

THE ROLE OF ARTIST RESIDENCIES AND COLLECTIVES IN
CULTIVATING EXPERIMENTAL ART PRACTICE IN RURAL PLACE

Proposal for Graduate Research Project

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I. Overview of the Research Proposal

The role of artist residencies and collectives in cultivating experimental art practice in rural place.

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Abstract

This research project proposal will investigate how artist residencies and collectives cultivate experimental contemporary art practice in rural place. Utilizing qualitative case studies and triangulation of methods that include interviews, artist questionnaires and data analysis, the study will inquire into an emerging genre of socially engaged experimental rural art practice that is manifesting throughout the United States. It will serve to better articulate and geographically situate this field of rural arts, expanding understanding of community-based practice and providing examples of alternative models of experimental contemporary arts production outside of urban areas.

Keywords

Socially engaged art practice
Contemporary
Experimental art
Artist collective
Rural

II. Introduction and Background

Problem statement

There is not clear association between contemporary experimental art, social practice and critical artistic inquiry with rural place. Across rural America we see a general lack of connectivity between contemporary artists, lack of understanding and exposure to experimental art practice or social art, its value and impact, and little or no supportive framework for this more

critical, exploratory work to be developed and sustained in rural place. There is little empirical research indicating how socially engaged experimental art practices might contribute to rural communities and how this type of practice might be manifested in reality.

As discussed in many rural arts studies, (Barrett, 2012; Bayard, 2005; Fleming, 2009; McHenry, 2009, 2011, et al) rural America faces daunting challenges fueled by major economic shifts signifying an important transformation in the 21st century. Experimental creative practices have the potential to stimulate new ways of thinking, critical inquiry into complex contemporary issues, and encourage invention of internal solutions, while bringing together community members, artists and organizations through collaborative practice (Hunter, 2014). There are artists and organizations internationally exploring new models of contemporary art practice in rural context, but there has been little formal research exploring the range of these practices in the United States and how they are conducting their activities and engaging with communities.

Artist collectives and artist residencies, which by their collective and collaborative nature may be more naturally suited to cultivate experimental art practices in an isolated environment. Organizing mechanisms such as these are commonly utilized to support networks of artists, and can provide structure for experimentation and critical inquiry (Drake, 2003), but there is little research indicating what role such collectives have in rural America, and particularly what role they have in supporting socially-engaged, experimental contemporary art practice. We lack understanding as to what effect such work may have outside of urban areas, and what role such collectives might have in rural communities.

This research will build on previous inquiry into contemporary rural practice, and provide a field guide for some of the socially engaged experimental art practices demonstrated through collectives and residencies in the rural United States. I hope that this work will further

solidify the emerging genre and encourage others to explore the relationship between contemporary art practice and rural place, further diminishing boundaries between traditional “urban” and “rural” art concepts and traditional mechanisms for engaging with contemporary art.

II. Conceptual Framework

This research is focused on three main areas: 1) rural arts and culture 2) experimental contemporary art practice, and 3) rural artist collectives and artist residencies. Research within the rural arts field has been vital to establish context for this study and to situate more focused exploration of contemporary art and artist collectives in a rural context. These three content areas are all deeply connected in this proposed study with artist collectives serving as a platform for contemporary art practice within a rural context. Organizing mechanisms such as artist collectives provide the structural framework for creative experimentation and critical inquiry to occur. Within a socially engaged practice this practice has a corresponding impact in the community. This study will explore the context and practices of such collectives and their relationship to the rural community within which they are situated.

Topical literature review

The combination of community development, rural place and contemporary art converges at an emerging artistic genre that combines the critical, timely and experimental nature of contemporary art practice with social engagement and community development. These ideas are reinforced by a growing network of artists and organizations exploring these concepts through an array of projects as diverse as the people invested in them and the unique places that they activate. These innovative artist-organized projects are being constructed in rural areas often perceived to have been left behind, and certainly not in places congruent with the general public’s perception of contemporary art.

