates with her top and her yellow shoes. This use of color draws the viewer's attention from head to toe, noticing the entire silhouette as a life sized person. The color of "Peaches" in yellow, contrasts against the brown purse and draws attention to her name and identity. Peaches' skin color stands out, which draws attention through color, length of legs and bare arms. The skin color shows depth and is authentic to the pictures and drawings Ying used in creating Peaches. This authenticity of skin is important to note as Ying wanted Peaches to look realistic and took time to use multiple layers of colors to get the right look so that when viewers looked at her from a distance, Peaches would look authentic and real. Ying also used white in the text bubble and QR code, the only instances of white, both inviting engagement and drawing the audience's attention. Regarding gaze, Peaches is looking outward, potentially at a person. She appears to be looking at something, creating a tension as we, the viewers, do not know what she is watching or observing. She has a serious look, and it is difficult for viewers to determine outward emotion. As an ordinary person engages with a cell phone, Peaches is also involved in a common, everyday action in holding a cell phone. This potentially mirrors the actions of those who will encounter her, creating another tension for viewers as they encounter a fictional victim of trafficking who may be doing the same thing that they are doing – holding a cell phone and looking at something in particular.

Several elements of disruption are present in Peaches' display on the street, as well as tensions that create interest and highlight the artist's work while thinking about human trafficking. Peaches' placement at the end of a public bench and shelter disrupts a traditional waiting space for members of the community (see Figure 5.4). The idea of a life size silhouette holding a cell phone also disrupts normal interactions; being in mid-action with a cell phone is

also an invitation to viewers to see her as a person with a story. There are also several tensions that highlight the artist's intentions and invite engagement. There is the mirroring of action, as Peaches is mid-action with a cell phone and many passersby will also have cell phone, mirroring their own actions. In Figure 5.4, there is a man opposite Peaches, facing her and also holding a cell phone, mirroring her actions. The concept of visibility and invisibility is also a place where mirroring takes place. Peaches' visibility in a public space disrupts the invisible nature of trafficking, which often takes place publicly without attention or recognition. This brings Peaches' invisible story into a highly visible public space with both day and night traffic, creating another tension for viewers to explore and consider.

Multiple elements foster engagement and interaction with Peaches' silhouette in a public space. The "Read My Story" bubble is white and includes a script or font that is inviting and reminiscent of a comic book style. The placement of the bubble is high, at eye level for viewers, and large in size compared to Peaches head, again drawing the viewer's attention. Peaches' name is in yellow, placed next to the white and black QR code. The QR code is on Peaches' purse, which sticks out behind Peaches, changing the outline of the silhouette. Drawing attention to this disruption of her outline highlights how she is holding a purse with a QR code. This QR code is truly an invitation for audiences to interact with Peaches, as QR codes are now familiar parts of everyday life and viewers know that by using their smart phone, they will be taken to a website. They do not know what this website will be, but the QR code is the invitation to something related to this unusual silhouette and creates an interesting tension for viewers. It creates an avenue for viewers to learn more about this silhouette at the bus stop. The placement of Peaches in a high traffic area is also an invitation to engage for members of the community. Peaches was placed in the median of a large street, at a bus stop frequented by those traveling downtown, and

underneath a shelter and next to a bench. Passersby would use this shelter and bench, so placing Peaches there invites the public to interact with this silhouette. Peaches' location also draws attention to the artist's intention in inviting the public to interact with Peaches in this way and placing her in a public space. These elements of disruption, location, and engagement highlight Ying's specific intentions as she created this art with the audience transactions in mind.

Figure 5.6

Artifact 3: Jose on Display in a Hotel



Context and Multimodal Artifact 3

Student David Garcia created a life-sized silhouette (See Figure 5.6) of a figure named “Jose.” This figure is mid-action, holding a hoe in his hand and looking downward at the

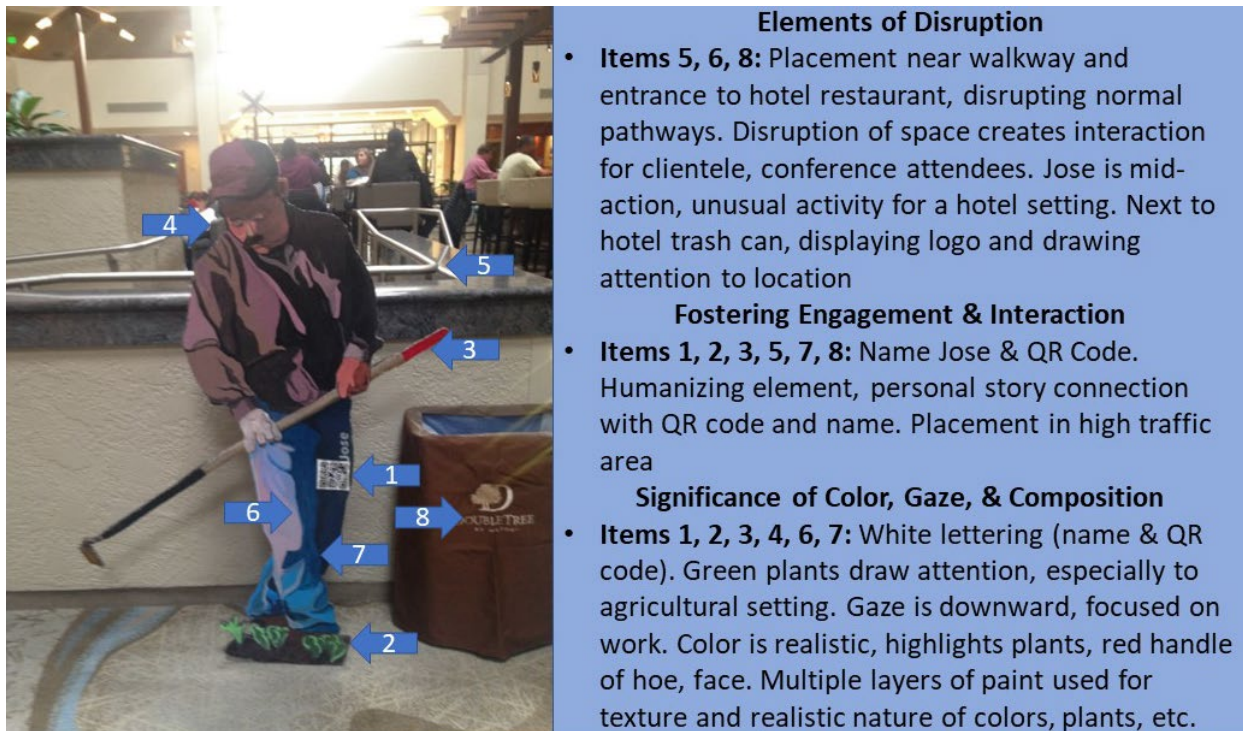
ground. He appears to be working the ground, and there are small plants in front of his feet. David had the choice of creating a silhouette or working on a painting, but he selected a silhouette because he wanted to focus on a person affected by trafficking. While many students painted silhouettes involved in sex trafficking, David's was the only silhouette involved in agriculture. This was a deliberate choice on his part, as he has family who immigrated to the States and worked in the fields, so he cares deeply about the plight of immigrants in the agricultural sector. He stated that this project was meaningful because everyone knows people or has family members and friends who could become victims of trafficking, and this is important for people who immigrate and work in the fields. This influenced David's work in painting Jose. Jose is depicted wearing a hat and a jacket and gloves. He wears blue pants/jeans and on his lower pantleg is a white and black QR code and the white lettering "Jose." David took a long time to paint Jose, and he worked with a partner from an English class in writing Jose's story, which took several revisions as the students worked out the details of Jose's backstory as an immigrant who was promised a safe trip to the United States but was forced to work in the fields for a contractor who paid to bring Jose across the border. While David started Jose's painting early, he was one of the last students to finish his project before the deadline as he worked on each detail of his story and his silhouette. Working on the story and silhouette simultaneously highlighted how this experience was a cohesive one for David, and he cared deeply about the story and the artwork together.

