Karen Tate

AAD 630

**Alumni Research Project Analysis**

1. ***Gathering Places as Cultural Passages: Engaging with Public and Community Arts***

**Author:** Yasmin Acosta-Myers

**Research Advisor:** Lori Hager

**Research Year:** 2010-2011

**Research Question(s)**

* How does public art and community art engage society to create gathering places?
* What is community civic engagement and how does it fit into participatory democracy?
* How do gathering spaces engage communities and aid in the formation of culture?

**Key Elements**

* Divided into 3 sections:
1. Sense of Place:
	* how this relates to the study of gathering places
	* relationship between built and unbuilt environment
2. Civic Engagement and Participatory Democracy
	* When art is holistic it will create socially conscious and culturally represented art in gathering places
	* Activated public space allows for people to interact and connect in a safe space that does not discriminate, therefore making a positive change
3. Models of Engagement
	* Describes organizations that create “multicultural learning experiences”
		+ Animating Democracy
		+ Esperanza Peace and Justice Center
		+ Pomegranate Center
		+ Integral Vision of the Arts Program (IVA)
* American city planning does not allow for easy interaction because of the Roman Grid. Cities and organizations have to formulate ways to create social interactions which leads to community culture.

**Data Collection Techniques**

* Conducted a literature review on topics such as: cultural geography, environment, placemaking, culture, cultural development, community, the arts, and education, in order to explore how a sense of place is created.
* Took 3 courses in relation to her research topic:
1. Community Arts Partnerships
2. Community Cultural Development
3. Cultural Identity and Heritage
* Collective Arts Project
* Personal Blog
* Wired Humanities Project in Oaxaca, Mexico
	+ Four-week trip to study art and architectural remains, Spanish colonialism impact upon Mexico, and arts programs that showcase cultural identities of Mexican culture

**Data Analysis and Interpretation Methods**

Qualitative, Narrative Analysis, Descriptive Analysis, Empiricism

**Assessment in Comparison to Literature Review**

She seemed to approach her capstone as a personal journey, allowing her cultural heritage to influence her understanding of sense of place within the environment. The courses she participated in and the courses she took solidified her understanding of the concepts of sense of place and art and culture as one entity. Her final capstone project was broken down into many sub-categories, trying to explain the differences between ideas such as space and place and the environment of civic places in general. She included several examples of organizations around the country that are making in impact in cultural and civic participation, as well as her own experience identifying with a place and a culture in Oaxaca, Mexico. These examples were interesting and thorough and actively supported her research topic of “Engaging with Public and Community Arts.”

1. ***Urban Design Interventions: An Emerging Strategy of Arts-Based Social Change***

**Author:** Danielle Walter

**Research Advisor:** Dr. Ann Galligan

**Research Year**: 2012-2013

**Research Question(s)**

* How are urban design interventions a form of arts-based social change?
* What is arts-based social change?
* What theories support urban design as a medium of social change?
* How do urban design interventions exhibit support these theories?
* What documentation of urban design interventions is currently being done?

**Key Elements**

* Identified these six social dimensions of public space through comparative analysis:
1. Allows for user appropriation
2. Fosters space for relationship building
3. Serves as an arena for social resistance and activism to take place
4. Impacts local neighborhood connectivity
5. Makes marginalized groups visible
6. Reinforces sense of identity
* Documentation of urban design interventions
* Parallels of urban design interventions and arts-based community development
* Arts-based activity categories for community development
1. Educate and inform us about ourselves and the world
2. Inspire and mobilize individuals or groups
3. Nurture and heal people and/or communities
4. Build and improve community capacity and/or infrastructure.

**Data Collection Techniques**

* Conducted a literature review as web-based document analysis focused on the topics of U.S. Urban Redevelopment history, Urban Design, and Community Arts Theory
	+ Reviewed and documented urban design intervention projects
	+ Identify connections between theory and practice
	+ Projects sourced from:
		- “Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good”, a collection of 124 small-scale city improvement design projects featured at the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale
		- Tactical Urbanism Vol. 2, an online publication edited and authored by Mike Lydon
		- Personal research blog as a source for people interested in learning more about urban design interventions
* Took two courses in relation to her research topic:
1. PPPM 523: Urban and Community Revitalization
2. ARCH 606: Bottom-Up Urban Design (independent study advised by Assistant Professor of Architecture, Philip Speranza)
* Internship with Animating Democracy
	+ Conducted inventory analysis of artists and organizations as part of their Mapping Initiative
	+ Noticed a lot of documentation on dance, theater, performing arts, etc. but very little on urban design or community arts projects

**Data Analysis and Interpretation Methods**

Interpretivism, Qualitative action research

**Assessment in Comparison to Literature Review**

While I thought her research topic was interesting, she didn’t seem to theorize and explain these concepts as well as she could have. She thoroughly defined each topic of discussion throughout her capstone project but did not delve deep into the actions and methods of urban design for social change. The most interesting part of her research was her section highlighting the fact that urban design interventions are not documented thoroughly, at least not for the arts world. She stated it was difficult to find physical examples of these types of projects but eventually found 2 web-based collections of examples. However, she merely introduced their content. If specific examples had been drawn from these sources complete with analysis outcome, relationship to civic space, and efforts of engaging communities then her investigation would have been much more comprehensive.