Existing research related to rural arts and culture, rural community development, artist collectives, and contemporary rural art practice has provided a well-rounded context for this study. Rural arts and culture practice and policy in the United States still seems to underdeveloped even though it is continually expanding. A study by Bell and Jayne (2010) highlights an emerging body of critique of the neglect of the rural in cultural policy, which is matched by a neglect of the cultural in rural policy. Much of the existing research pertaining to rural arts focuses on instrumental community development, creative place-making, and creative industry. (Bayard, 2005; Bell & Jayne, 2010; McHenry, 2009, 2011; et al).

Rural Arts and Culture

Social and economic development is a focus piece throughout much of the current body of literature pertaining to rural arts. Much existing community-based cultural research explores the role of art and artists in building community and influencing economic, social and cultural development (Goldbard, 2006; Bayard, 2005; Borrup, 2006; Engh, 2013). These works provide a framework for thinking about the possibilities of the arts as a tool for social reform, social practice, community building, and change initiated from the ground up.

Economic development seems to take center stage throughout much of the literature on the role and impact of rural arts. There is a large body of research centered on building creative industry or creative economy in both rural and urban areas, although with a heavy focus on urban creative economies, encouraging diversification and building resiliency to revitalize communities. While these are valuable objectives, several sources argue that current theory adopts simplified urban practices and transplants them into a rural context, ignoring important distinctions specific to the unique complexities of various rural cultural geographies (Bell & Jayne, 2010; Fleming, 2009; Harvey, Hawkins, & Thomas, 2012; Drake, 2003).

These authors observe theories of ‘creative industry,’ ‘creative economies,’ or ‘creative class’ with a more critical lens and with a specifically rural focus, identifying that much of the literature confirms the role of ‘creatives’ as saviors of the city and perceives creativity in a limiting way as an instrumental economic tool (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Grierson, 2011). The theories surrounding ‘creative economies’ and related terms have largely been discussed in relation to urban contexts, with much of the literature supporting this with generalizations about the power of the creative sector to revitalize urban neighborhoods. We need to better understand the unique characteristics of creativity in the countryside in order to implement arts and culture strategies responsive to the nuances and complexities of place.

Research on rural arts, culture and creativity is continuing to develop, with recent literature turning a critical eye towards existing practices and policy. It is still unclear just how much the arts can impact rural development, what strategies are best for cultivating creative rural communities or what the full potential of arts and culture really can be in rural America. The lack of rural arts specific research, especially within the United States, makes it very difficult to fully comprehend the possibilities, opportunities and challenges of implementing rural arts strategies. The focus of this proposed study is especially un-documented, as it combines aspects of the arts sector not usually associated, although a focus in rural artist collectives relates to some of the current literature on creative clusters and their strengths in sustaining rural arts practice.

Artist Residencies and Collectives

There does not seem to be much existing research on rural artist collectives or artist residencies. Some sources provide good analysis of creative clusters as effective generators for creative activity in rural place (Borrup, 2006; Drake, 2003; Harvey, Hawkins & Thomas, 2012), but they focus primarily on a more economic idea of a ‘creative cluster’ as a grouping of creative

industries including artists, organizations and other creative entities, rather than simply a collective of artists or creative individuals. Although these studies are not specific to artist collectives in a more traditional sense, they do provide valuable perspective as to how clusters of creative workers can provide support for creative practices in a rural context.

The connective and collaborative nature of artist collectives and residencies may serve as a framework for nurturing creative experimentation and critical inquiry in a rural setting. Several sources stress the close relationship of people and place as important to the development of successful creative endeavors in rural areas (Drake, 2003; Engh, 2013; Harvey, Hawkins, & Thomas, 2012). These studies emphasize the importance of building strong creative networks in rural place to decrease isolation amongst creative individuals and organizations, increase sustainability and support development. Creative clusters, however they are defined, can provide a structured framework to support artist networks and creative activity in locations that can sometimes be hostile to growth, innovation and entrepreneurship.

There is an over-simplification of what creative places should look like or where creative clusters can exist. As stated by Drake (2003), “current theory tends to underplay the significance of creative enterprises located outside highly networked clusters where workers are operating in relative spatial or economic isolation.” These ideas challenge mainstream constructions of urban creative economies and “explore other geographies of cultural production (Harvey, Hawkins, Thomas, 2012).”