Ultimately, Jose was displayed in multiple art exhibits in town, including the larger human trafficking exhibit in an art gallery. He was also displayed in a DoubleTree Hotel, the site of a local conference on human trafficking (see Figure 5.6). The decision to include Jose's silhouette at the hotel demonstrated a willingness to become actively involved in the community

and to disrupt public spaces with a personal story of a trafficking victim. When students learned of the opportunity to share their work in this setting, Jose’s silhouette was selected to share at the conference site because of his representation of labor trafficking, which is also common in the agricultural area in which students live.

Figure 5.7

Artifact 3: Jose on Display in a Hotel with Analysis



Elements of Disruption

- **Items 5, 6, 8:** Placement near walkway and entrance to hotel restaurant, disrupting normal pathways. Disruption of space creates interaction for clientele, conference attendees. Jose is mid-action, unusual activity for a hotel setting. Next to hotel trash can, displaying logo and drawing attention to location

Fostering Engagement & Interaction

- **Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8:** Name Jose & QR Code. Humanizing element, personal story connection with QR code and name. Placement in high traffic area

Significance of Color, Gaze, & Composition

- **Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7:** White lettering (name & QR code). Green plants draw attention, especially to agricultural setting. Gaze is downward, focused on work. Color is realistic, highlights plants, red handle of hoe, face. Multiple layers of paint used for texture and realistic nature of colors, plants, etc.

Discussion

This labor trafficking silhouette encourages passersby to notice, stop, and engage. There are multiple elements within this silhouette (See Figure 5.7) that personalize this silhouette as well as invite engagement with the viewers in the hotel. First, the use of color with the silhouette creates a life-like figure. The man is wearing blue jeans, a common item of clothing for field workers and those who don’t work in the field. He also has a jacket and hat, again items that are common for most people. The purplish color contrasts with Jose’s skin color for this face and his

black mustache. His two gloves are mismatched, one gray and one red, drawing attention to the two different colors. The end of the hoe is also bright red, drawing the viewer's attention to the hoe that he is holding, which cuts across his body and extends on both sides of the silhouette. The green of the plants at his feet also demand attention, as they are the only green object and their bright color and details shows light and dark green leaves, bringing life to the plants that he is tending to with his hoe. David spent significant time on the green plants, using multiple layers and shades of green, trying to make the green stand out and create a textual element. The only white is found with the QR code and the letters spelling "Jose," again drawing attention to the QR code and the name, inviting viewers to see this silhouette as a person with a story and to go online to read his story. The figure gazes downward at his hoe, likely focusing on the work he is engaged in, and unaware of the audience.

The placement of Jose's silhouette at the human trafficking conference also demands attention and disrupts a public space with the intention of asking viewers to confront trafficking. Multiple tensions arise through this silhouette and the public display of this figure. The silhouette was placed in the lobby area where people enter the hotel and near a walkway that led to the hotel restaurant. Passersby would have to move past Jose either via stairs on the right or a walkway to the left, making Jose a focal point for any hotel visitor. In addition, the silhouette was placed next to a trash can, which is another disruption as this is a functional space where people do not generally expect to see artwork of a pop-up or guerrilla nature. Someone stopping to place trash in the bin must confront this life size silhouette of a labor trafficking victim, leveraging this tension to encourage interaction. It is also significant to note that this silhouette is of labor trafficking in the agricultural sector, not domestic labor which is commonplace in the hotel sector. This is again an element of disruption that may create surprise for viewers, some of

whom are conference attendees seeking to learn more about trafficking in the area and how they can support trafficking victims. Viewing this labor trafficking victim in an upscale hotel that serves tourists and business travelers in the community also creates a tension for viewers in confronting them with the realities of how food is produced and processed in this country, highlighting the invisible work that often goes unnoticed in the food industry. Before food arrives in a grocery store or hotel, it is tended to in the fields, often by victims of trafficking. This brings attention to the many sectors in which human trafficking occurs and the need for awareness of the different types of trafficking that occur in the local area. These tensions highlight potential interactions for viewers as well as the purposes and processes of the artist, as David sought to bring a voice and visibility to the agricultural labor industry.

Findings

This project involved students leaving traditional classroom spaces and enacting literacies as citizens within their own communities. Importantly, these artwork explorations blur traditional learning boundaries and create engagement in public spaces, recognizing the need for learners to participate as community members and actively pursue learning transactions for all participants. Students actively created and shared their work outside of classroom boundaries and sought audiences with intention and deliberate goals in mind. Engaging in this work enacts a “publicness, that is, a pedagogy enacting an interest in the public quality of human togetherness” (Biesta, 2014, p. 16). These literacy enactments facilitate transactions across public spaces and between various groups of citizens, embodying the notions of human togetherness and public connections through shared, personal experiences. It is both *experimental* and *activist* in nature, seeking to foster connections across community members that personalize vulnerable groups and opens possibilities for social and political movement among participants.

While examining the artwork alone would reveal insights and ideas surrounding the production of the artwork, using nexus analysis and geosemiotics allowed for analysis of these artifacts in intentionally selected spaces. Students utilized multiple modes, in addition to placing the artwork in specific locales that spoke to their intentions. The location is equally important as the material artifact, as “the concept of discourses in place includes place semiotics as well as visual semiotics, so that the cultural location or where a sign is placed is as important as the depicted meaning or what the print says” (Wohlwend, 2020, p. 170). Through the artifacts as well as the discourses and cultural understandings surrounding human trafficking, it is possible to examine the complexities of creating and interacting with art in public spaces. This analysis shows a deep level of interaction for all participants with a focus on voices, critical consciousness, and artistic disruptions in public spheres. The following section will examine three key findings across the various multimodal artwork: mobilizing of silenced voices, disruption of communal spaces through multimodal artwork, and raising critical consciousness for audiences, artists, and community members.

Finding One: Mobilizing of Silenced Voices: Creating Spaces for all Voices

The idea of voice is a critical aspect of these artwork explorations in ArtWorks Institute. The teachers prioritize voice and story, which becomes sedimented within the student artwork. The phrase “voice to the voiceless” is used throughout the institute, as students work and explore their projects. One teacher asked, “how is our artwork sharing an important voice? This is always on my mind as a teacher.” The idea of individual story is central to all of the institute’s work, and this is apparent in the nature of the artwork for the human trafficking year. The silhouettes were accompanied by written stories and students were encouraged to develop, share, and consider these stories as they created their visual artwork. Students learned about the nature of human

trafficking by learning of the stories of many victims in a variety of sources (this includes “The Atlantic” reading pieces, *Sold* by Patricia McCormick, the work with local trafficking organization, and informational workshops with law enforcement). Understanding the personal nature and the stories of human trafficking was prioritized and this connects directly with the taco truck painting, the silhouette of Peaches, and the pop-up of Jose. This artwork supports a personal and also a vulnerable approach to the complex issue of human trafficking, centering individual stories and personal narratives at the core of this work.

Late Night Taco Truck

With Melinda’s painting of a taco truck (Figure 5.1), an otherwise ordinary sight in the community, a new space created possibilities for new voices. This painting highlights the need for voices and recognition of people and ideas that often go unnoticed as the “invisible” within the community. Taking a common occurrence, the placement of taco trucks around the valley and the community, Melinda drew attention to something that many people do not notice in their everyday lives. She created a space where people became a focal point; she made invisible people more visible with a painting that highlighted their locale and also raised questions, interest, and tensions. These tensions invite questions and active engagement with the viewer. Who are these people at night? Why is one person sitting and watching? Why is it that not everyone is visible in the painting? Invisible spaces and groups of people create vulnerabilities that can lead to trafficking; the tensions within this painting reveal the necessity for voices for all participants.

Peaches and Ying

Ying, a high school senior, spent almost three months working on her rendition of Peaches, including the story to accompany the life size silhouette. In multiple ways, Ying

brought a voice to character whose narrative was typically silenced by society. Peaches' story evolved and was shared through this artwork. The process of creating Peaches and her experience opened up opportunities for inquiry, dialogue, and critical consciousness for Ying as an artist and for her audiences, and ultimately supported the development of a voice that Ying recognized was often silenced within her community.

Ying (discussing Peaches, a character and silhouette, in a media interview): "She is a young female who was brought into the life of sex trafficking. It wasn't her decision. Her name is Peaches. It's not their decision to go into this lifestyle but they get brought into it....girls who are insecure about themselves...I want people to be informed about human trafficking. It happens a lot in our community, and I want people to know about it. People have to understand it."