Experimental Contemporary Art

Some organizations and collectives across the United States are contributing to what is now a “rapidly coalescing international art movement located around a new understanding of and engagement with the rural and agriculture as a challenging new site for contemporary art practice

and curatorship (Handwerker & Saxton, 2014).” Twenty-first century rural America sits at the crossing of many contradicting complexities that are pressing up and pushing against each other to create a unique cultural dynamic: the familiar and the strange, traditional and contemporary, material and immaterial, and permanent vs. transient. Experimental contemporary art practice is well suited to engage with the complex dynamics of the rural because of its own timeliness, complexity, adaptability and multidisciplinary nature.

One could argue that experimental contemporary art is positioned outside formal constraints of traditional art forms, making it more adaptable, and possibly even more accessible to those without formal arts knowledge. It could even be argued that the remoteness of the rural and its separation from institutionalized artistic expectations facilitates greater creative freedom. Bell and Jayne (2010) referenced two sources who stated that “distance creates freedom to experiment and follow a different course (Matarasso, 2005)” and “it is urban culture which is staid and conventional with the countryside the true site of innovation (Hall, 2000).” The remote, individualistic character of rural America lends itself well to experimental art practice. “The innovation and originality associated with an avant-garde isn’t all that different from the pioneer spirit and rugged individualism attributed to rural dwellers (Sauter, 2014).” This freedom from institutionalized standards and expectations might also contribute to why experimental models of art practice are finding themselves at home in rural America.

The unique characteristics of rural geography and culture can serve as a catalyst for creative inspiration, and often rural places are good examples of instances in which that uniqueness has been isolated and preserved better than in a fast paced and ever-changing metropolis. Unique characteristics of place play a key role in the development of specific conceptual and physical aesthetics. It is interesting to consider how artists might respond to place

to create unique exploratory projects connecting rural aesthetics, culture and rural narrative (Drake, 2003; Handwerker & Saxton, 2014).

Experimental contemporary art practice is an agent for critical inquiry, advocacy and change, and has an influential role in engagement, discourse and democracy (Alinsky, 1971; Grierson, 2011; Handwerker & Saxton, 2014; Hunter, 2014). McHenry (2009, 2011) discusses the arts as a vehicle to empower residents to find specialized solutions to local problems as well as build resilience and civic participation. Arming rural communities with attitudes of openness and creative thinking might leave them more ready to tackle complex challenges from the inside. Art as a catalyst for social change is especially relevant today as rural communities face challenges related to agriculture, economic structure, environment and sustainability. Contemporary critical art practice can provide a platform for exploring these challenges, as well as possible ideas and solutions, rewriting rural narratives and positioning rural communities more visibly in national policy (Hunter, 2014). Contemporary rural art practice can explore what rural means today in a contemporary context, looking simultaneously back at the past and forward into the future to conceptualize what characterizes rural America in the 21st century.

Theoretical framework

This research has been informed by theories related to rural arts and culture, community arts, community engagement, and community development. It is also heavily influenced by emerging theory around experimental contemporary rural arts practice. The specific theories of Handwerker and Saxton (2014) and Hunter (2014) provided the inspiration for my inquiry into contemporary arts practice within a rural context. Hunter's brief essay in *A Decade of Country Hits* pushed me to think beyond traditional arts and culture concepts associated with the rural. Hunter is a community arts leader in England who has helped begin to redefine contemporary

rural culture, aesthetics and narrative, enabling a more critical perspective of the rural, and current policy and issues, through advocacy for a socially engaged contemporary art practice (Sherman, 2015).

Certain areas require further literature review, including continued research into the rural arts sector, artist collectives and artist residencies, and experimental contemporary art practice.

IV. Research Methodology

Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to better understand the role of artist-organizing mechanisms such as artist residencies and collectives in supporting and developing experimental contemporary art practices in rural America. By developing a better understanding of how these types of organizations or associations are situated within rural place, and what role they might have, we can gain a better sense of how to increase support for contemporary art in other rural areas, and whether these organizing mechanisms should be part of the means of doing so. On a broader level, this research begins to probe into what effect and/or influence experimental contemporary art practice might have in rural communities, beginning to answer the question of how experimental contemporary art practice, social art practice and critical inquiry is currently situated within the field of rural arts.

Methodological paradigm

I am approaching the research from a constructivist and interpretivist perspective to develop an understanding of the topic. A constructivist/interpretivist approach will allow me to construct meaning through various qualitative methods and analysis, providing opportunity for valuable human perspective and interpretation. In this qualitative research study, I have employed a triangulation of methods to explore my research questions. These research methods

include case studies, interviews, questionnaires and document analysis, which are contextualized by extensive literature review.

Role of the researcher

My role as the researcher in this study is that of an active listener and external information gatherer. I will be approaching this research from a distance, without the need to be on-site, which will limit my involvement. Interviews will be conducted over the phone or online, and artist questionnaires will be distributed through email and mail. Correspondence will take place through email and phone with key contacts within each organization to arrange interviews and to acquire documents for analysis. I may occasionally contact key informants and artists for clarification or to request additional materials. I will collect, review and analyze existing documents and literature, mostly publicly available but some that may require a request to the organization, such as organizational documents and charts and evaluation reports, as they are typically intended for internal use.

While I have made professional acquaintances with a few of the potential contacts, I have not had any prior experience with any of the potential case study organizations. My perspectives from previous engagement may be used to contextualize some of the responses but will not be utilized as testimonial.

Research questions

This research project will investigate the following question: *How do artist residencies and collectives support experimental contemporary art practice in rural place?* In the process of answering this main question, I will also investigate other supportive areas of inquiry: How do they engage communities with contemporary art and practice? (What does socially engaged contemporary rural practice look like?) What role and relationship do the artists have with the

collective and the community? What is the perceived impact within the community? How does rural context and aesthetics inform experimental contemporary art practice?

Definitions (*in progress*)

Socially engaged art practice

Contemporary

Experimental art

Artist collective

Rural

Delimitations

For the purposes of this study, I have set specific parameters to determine the types of organizations to be considered for case studies: located in the rural United States; focused on experimental contemporary art practice; operating as either an artist collective, residency or similar collective format; and incorporating social engagement. These case studies will be limited to the United States because much of the current research on rural arts comes from an international context, and this will inform the research through contextual literature review.

Organizations will be chosen that best exemplify the specific focus of this research. Community impact will be measured only from the perspective of the artists and the organization. Case studies will be conducted off-site, with limited interaction, and with analysis of documents that are mostly publicly available. A limited number of case studies will be conducted, with a very limited number of interviews within each case.

Limitations

This research is limited by the number of case studies I am able to conduct, which leaves out many organizations and projects that could potentially provide valuable information and examples either in agreement with or in addition to my findings. The study cannot capture all possible strategies and program models existing in the United States. It also cannot be

generalized as a set of best practices because community-based work is highly dependent on place and culture. By not incorporating on-site visits, the case studies may be limited in their depth of analysis.

While analyzing community impact only from the perspective of the artists and organization is a beneficial delimitation for the scope of this study, it leaves out analysis of impact directly from the affected community. Impact will be gauged through interviews with key informants within the organization, artist questionnaires, and analysis of organization evaluation and impact reports. Community impact must be seen as impact perceived by the artists and those within the organization.

Benefits of the study

This study will be situated alongside other research exploring concepts of rural creative clusters, but with a more defined focus on rural artist collectives and artist residencies, and with an exclusive focus on contemporary collectives in the United States. Much of the existing research on rural arts and creative clusters has been formulated outside of the U.S. This study will provide formal inquiry into an emerging genre of experimental rural art practice that is manifesting in a variety of ways throughout the country. It will serve to better articulate and geographically situate this relatively unknown field of contemporary rural arts practice, providing concrete examples within the format of a collective. It may influence artists, practitioners, and organizations with similar interests in contemporary rural arts practice and provide potential models of practice and community engagement, or at least examples of practices across the United States for more in depth analysis and comparison, expanding understanding of community-based practice and providing examples of alternative models of contemporary arts production outside of urban areas. Hopefully this study will lead to further

exploration of the relationships between experimental arts practice, social engagement, critical inquiry and rural place.