As Ortiz (2020) discussed with her community artwork, "The main goal of the project was to shift the focus from statistics and numbers of deportations to seeing the fathers, mothers, and brothers that have been torn apart from their families" (p. 32). Similarly, Ying also sought a means to personalize those represented in her artwork, as she wanted audiences to see Peaches as a person with a story rather than a statistic. Through Ying's story, Peaches became a character with needs, desires, vulnerabilities, and dreams; Ying made Peaches "real," through her visual representation and her story. Ying's own words discussing this process reveal her own wish for audiences to recognize the vulnerabilities that facilitated Peaches' entry into trafficking, and the complications of not being able to leave trafficking on her own. Peaches' vulnerabilities were visible for others to see, as her story discussed her desire to leave and her fears in seeking a way out of sex trafficking. Working on this narrative alongside the painting gave Ying time to develop Peaches' story as she drew, painted, and reflected on Peaches as a character. Ying's intentions show her interests in personal understandings as an outcome, as she sought a way to

show Peaches' voice through writing and personalize her story. Through the creation of Peaches' story and her silhouette, Ying sought a means to share, value, and recognize the voices of those who have been voiceless, drawing on and enacting ideas from the institute's mission statement.

Jose: Labor Trafficking Silhouette

With the silhouette of Jose, student David Garcia worked toward highlighting migrant field workers and bringing visibility to a sector that often goes unseen in society. Placing Jose in a hotel created tensions that highlighted the invisible nature of farm work. This placement asked viewers to see Jose and recognize his story as he worked. The QR code linked to his story, one in which he sought a better life and found himself forced to work in the fields as an undocumented worker.

David (in student interview): "I wanted people to think about their food, about the people who have to make that food and don't have choices in their own life. I wanted them to see Jose and think about him as a person. My family has lots of people who have worked in the fields and I know what it is like."

David sought a voice for Jose, recognizing that many in society do not hear the voices of those forced to work in fields. He also drew on tensions within society and his own experiences, realizing the complications of labor trafficking, field work, and immigrants. David connected Jose as a person to his own life and hoped that his viewers would also make connections and see people in a new way. It is possible to view David's work as "public or community art," as he is seeking to draw attention to a topic and demonstrate his belief that victims of labor trafficking should be recognized and have a voice, leading to public change. He looks to a change in the future, a characteristic of public art, as "such public art offers a prescriptive model for the future, as assertion of how people want to live for others as well as themselves" (Duncum, 2011, p.

353). He sought a means to make Jose's voice present in society and create a space where the voiceless are recognized.

Finding Two: Disrupting Communal Spaces Through Semiotic Resources

While the genesis of the art projects began in a traditional classroom, the intention and process reveal the potential outcomes in public spaces as students engage in art of an activist nature. The goal of displaying art in public spaces was a factor as students worked all semester, setting installation dates on the classroom whiteboard. The art was created with the intention of disruption as a driving force. As the high school principal explained, this street art "popped up without explanation," with the purpose of "drawing up community interest and telling the stories of folks who have been impacted by human trafficking" (Mr. Smith, Media Interview). It is this notion of artistic interruption that becomes critical to the social location of the classroom space (a non-traditional artistic endeavor in a traditional classroom) and also in the public space, as "the public pedagogue's important role here is not to instruct, nor facilitate, but to 'interrupt'" (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). This activist artwork is not only created with disruption in mind; it is also critical to consider the potential audience interactions once the art is installed in public spaces. The nature of the transaction with the audience is crucial to the creative process, as "activist art is based on relationships with its audience and political intervention; it is deliberately designed as a forum for public dialogue" (Duncum, 2011, p. 353). While verbal dialogue may be a traditional method of fostering critical consciousness, visual art is also a powerful means of fostering critical encounters and awareness of injustices. Highlighting the power of visual communication, designers and artists "channel social discourse into the public domain, offering cultural representations to the broader public" (Kelly, 2015, p. 392). These visual details create avenues of interaction for public audiences, a public dialogue facilitated by artwork.

Late Night Taco Truck

Sharing the painting of a late night taco truck (See Figure 5.1) as an entrant point to an art exhibit served to disrupt traditional notions of art spaces and also set a tone and expectations for what viewers would continue to find in their exploration of the art exhibit. The outdoor placement interrupts the space for viewers, creating a new area for new thinking and dialogue (Biesta, 2012). Placing the late-night taco truck oil painting as the first exhibit viewers would encounter, before even entering the traditional art sharing space, set a tone of intrigue, surprise, and a degree of discomfort as well. Prior to seeing the other artwork located inside, viewers were already confronted with the idea that human trafficking could take place in locations that they find ordinary. This is a location that audience members may see as part of their own everyday lives and it could be a location for human trafficking, unknown to passersby. This notion of place draws on tensions and confronts traditional ideas and understandings of human trafficking, which often occurs in public places; it pushes discourse into public domain, asking viewers to become actively involved through the nature of the disruption. The taco truck painting (Figure 5.1) literally and figuratively disrupts the traditional route that viewers would take into the art exhibit, creating a meaningful and complex event for all participants.

Peaches and Ying

The placement of Peaches in a public bus stop creates a space for public dialogue. Peaches and her story disrupt an ordinary location. Her presence draws attention to trafficking in a public place, one in which trafficking is present, yet invisible. Her placement was a “public art intervention” (Duncum, 2011, p. 354) as it transformed a bus stop into a place of interruption, social awareness, and confrontation with a pervasive social issue in the community.

The nature of visual art also challenges notions of traditional print-centric communication, using multiple modalities to both disrupt and also to seek connections and togetherness. Ying used her multimodal resources in creating Peaches and displaying her for on-lookers. Creating artwork that is life size not only demands attention visually, but it also highlights the very human nature of those who are often invisible and fade into the background as victims of trafficking. The life size silhouettes are similar in size to those who are interacting with them, again showing human connections. The use of color and detail, even including cell phones, again show the connections with the audience, while the white bubble “Read My Story” and the QR code invites interaction with passers-by. The vibrant colors highlight the size of the silhouette and attract attention from a distance, even catching the eye of those who may be driving by or even across the street.

In selecting an ordinary bus stop in a popular downtown location, Ying and her teacher disrupted traditional flows and spaces with her artwork, creating a new space for dialogue and learning. Ying acted as “educative agents” (Charmon and Dixon, 2021), bringing her work into a public space, actively disrupting ordinary public transactions and redirecting attention and action from traditional public interactions. This engagement as disruptors highlights Ying’s own agency as a community members, student, and participant in public spaces. Desai and Darts (2016) write that, “urban interventionist art practices.... use urban spaces as sites of artmaking, learning and social action” (p. 188). Ying approached this public space as a potential site of learning and social action; the human trafficking silhouette became a catalyst for this transformation of space, seeing the potential beyond the functional location of public transportation. She actively engaged in the process of disrupting norms in order to give voice to those who do not have the power or access to raise their own voices to be heard, echoing the theme of the art institute. These

disruptions also highlighted how traditional power structures can be reconfigured for the benefit and the interest of the public.

Jose: Labor Trafficking Silhouette

The figure of Jose disrupts traditional public spaces within a hotel; this space is typically one of comfort, relaxation, and welcoming to all. The placement of Jose's silhouette has the potential to create tension and invites an interaction with viewers that facilitates interest, questions, and intrigue. Similar to the display of Peaches, the display of Jose in a hotel lobby is a "public art intervention" (Duncum, 2011, p. 354). The lobby is a place open to the public and also dedicated to a specific group of people. In this case, the students knew in advance of the upcoming conference of groups concerned with trafficking and decided to place Jose in a location where he would be viewed by conference attendees, as well as other people patronizing the hotel.

There is an element of contrast in the public display of Jose as a field worker in a place of privilege and resources. From a visual standpoint, Jose is a vibrant and colorful life size display among the beiges and grays of the hotel. With regard to citizenship status, this is another point of contrast. It is likely that Jose is an undocumented worker, but many of the people walking through the lobby and patronizing the hotel are citizens. And in further contrast, this also draws attention to undocumented workers as a group of people, which often includes the hospitality industry. This ordinary public space becomes a place of learning and potentially social action, particularly with regard to how students utilized the human trafficking conference and leveraged this knowledge by placing Jose in a prominent location. Students garnered their multimodal resources, including how they used color, gaze, action, narrative, by placing a silhouette in a public hotel lobby and asking viewers to read Jose's story. It is in the interest of human

connections and public engagement that students acted as creators and agents in disrupting public spaces with the interests of the public in mind. Further, bringing class work into public display directly engages audiences with art, and this art is a form of both resistance and dialogue with the cultural and societal forces at work in the world.

Finding Three: Raising Critical Consciousness

In this work, by highlighting and drawing attention to those who are victims of human trafficking, student artists are giving voice to those without voice or social power, while using counternarratives to disrupt the traditional power structures in which marginalized and vulnerable groups cannot express their own stories. This art personalizes and highlights those who are impacted by human trafficking, treating them with care and empathy while asking viewers to engage with them as fellow community members with their own stories to share. The nature of the artistic disruption and the tensions within the art and subject matter raise the viewer's awareness of human trafficking and draw attention to the often invisible nature of trafficking. It raises critical consciousness for the creator and for the viewer, seeking to open spaces for dialogue and potentially social movement. The existing power relations are disrupted as victims of human trafficking are suddenly visible and present. This disruption makes it possible to consider power relations and critically interrogate them, as "critical public pedagogy hinges on reality's deconstruction/reconstruction in making power relations visible (Fine, Weis, Centrie, & Roberts, 2000; Grodach, 2011; Jaramillo, 2010)" (Zorilla, and Tisdell, 2016, p. 286). It is when the visibility of victims evolves in a public space that audiences can begin to deconstruct and reconstruct the systems surrounding human trafficking; the process of making this visible becomes a space for the creator's own awareness and consciousness to be raised, just as they seek to raise the critical consciousness of those who will view the artwork. The

transaction between the artist, the viewer, and the art (or subject matter) evolves during the process of creating the artwork, particularly as each member experiences shifting or developing understandings of the social justice issue at hand. All of these authentic transactions carry the possibility of disrupting power imbalances, shifting traditional power structures, and affecting transformations that will benefit the public. In this way, the public interest and the public togetherness is supported as artists create and share in public spheres, raising critical consciousness for all participants. Zorilla and Tisdell (2016) explore these ideas through the artwork of Camnitzer, as they examine public art sharing and transformations. Zorilla and Tisdell (2016) state that:

Camnitzer talks of opening space for individuals to interact with artworks, so codes are exchanged and new meanings are formed and evolve as work, artist, and viewer come into relation. The budding may awaken viewer and artist to a new understanding of power imbalances, hopefully challenging ideology and perhaps affecting the status quo (p. 285).

These transactions carry possibilities beyond the locale of the artwork, and beyond the creator of the artwork as well. These new understandings carry the possibilities of transformations and evolutions in public spheres as various participants interact with and react to social justice-oriented artwork in public space.

Late Night Taco Truck

Examining Melinda's oil painting (See Figure 5.2) reveals connections between her intentions and her thinking about human trafficking as an important social justice topic. Specifically, examining the tensions found within the taco truck painting reveal how Melinda's consciousness was raised through the process of learning about human trafficking and creating

artwork about trafficking. She discussed her choice of the painting, stating that she wanted people to realize that “trafficking can happen in a lot of places, where you might not know about it.” She stated that she was drawn to the taco truck because of its common occurrence around the area and her knowledge that most of her viewers would have seen taco trucks and possibly frequented them at night themselves. She was also drawn to the image of the truck at night, another tension for viewers in highlighting this “dark” aspect and the “darkness” of human trafficking. Her own awareness of human trafficking grew through the process of learning about it. She intentionally foregrounded her audience’s emotions and reactions, seeking to expand their knowledge and raise their consciousness about trafficking.

Peaches and Ying

Within Peaches’ silhouette, we can see how critical consciousness is raised both for Ying and for the potential viewers who will encounter her at a bus stop, as well as within traditional art spaces. Ying’s words show her own consciousness as well as her hopes in raising the critical consciousness of others. She wants people to learn about Peaches and see her as a complex and empathetic person; this creates a window to highlight trafficking and raise awareness of trafficking. She also wants people to see how Peaches’ choices are limited and how there are barriers that increased her vulnerability to trafficking; this speaks to the critical consciousness raised for Ying and for Peaches’ viewers as well.

Jose: Labor Trafficking Silhouette

In displaying the figure of Jose at a hotel, David shared his work and sought to raise the critical consciousness of those around him, both in the classroom and at the hotel. David actively sought a way to bring attention to and recognize the voice of victims of labor traffickers, seeing this opportunity at a local conference. Several tensions created opportunities for viewers to learn

about trafficking and raise their own awareness. The stark contrast of the laborer in the hotel lobby, in an unexpected place, created the first tension. Second, the artistic choices, including color, gaze, and action, created a contrast and highlighted the tension between the location and the silhouette. Finally, the story of Jose, connected with the QR code, served as an element of voice that shared Jose's story and brought critical attention to labor trafficking. These tensions encouraged viewers to wonder and ask questions about the agricultural sector, about labor trafficking, and about what human trafficking looks like in their own local areas.

Conclusion

This analysis work focused in particular on the following two questions: *How are the learning processes, understandings, and priorities sedimented within the artifacts created through explorations of social justice?* and *What are the tensions within and around the artwork that influence artist and viewer/audience interactions with artwork?*

These three findings illustrate the complex interactions that take place across multimodal artwork, drawing on students' engagement with social justice ideas to create and share their work. Students and teachers prioritized voices and story within this work, and this is apparent in how participants centered stories and created space for voices (Peaches, Jose, and others). Students engaged with the topic of human trafficking and saw possibilities for sharing their understandings about the people involved in trafficking with authentic audiences. Recognizing and creating spaces for voices of those who are often voiceless supports relevant and authentic literacies and opens possibilities for understanding the very human aspect of trafficking. It also creates the possibility for examining multiple perspectives within trafficking and deepening one's knowledge of this topic. Various tensions arose in the process of learning about human trafficking, including notions of power, victims, and vulnerabilities. These tensions impacted

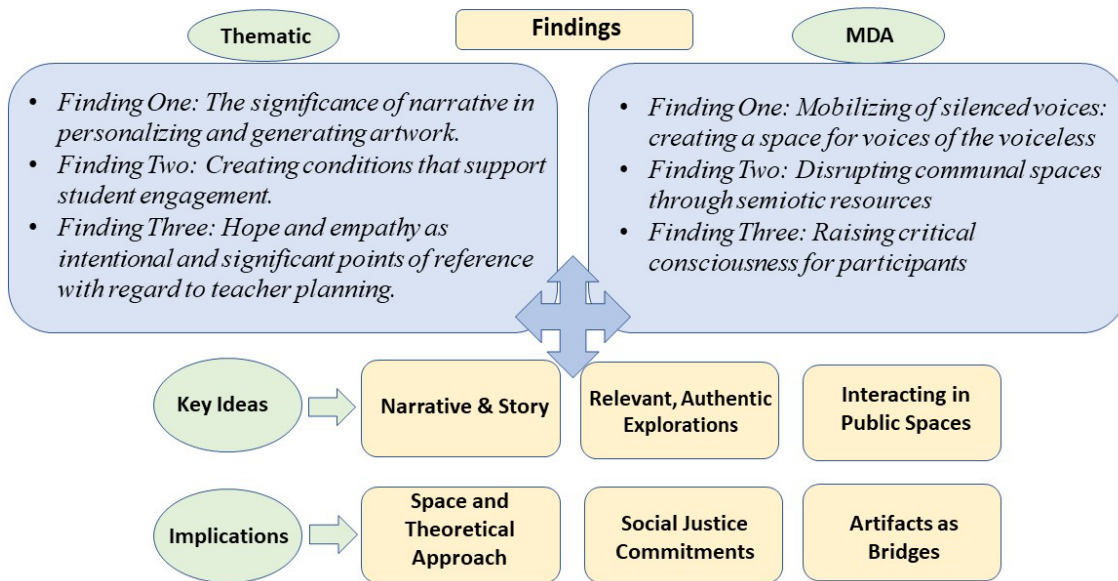
student work and the artist's intentions in creating and sharing artwork with others. Students engaged with many ideas and modalities through this process.; using multimodal resources also creates opportunities to disrupt traditional spaces and create “artistic interventions” in the name of social justice ideas. These disruptions take ordinary public spaces and produces places of learning, opportunity, and connection. These sites of engagement become an opportunity for re-design (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009), as artists draw on multiliteracies and multimodal theories while they create artwork that serves as a catalyst for social futures.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Implications

Exploring social justice oriented artwork reveals multiple avenues to pursue as a practitioner and as a researcher. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings for my research questions, detailing both my thematic analysis work and mediated discourse analysis, and implications for the classroom and for academic research. I will share connections to current research in the areas of public pedagogies, social justice pedagogies, and multimodal social justice artwork. I will also share how this work has impacted my own thinking about art, about social justice pursuits, and about possibilities for new thinking and transformations beyond traditional classroom spaces.