V. Research Design

Research approach and dimensions of research

This research project will investigate the following question: *How do artist residencies and collectives support experimental contemporary art practice in rural place?* This individual research project will explore projects and programs that already exist, falling into the category of artist residency or collective. At the onset of the study, I will generate a list of the field of rural collectives that focus in experimental contemporary arts practice within the United States, from which my case studies will be selected. Due to the explorative nature of this research, 3-4 case studies will provide the foundation for the qualitative study.

Each case study will employ 1-3 qualitative interviews with key informants, artist questionnaires with recent resident or participating artists, and analysis of documents, media and available data. While literature review will not be one of the formal research methods, it will be integral to the study, helping to define the broader context within an area lacking in formal research. Analysis of the case studies will be dissected into three areas: organization (artist collective or residency), experimental contemporary art practice, and artist. From these main areas, specific content clusters will provide topic areas for organization of information: role of artists, relationship to place, program strategies, organizational and financial structure, history and purpose, perception, challenges, and impact. Analysis of the case studies will reveal varying strategies and potential models of practice.

Strategy of inquiry

My main strategy of inquiry is from a constructivist / interpretivist perspective designed to produce new qualitative data from case studies and corresponding interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. The foundation for this study will focus on a small sampling of 3-4 case study organizations that are considered either artist collectives or artist residencies focusing on experimental contemporary rural arts practice in the United States. These case studies will be selected from a list of compiled collectives and residencies in the United States that fit the case criteria: located in the rural United States; focused on experimental contemporary art practice; operating as either an artist collective, residency or similar collective format; and incorporating social engagement. Case studies will be conducted to examine organizational structures, methods for supporting and implementing contemporary art practices, community engagement, and resulting influence and impact in their home communities. As demonstrated through a case study examination by Community + Public Arts: Detroit, the variety of methods used within case studies allows for a rich, in-depth analysis with many layers (University of Michigan School of Social Work, 2014).

These case studies are not necessarily comparative but would identify and explore themes that emerge across all of the cases, and would also pinpoint any major differences to provide a holistic study that highlights the variation in approaches as well as any commonalities. Because there are so few organizations doing this sort of practice, there will likely be many distinct differences between projects and programming and it is important to explore why and how they are different. This could potentially contribute to a broader conversation about “cultural geographies” and how arts and culture programming and practice is varied depending on place.

Interviews will provide additional support for the case studies from a more ethnographic perspective, incorporating human interpretation to better understand the impact and objectives of

each organization or collective. The analysis on community and public arts in Detroit provided a good example not only of case study, but of utilizing interviews as part of the study, demonstrating how to effectively use interviews to identify reoccurring themes, provide illustrative examples, and compare and contrast project objectives with actual impact (University of Michigan School of Social Work, 2014). Interviews will allow for a better understanding of each organization's goals and operations and how their practice influences the related community.

For each case study, 1-3 interviews will be conducted with key informants inside the organization, including leadership and key administration with important insider perspectives, especially in regards to how the organization and its practice has impacted the community. Conducting interviews for each case study will help illustrate data collected from document and media analysis and will provide:

- Rich contextual information on the organization and place
- Deeper understanding of the organization, its objectives, and its projects
- Valuable information about challenges and opportunities
- Insight into why and how it is valuable to the community
- Organizational perspective on community impact

An analysis on the method of interview by Robert Weiss (1994) explains that interviewing gives the researcher access to the observations of others. The word "access" is key here, as interviews will not only provide access to programs and projects from which I am disconnected, but they can also inform my research with valuable internal perspectives into what these organizations are doing, how and why they are doing it, and what the results have been. Due to the interpretive nature of this research, interviews will be utilized to better understand human experience, perception and interpretation. While it is important to understand the process of these projects and art practices, it is maybe even more important to understand their impact.

Within the case studies, interviews will contribute illustrative depth and density to the study, contributing multidimensional understanding of a complex topic.