I organized this chapter in sections according to my discussion of findings and key ideas, implications for practice, and implications for future research. Throughout this chapter, I refer to my findings detailed in Chapters Four and Five as well as relevant literature that informs my theoretical framework and current implications in the field. In the following graphic (See Figure 6.1), I include my findings, key ideas, and implications for practice, outlining the relationship between these ideas and creating a framework for my chapter.

Figure 6.1: Organization of Discussion



Discussion of Findings: Key Ideas Informing Understandings Across Data

The following section addresses findings from my research questions, grounded in both thematic analysis and mediated discourse analysis. I first identified key ideas that were central to my findings across thematic and mediated discourse analysis. These key ideas include narrative and story, relevant and authentic explorations, and learning experiences in public spaces.

Narrative, Story, and Engagement

In engaging with artwork, students and teachers used narratives and supported engagement as they explored and acknowledged personal outcomes that centered around hope, empathy, and possibilities for supporting and sustaining social justice issues. Significantly, all of these findings involve “humanizing and hopeful civic futures” (Mirra and Garcia, 2020, p. 295). These concepts ground the work and findings in a way that engages youth as makers of social futures and positions them as agents of change. As Ortiz (2020) explains, “Stories are powerful,

especially within the context that they are told or represented. My goal is to use my art as a way to record, reclaim, and elevate these stories that connect us to our humanity” (Ortiz, 2020, p. 37). The students in the institute recognized and also used the power of story in their work, across themes and ideas. They prioritized stories and honored stories as they used their work to speak to possibilities for empathy, new ideas, and potential changes.

Narrative as part of the institute mission and the student artwork became a driving force that was generative in nature, building toward more nuanced understandings and possible ideas for engaging with others, including audiences in various settings. Narrative became a place of multiple perspectives and also of imagination, reminiscent of Maxine Greene’s (1995; 1997) notion of possibility. Through narrative, students interacted with those affected by the social justice topics they were exploring, including human trafficking, drought, immigration, and foster youth. In multiple explorations, students wrote stories from the perspective of those impacted by these themes and conducted interviews in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the topic. Significantly, narrative was at the forefront of student and teacher discussions of artwork and it was also central to the artwork itself. In this way, narrative and story became pivotal findings in both thematic analysis and mediated discourse analysis. Narrative and voice became intertwined, as students and teachers both sought to prioritize and center voice in their work. Students and teachers both referenced voice and the concept of recognizing and valuing voice, echoing the mantra of the institute and highlighting their own beliefs in the power of art to create a space for voices to be heard and valued.

Relevant, Authentic, and Multimodal Explorations

Through various art projects, students and teachers found ways to personalize social justice ideas and issues that were often abstract and complicated. Teachers supported relevant and meaningful spaces for students to explore and create. Building on the nature of story, students and teachers used multimodal work to create vibrant and multidimensional stories that honored the voices of those they wished to share with their audiences. This happened through multiple themes, including immigration, drought, human trafficking, foster youth, and incarceration. Students and teachers explored stories as they created multimodal depictions and counterstories to the narratives they encountered. The affordances of counterstories meant that students were able to express their own ideas and share the stories of those that they met, encountered, and spent time with. DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall (2019) write that “multimodal counterstories are situated at the interstices of identity and subjectivity, making them valuable for performance and representation” (DeJaynes and Curmi-Hall, 2019, p. 300). This highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the students work, and the possibilities found within multimodal work that allow for personalizing approaches through story. The students’ multimodal creations centered on personalizing stories and helping audiences experience the voices of the “voiceless,” as referenced in the institute’s mission statement. Further, these creations highlighted the possibilities that students saw for the future and embodied the hopes they carried for changes to benefit all.

Educators within the institute took an approach that focused on relevance, engagement, and personal stories, particularly in recognition of students’ lived experiences, literacies, and the use of various modalities to support students’ development as artists and their creations. In turn, these supports offered opportunities to counter deficit discourses and instead emphasize an

assets-based and growth oriented approach to students' work as artists. These supports also helped to create spaces that would include and support multiple stories, perspectives, and ideas. This is reflected in the way students used voice, story, and empathy in honoring and sharing their work with others.

Students engaged in multidimensional work, which speaks to the personal and authentic nature of their artwork. This key idea was repeated in multiple forms throughout the various projects, reflections, and discussions. Many projects entailed multiple modalities, creating an opportunity to share multiple perspectives and aspects of individual stories. For example, students often created text-based stories alongside visual artwork. They also incorporated direct quotes into their visual work, performances, or video pieces. They used props and artwork alongside monologues and dramatic performances. They also used digital components in conjunction with their artwork or dances. They focused on relevant, meaningful work that highlighted the personal and authentic nature of their topics. All of these creations highlighted the complicated, multi-layered, and authentic experiences of the people that students centered in their work.

Public Pedagogies and Social Justice Connections

Just as Michelle Ortiz (2020) writes of “utilizing public art and public spaces as platforms for social change” (p. 25), the students at ArtWorks Institute engaged in art with a view of socially minded issues and justice. The students and teachers utilized public spaces in various ways to facilitate meaningful and dynamic transactions with audience members, sometimes traditional and also in alternative spaces. Sharing artwork in public spaces afforded students and teachers opportunities to interact in ways that support their interests and search for new possibilities. The combination of social justice orientations, public spaces, and civically minded

adolescents created new prospects for encountering audiences and facilitating authentic and meaningful transactions in a variety of spaces with a variety of participants.

In discussing work with youth through community based group that involved arts, media, and literacy, Rogers (2015) wrote that: “Thinking about this work as a public pedagogy helps us, as educators, to understand the connections among a range of formal and informal sites of learning and public life, and the role of “new literacies” in contemporary participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2009)” (Rogers, 2015, p. 10). Similarly, this work with the ArtWorks Institute also encompassed a range of sites, experiences, literacies, and the possibilities for thinking about this work as public pedagogy. Taking this view affords opportunities to expand thinking about how adolescents interact with literacy, how they interact with social justice topics, and how they interact with communities and public spaces in a more global context.

The connections across learning experiences, public spaces, and social justice create multiple opportunities to examine student interactions. The possibilities for learning include spaces outside of the traditional classrooms, as “learning takes place in a variety of public spheres that allow us to connect the larger culture, the productions of youth, and the challenges of radical democracy” (Rogers, 2015, p. 10). Indeed, the possibilities for addressing issues of “radical democracy” and “larger cultures” are enhanced in public spaces because of the audiences and spaces available to student artists. It becomes more relevant and timely to connect to larger ideas in public spaces, as seen with the human trafficking silhouettes in public areas. The silhouettes gained new weight, life, and possibility because of their viewing in these spaces, asking viewers to confront issues of trafficking in their own neighborhoods.

Dewhurst (2014) observed that in discussing artwork, “students continued to clarify their understanding of their issues as they constructed meaning – furthering their own learning. At the

same time, they took on the role of educators, seeking to facilitate a process of critical reflection and action with their imagined audience” (p. 89). The roles that students took on were layered and complex; they acted as artists and designers while also taking on an educator’s role and also that of a civically minded community member. The students in ArtWorks Institute employed multiple resources in how they produced, created, and shared their work. As Biesta (2012) writes of the “educative agent,” students here also acted as educative agents engaged with public audiences as one who “interrupts” as a site of engagement. Indeed, Biesta (2012; 2014) did not see educative agents as educators, but rather as *interrupters*. Biesta (2012) writes that the “aim of such interruptions is not to teach actors what they should be, nor to demand a particular kind of learning, but to keep open the opportunities for becoming public or, in Arendtian terms, to keep open the possibility of a space where freedom can appear” (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). It is this emphasis on the notion that “freedom can appear” that enhances and maximizes the opportunities for linking artistic interruptions with social justice interests. The student interruptions are places and sites of possibility. Students create without concrete knowledge of what will happen; rather, they create and interrupt with the idea of possibility and what could happen. They set in motion the ideas, the interruption, and the engagement for public audiences to notice, wonder, and learn. They create the circumstances to form learning experiences both for and with their audiences. This echoes the notion of problem-posing education once again, as students seek to become active participants and spark learning, not transmission of knowledge. As Freire (2000) asserts, “liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information” (Freire, 2000, p. 75?). The students of ArtWorks Institute actively engaged in social justice commitments, drawing on the possibilities of multiple literacies and public spaces to create dynamic learning transactions for all participants in the public spaces they selected.

Implications for Practice

In the following section, I highlight several implications from this research study that speak to possibilities both in traditional classrooms and outside the traditional classroom boundaries. These implications are centered around public spaces, the social justice commitments that are recognized and possible within and outside of classrooms for all participants, and recognizing the affordances and opportunities found within social justice artifacts created by students.

Public Spaces and Theoretical Approaches to Support Dynamic Student Experiences

In examining public pedagogies and social justice connections, space becomes a significant focal point. Recognizing the possibilities within public spaces and expanding notions of literacy learning and growth highlights what is truly possible when traditional boundaries are blurred. The implication here is that educators can and should negotiate new spaces for learning. Further, it is critical to note that while space itself is an important element, the space alone does not facilitate potential for change. In order for new spaces of learning to truly be maximized, the teaching and learning approach must be aligned with dynamic, nuanced, and engaging learning experiences. According to Kelly (2015), “learning can occur anywhere at any time and is determined by the physical setting, the social interactions, personal beliefs, existing knowledge and attitudes of the person” (p. 391). In this sense, learning is not limited to a traditional classroom space and indeed, can happen in many different physical settings. Intentionally creating learning opportunities in new spaces affords new opportunities and possibilities, especially when considering social justice oriented topics and avenues to explore.

A combination of space and an approach that values, honors, and celebrates expanded literacies and notions to support dynamic student learning. These things must happen in tandem

to maximize the potential for transformative learning; indeed it is reminiscent of bell hooks' (1994) notion of "teaching to transgress" as teachers are able to teach across boundaries and in a way that support dynamic and meaningful change. The physical space can support this development, particularly as we recognize the value of hybrid spaces that serve multiple purposes, including places of learning. In discussing the notion of learning within museum spaces, Hamilton and Van Diunen (2021) recognize that, "Although teaching in hybrid spaces does not guarantee changes in thinking about adolescent literacy, teaching, or learning, they hold much potential to do so" (p. 519). Rather, hybrid spaces (beyond and outside of traditional classroom spaces) hold the potential for new and expanded notions of teaching, learning, and literacy. It is still necessary to be intentional and thoughtful in enacting new thinking about adolescent literacy in hybrid, alternative, and new spaces.

The existence of community art spaces alone did not facilitate the transactions taking place for students and teachers within the art institute; rather, it was the approach of the teachers, valuing student artwork, creating authentic and relevant transactions between student artists, artwork, and audiences, and the commitment to relevant and timely social justice topics that enabled complex and nuanced transactions. The students themselves were recognized as designers and indeed, makers of "social futures" (The New London Group, 1996). Kelly (2015) views "socially engaged design, as a form of public pedagogy" (p. 402), bringing together the concepts of design, social futures, and public pedagogies. When students act as designers in public spaces, they are facilitating transactions with authentic audiences, bringing together multiple considerations of author's intention, purpose, space, and audience. Their role in this process is critical, as "designers have a significant role to play in the creation of suitable, engaging spaces to appeal to visitors and increase the effectiveness of learning" (Kelly, 2015, p.

401). The teachers empowered students by supporting their choices, encouraging them to take an active role in developing their artwork, and supporting engagement at a deep and meaningful level beyond traditional classroom constraints.

The teachers also worked to facilitate intentional artwork with the students, as we saw in Melinda's, Ying's, and David's artwork and their specific discussions of purpose. This ties to the institute's vision of authentic audiences and Angel Vega's statement that all art was created with the purpose of sharing with others in mind. Kelly (2015) writes that, "the aim of the visual communication is for the visitor, who will engage in his or her own meaning making in response to the exhibit, to receive the intended message defined by the curator and created by the designer" (p. 394). The institute honored students as artists and designers, engaging in meaning making and also bringing their own awareness of the audience's role in meaning making to their work. Space, intention, and an approach that supports student work are all threaded through each element of student learning, teacher planning, and student artwork. There are significant implications for practice to be garnered from these observations, as students and teachers utilized public spaces for learning opportunities; indeed, the possibilities abound when educators look to hybrid spaces, public sharing spaces, and authentic audiences as a means to support and nurture their students' social justice endeavors.

Social Justice Commitments: Civic Engagement in Public Spaces

Throughout this study, it became critical to recognize the myriad of ways that teachers and students can and should interact with social justice issues and how civic engagement can take place in local, community learning spaces with adolescents. Students and teachers leveraged their own semiotic resources and knowledge as they interacted and created responses to social justice topics. Engaging in multimodalities affords opportunities for nuanced and more complex

interactions with social justice themes. This fostered opportunities for teachers as well as students. Teachers worked alongside students in drawing, performing, writing, and painting, often collaborating on work and sharing ideas. The multiple modalities and literacies supported this collaboration, resulting in rich artwork that was deemed “museum worthy” by teachers. Engaging in multiple modalities and modes of performance opened up new avenues of thinking about issues and challenged students to connect social justice ideas with their own artistic endeavors.

Teachers and students both exhibited commitments to social justice topics through their engagements. First, it is important to recognize how “teaching is itself a form of activism that allows for the realization of social justice both in *how* and *what* educators teach their students” (Boyd, 2017, p. 7). Teachers engaged in social justice issues with purpose, and in selecting what and how they taught, they embraced these ideas with their students. Their own commitments and priorities were present and also sedimented within the topics and artwork they explored and supported in the classroom. They brought their own ideas, experience, priorities, and interests into the classroom and shared those with students as they approached these topics, as “teachers who work for social justice exhibit various literacies based on their experiences, the students they teach, and their interactions with and knowledge of the world around them” (Boyd, 2017, p. 9). The educators in ArtWorks Institute engaged in activism as educators and encouraged their students to also engage in activism as designers, artists, and creators.

As designers, students took ownership of their work and created with their social justice topics in mind; these social justice orientations facilitated meaningful engagements. As they engaged as designers, they also engaged as activists, as “practices of design as an agent of change where design practices are employed to create impactful messages. All activists who aim

to incite change endeavor to transform their target audience, or larger social groups, by encouraging social, cultural or political transformation (Fuad-Luke, 2009:6). Design is implicitly embedded in the process of questioning and creating change” (Kelly, 2015, p. 402). Their work moved beyond simply designing due to the intentional and purposeful nature of their work, and the social justice oriented topics and visions. The impacts that they sought through their artwork spoke to the socially minded intentions they articulated and their desires to impart change in some way through meaningful transactions with their audiences.

There are multiple ways in which students can and do engage in student activism, even taking on roles as teachers in some scenarios, as they worked to teach their peers and others about their selected topics. Dewhurst (2014) discussed the roles of students in her research study, allowing that “At times, the youth in the activist art class seemed to become critical researchers as they forged connections, asked questions, and collected, analyzed, and shared information about their chosen issues. In other moments, they were teachers – learning about and engaging others in an exploration of issues. And finally, as the participants tweaked their works of art, they became activists, creating art that aimed to address conditions of inequality and other injustice in the world” (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 113). In similar ways, students in the ArtWorks Institute also engaged in multiple forms of activism through their artwork. They conducted research on social justice topics, which often included interviews, readings, community organization workshops, etc. They became active participants in this work, engaging as student researchers with a critical eye. They also shared their knowledge with other peers and teachers, acting as teachers. And finally, they engaged as artists, creating art that spoke to their own intentions, purposes, and hopes for the social justice issues they selected.

These social justice connections highlight multiple implications for the classroom. It is important to recognize the multiple ways in which teachers and students have the opportunity to make commitments to social justice and interact with social justice themes both in and out of the classroom. Mirroring the many roles that students engaged in, teachers also acted as researchers and educators, and sometimes artists as well. They engaged in social justice at the classroom level and also as community members, civic participants, and artists. The teachers were invested in social justice in many ways, including how they allowed and supported multimodalities and multiliteracies, how they honored student choice and engagement, and how they created learning opportunities for all students. The ways in which they centered student work in social justice issues that are relevant, local, timely demonstrated their commitments to their students and to the social justice ideas they selected with students. Students are also invested as members within this community and creators of socially justice minded artwork. They shared their commitments within public spaces. Their visions, ideas, and hopes for change surrounding issues such as human trafficking and immigration display their activism and their desire to impact the world in which they want to live and create.

Artifacts as Bridges and Sites of Opportunity

Student artwork, specifically student created artifacts, are critical to creating avenues for personalizing social injustices, centering human connections, and bridging the abstract and the concrete. There are implications surrounding the ways in which teachers and students can intentionally create, use, and interact with student-created artifacts. These artifacts are dynamic and complex, enhancing the many ways in which educators and students approach social justice topics. Indeed, artifacts act as bridges which create the opportunity for students and audiences to learn about social justice topics which impact their worlds. Artifacts created in response to

learning about social justice issues also serve as a response in their own space to complex, social justice issues. This builds on artists' intentions and sharing of artwork in public spaces.

Artists create with intention, ideas, and design in mind, while accessing their own experiences, identities, and hopes in the process. Albers (2022) writes that "artmaking is a social practice in which the maker and artist draws upon their past and present experiences, access to art materials and space, and knowledge of elements of art to create an art object. In combinatorial relationship, artmaking becomes a future interpretive product and opens up insights and interpretations into an artist's social practices" (p. 107). Viewing artmaking as a social practice opens up possibilities for expanded literacies and considerations of artwork as sites of engagement and opportunity. Considering artmaking as a social practice also allows for opportunities to explore the sedimentation of identities, experiences, and ideas within a student-created artifact.

Another connection that warrants further exploration is Pahl and Rowsell's (2010) notion of artifactual literacies. This allows for the possibility of considering artwork as "artifacts [which] open up worlds for meaning makers, worlds that are frequently, if not always, silent in formal, institutional settings like schooling" (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, p. 3). Artifactual literacies create opportunities for expanding traditional boundaries and limitations in formal education, and this is certainly true of the social justice oriented artwork created by the students in the ArtWorks Institute. This artifactual literacy approach views "literacy teaching as material and situated" (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, p. 3) and this view honors the student created artwork while also addressing the situated context and materiality of the objects they create and share. The artifacts are inextricably linked to the contexts in which they are created and the artist's intentions throughout the process of creating the artwork.

In examining artwork, and particularly with the possibilities of mediated discourse analysis, it is possible to consider multiple aspects of artwork, not only the final product but also the process and the ways in which multiple layers and ideas can be present in one piece of artwork. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) conceive of artifacts in a way that links literacy, multimodality, and everyday life. They also see *sedimentation* in artifacts, which they define as how “meaning makers infuse the texts they write with their identities and passions” (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010, p. 9). This notion applies to visual artwork, performance artwork, writing, etc, in the same way as students as infuse this work with their own identities, experiences, passions, hopes, and desires. This is particularly true in how they see possibility for change or new ideas, and bring this intentionality with them to their artwork in how they conceive of audiences interacting with their work. There are also possibilities for linking process with sedimentation, and viewing artifacts in progress as well as in a final form. Bringing in the notion of artifactual literacies carries multiple implications in how educators can view student artwork and analyze student artwork as material, situated, sedimented artifacts. These student created artifacts are distinct sites of sedimentation, opportunity, and engagement.

Literacy engagements often focus on traditional texts, which carry their own possibilities for personalizing experiences and socially minded engagements. Often literature is seen as a catalyst for social justice movements and there are clear links to action and justice. In discussing empathy, Mirra (2018) writes, “I am interested in using the concept of critical civic empathy to push the dialogue toward recognizing ourselves (and other individuals) within a political context as members of socially constructed groups with different levels of power and privilege, while reimagining caring in terms of engagement with public life. Within this model, reading literature can become a mutually humanizing experience that can spur social action” (Mirra, 2018, p. 20).

While Mirra refers to literature and the connection to critical civic empathy, I believe that we need to apply these same ideas to student created artwork and how we consider these artifacts in relation to social justice intentions. The artwork that students create become sites of caring, sites of civic engagement, and sites of critical reflection. These artifacts are bridges toward relevant and authentic experiences that spark interest, action, and carry the potential for transformation. It is not only literature that is capable of creating rich experiences and spurring social action; artwork carries the same possibilities and if we approach student artwork with this in mind, the potential is enhanced and magnified.

Implications for Future Research

Looking ahead to future possibilities, there are multiple opportunities for sustained investigations into the processing of student artwork at the personal and the community level, carrying potential for social justice and action in a variety of school and community spaces. The idea of transaction theory, as readers/writers and artists/viewers, is an area that warrants further examination in the ArtWorks Institute. Some data analysis leads in this direction, and more thorough case studies have the potential to reveal more about transactions at a personal level for students and teachers, particularly in the area of long-term impacts beyond the school year. I think that the potential for social justice and change beyond the classroom is present, and it may be that upon further investigation, I find more connections within the community and initiating change, either on the part of the students or the teachers. It is possible that there are transactions supporting change and action beyond traditional spaces and time, for multiple participants, including teachers, students, and audiences, and a longer study that follows students and teachers beyond graduation and art exhibits carries possibilities for future insights. In this process, I also recognized that change may happen at the personal level. Dewhurst (2011) reminds us that “the

social justice action might be found not only in the final impact but also in how it alters the creator along the way" (376). I have seen hints of this already and I think there is further potential to see personal change outside the classroom as well as at the personal level for teachers and students, and this would also be an area for research beyond student graduations and teaching at Milner High School.

Continuing in the exploration potential transformation, another area for further research is within the notion of public audiences, transactions, and impact at a community level. This study did not include data gathered from those who interacted with the artwork in public spaces, but this area is rich with possibilities. Indeed, several of the silhouettes have been moved into “new lives” of sorts; three of the silhouettes are now part of the lobby for a community organization dedicated to helping victims of human trafficking. Several members of the organization requested that if silhouettes were available, they would appreciate housing them at their offices. In this sense, the artwork now has a new life and a new space for potential audiences. The QR codes are still active, and people are still able to scan and read the stories created by the students at ArtWorks Institute. Multiple pieces of artwork (including paintings from the human trafficking year) have been moved to district offices and three different school sites, where they are on display year-round.

Finally, another area for future research involves connections to community service for participants within and outside of the institute. I recognized the possibilities of this in listening to students discuss how they would like to help others and I heard similar sentiments from teachers in the institute as well. To date, there has not been a method for tracking students after leaving the institute and noting their community and school activism. But I think there are possibilities to

explore in this area, as many students noted a desire to become more involved in an activism as college students and community members.

In reflecting on my findings at this point, as well as the potential for further study, I am reminded of Michelle Fine's words, "when we work in intentional and often difficult collaboration within and across sites, unexpected insights and incites emerge from the animated and sometimes disruptive chorus of voices" (2018, 96). My work right now reveals a chorus of voices, and I am still listening to the voice, discovering insights, and thinking about collaboration. *Listening* and *story* are two concepts that I circle back to frequently, pondering what I see, what I hear, what I have missed, and what I might look for as I continue listening and considering future research.

Researcher Reflections

Throughout this experience, I was constantly amazed, surprised, and intrigued both by student artwork and their comments about their own work and their own thinking. The comments of their teachers continually impressed me with their dedication, interest, and belief in their students. The dedication of all involved in the institute impressed me on a daily basis. I began this journey with many questions about what students were doing with artwork and why they were so interested in these various topics. And no matter what idea, question, or topic arose during my time at the institute, the conversations always circled back to the student artwork. The artwork is truly the heart and soul of the institute and the focus of student and teacher energy. This artwork and this energy continued to give me hope as a teacher and a researcher, even through the trials and complications of a global pandemic and nationwide reckoning surrounding racial injustice. I saw the youth of Milner High School as energized, educated, and motivated to change their worlds. I find wisdom and inspiration in the poetry of Amanda Gorman, "For there

is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it" (Gorman, 2021). Today's youth are brave enough to be the light.

Conclusion

This research project evolved over multiple years and took a different form than my first explorations at the institute. I started with an ethnographic approach, simply immersing myself in the institute and listening to many, many voices. As I built relationships, I found that my research design and methodology took shape. As I sought ways to center student artwork, I found that I could honor student voice through reflective interviews, conversations, and mediated discourse analysis. I found student engagement, story, and commitments to social justice ideas through my conversations with teachers and students. I saw how these experience truly created meaningful learning opportunities, personalizing large, abstract social justice themes. These key ideas resonated throughout my various data sets and I saw the threads through the interviews, observations, and student artwork. I realized the significance of student artifacts as sites of engagement and bridges that created opportunities for students to truly understand important issues of injustice. These commitments to social justice were found within the artwork and the discussions of the process and the artwork itself. I also found how public spaces become important sites of engagement, creating opportunities for students and teachers to interact with audiences and act with intention as artists. The implications for practice center around this idea of intentionality, with regard to spaces for learning, including non-traditional spaces, focus on relevant and timely social justice issues, and purposefully creating and sharing artwork. Adolescent artwork is powerful; it is our place as educators to recognize and honor their work.

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Appendix

Figure A: Initial Approval Letter



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
 OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
 Office of Research Compliance

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION - NEW PROTOCOL

DATE:	July 12, 2019
TO:	Sharon Daley, Principal Investigator EDUCATION Tara Warner UNIVERSITY LEVEL
FROM:	Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Office of Research Compliance – Indiana University
RE:	Protocol #: 1903020036 Protocol Type: Exempt Protocol Title: Critical Literacy & Multi-Modality in Art Classrooms Funding Source: None

In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and/or IU HRPP Policy, the above-referenced protocol is granted exemption. Exemption of this submission is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant HRPP policies and procedures governing Human Subject Research can be found at: <https://research.iu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/guidance/index.html>.

Submission and Review Information:

Type of Submission:	Initial Protocol Application
Level of Review:	Exempt
Exempt Category(ies), if applicable:	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices. Category 4: Secondary research for which consent is not required.
Date of Exemption Granted:	July 12, 2019
Authorized HSO Signature:	 Adam Mills

Regulatory Determinations:

. Study meets the criteria for approval defined by the HRPP Policy on IRB Review Process
--

Documents Approved with this Submission (for Amendments and Renewals, documents appearing in bold were either added or replaced with the submission):

Attachment Type - Document Version #
Assent Form - Assent form Data Collection Instrument - Data Collection Catalog (Excel Doc) Informed Consent Statement - Informed Consent

Figure B: Amendment Approval Letter



INDIANA UNIVERSITY


OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
Office of Research Compliance

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION GRANTED

DATE:	August 31, 2020
TO:	Mary Beth Hines, Principal Investigator EDUCATION Tara Warner UNIVERSITY LEVEL
FROM:	Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Office of Research Compliance – Indiana University
RE:	Protocol #: 1903020036A001 Protocol Type: Exempt Protocol Title: Critical Literacy & Multi-Modality in Art Classrooms Funding Source: None

In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and/or IU HRPP Policy, the above-referenced protocol is granted exemption. Exemption of this submission is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant HRPP policies and procedures governing Human Subject Research can be found at: <https://research.iu.edu/compliance/human-subjects/guidance/index.html>.

Submission and Review Information:

Type of Submission:	Amendment
Level of Review:	Exempt
Exempt Category(ies), if applicable:	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices. Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.
Date of Exemption Granted:	August 31, 2020
Authorized HSO Signature:	 Adam Mills

Regulatory Determinations:

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Documents Approved with this Submission (for Amendments and Renewals, documents appearing in bold were either added or replaced with the submission):

Attachment Type - Document Version #
Assent Form - Assent form Data Collection Instrument - Data Collection Catalog (Excel Doc) Informed Consent Statement - Informed Consent

EDUCATION

E.D.D. Literacy, Culture, and Language Education | Projected graduation May 2023 | Indiana University, Bloomington

Dissertation: Centering Student Artwork As Sites of Engagement, Possibility, and Hope:

Exploring Social Justice Art with Adolescents

Chair: Dr. Mary Beth Hines

M.S., Reading and Literacy Education | December 2017 | CSU Fullerton

Thesis: Student and Teacher Empowerment through Independent Reading

Professional Clear Single Subject Teaching Credential, California: English | December 2001 | Fresno Pacific University

Reading & Literacy Added Authorization; Cross-Cultural, Language & Academic Development Certificate

M.A., English | June 2000 | University of California, Davis

Concentration: Writing

B.A., English | June 1998 | University of California, Davis

Concentrations: Literature and Writing

EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Director, Reading and Language Program | Fresno Pacific University | August 2021 – present

Courses taught include: LLC 767 Current Trends in Language and Literacy; LLC 732 Early & Adolescent Literacy; LLC 708 Issues in Literacy, Multilingual Learners. Duties include course design and development, thesis supervision and mentoring, school district collaborations, student support, and administrative support.

Adjunct Faculty, Reading and Language; Teacher Education | Fresno Pacific University | August 2016 – present

Courses taught include: LLC 767 Current Trends in Language and Literacy; LLC 732 Early & Adolescent Literacy; LLC 708 Issues in Literacy, Multilingual Learners; EDUC 693 Reading and Writing in the Disciplines; EDUC 695 Curriculum Design & Implementation (II); EDUC 694 *Curriculum Perspectives & Design* (I); EDUC 703 Curriculum Study & Theory.

**Language Arts Instructor, Center for Professional Development | Fresno Pacific University
| January 2008 - Present**

Courses taught include: Reading Comprehension in the Disciplines, Close Reading Strategies, Poetry in the English Classroom, Teaching Shakespeare, Writing with Mentor Texts, Teaching Literary Elements, Early Literacy & Core Standards, The Power of Picture Books, and Content Area Writing. Duties include: Program Council Advisory Committee, 2013-2016.

Adjunct Faculty, English Department | Fresno Pacific University | August 2002 – December 2002

Courses taught included: Introduction to Composition.

Language Arts Instructor | Selma High School | August 2000 – June 2005

Courses taught included: Advanced Placement Literature & Composition, Reading Grade 9, and English & Composition Grades 9-12. Additional Duties included: BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support & Assessment) Support Provider and Mentor; Advanced Placement Club Advisor; Senior Class Advisor; Summer School Instructor.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Council of Teachers of English, Member
International Literacy Association, Member
California Association of Teachers of English, Member
California Reading Association, Member
ALAN, Association on Literature for Adolescents, Member

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Listening to Students: Empathy, Engagement, and Voice in Social Justice Artwork; National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research, March, 2023

Centering Human Connections: Art as an Anchor of Hope, Courage, and Empathy; National Council of Teachers of English, November 2022

Centering Student Voices: Art as an Anchor of Community and Hope; International Conference on Literacy, Culture, and Education, October 2022

From Chile to California: Community Spaces and Artistic Disruptions Through Multimodal Texts; American Educational Research Association, April 2022

Youth Activism and Social Justice Artwork in Public Spaces; Literacy Research Association, December 2021

Listening to Students: Art, Literacy, and Voice; International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Conference, May 2021

The Power of Picture Books; EdTIPS Webinar, Fresno Pacific University, September 2016.

Courage, Community, and Hope: Reading Stella by Starlight by Sharon Draper; Nerdy Book Club (www.nerdybookclub.com) December 2, 2015.

Black, White and All the Colors in Between: Reading Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine; Nerdy Book Club (www.nerdybookclub.com). November 5, 2015.

Using Social Media and Blogs to Build Student Relationships; Center for Professional Development Annual Conference, Fresno Pacific University, May 2015.

CERTIFICATIONS

Reading and Literacy Added Authorization, California Teacher Commission, 2017

Digital Educator Certificate, Computer-Using Educators (CUE), 2017

Professional Learning Leader Certificate, Computer-Using Educators (CUE), 2015

Online and Blended Learning Teacher Certificate, Computer-Using Educators, (CUE), 2015

Professional Clear Single Subject Credential, English, 2002