Much like interviews, artist questionnaires will provide a unique perspective and rich understanding about the effectiveness and impact of each case study organization from the perspective of the artists. Questionnaires will help illustrate data collected from document and media analysis and will provide:

- Rich contextual information on the organization and place
- Insight into the role of the artists within the organization and community
- Artist perspective on community impact

Questionnaires will be distributed to the entire sample, or the current group of artists active within the organization. If this group of artists just started their residency or time within the collective, then I would fall back to the previous group. Because this is not a quantitative survey, questions are open ended. Questionnaires will be sent through mail as well as electronically through email.

Based on analysis of other research that uses case studies and interviews I recognize that I will need to be cautious about generalizations, and sure that I have enough supportive evidence when identifying themes and patterns across qualitative data. I especially need to be careful to not rely on using statements from single interviewees to illustrate an important point. While interview quotes can be valuable to illustrate information, create interest, and provide personal perspective, they can sometimes put too much emphasis on one idea coming from one individual. Interviews should serve as one leg of the support structure and need to be supplemented by other data. I also need to be sure that I identify the scope of interviews and surveys so that they are properly contextualized within the study. While surveys and interviews would be very valuable

with the unique perspectives that they provide, I must be cautious not to rely too much on interviews or surveys without other support.

Overview of research design

This study will investigate how artist collectives and residencies support experimental contemporary art practice in rural place. Case studies will be selected from a list of compiled collectives and residencies in the United States that fit the case criteria: located in the rural United States; focused on experimental contemporary art practice; operating as either an artist collective, residency or similar collective format; and incorporating social engagement. Selection of 3-4 cases will be based on those organizations that best exemplify the focus of this study.

Study Participants

Interview participants will include 1-3 organization leadership or key administration from each case study with important insider perspectives on projects and programs, especially in regards to how the organization and its practice has impacted the community. They will be individually selected based on their position within the organization, familiarity with the organization's practices and projects, and understanding of greater community impact. Questionnaires will be distributed to the entire sample, or the current group of artists active within the organization. If this group of artists just started their residency or time within the collective, then I would fall back to the previous group. Questionnaires will be sent through mail as well as electronically through email. Follow up interviews may be requested with artists for further clarification. Study participants for interviews and questionnaires will most likely be adults age 25 and above. The total number of participants is approximately 60-90 people.

Research Timeline

Please refer to appendix C for a detailed research timeline.

Anticipated ethical issues

I recognize that my own experience growing up in a rural context and my interest in and experience with experimental contemporary art practice may provide grounds for potential bias. My perspective may be used as personal context but will not be utilized as testimony or evidence and will not influence my objective analysis.

Confidentiality of personal information collected from interview and questionnaire participants poses a potential ethical issue, but measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality of any sensitive or personal information. Confidentiality of internal organizational documents and information also posed an ethical dilemma. While most of the information that will be accessed through document analysis is publicly available, there may be some documents that will require a request to the organization for access. It will be important to confirm in those cases whether or not that information should be confidential.

Expectations

I expect to learn about the range of contemporary rural arts practice in the current field and potential models for practice and community engagement. While conducting the study I expect to learn about each organization or collective, including purpose and history, organizational and financial structure, relationship to place, expectations of artists, program and project strategies, challenges, evaluation strategies, and perceived community impact. I also hope to learn about the artists engaged in these practices or with these organizations, learning their role and involvement in the organization and in the community, reasons for involvement, relationship to place, and their perception of community impact. Overall throughout the study I hope to learn more about the relationships between rural place, artist collectives and experimental contemporary art practice, developing a better understanding of the influence of

rural place on this sort of practice, the influence of experimental contemporary art in rural communities, the perception that people living in those communities might have of these practices and the potential value and benefit of experimental contemporary art practice engaged in rural place.

This study will formalize inquiry into an emerging genre of experimental rural art practice that is manifesting in a variety of ways throughout the country. It will serve to better articulate and geographically situate this relatively unknown field of contemporary rural arts practice, providing concrete examples within the format of a collective. It may influence artists, practitioners, and organizations with similar interests in contemporary rural arts practice and provide potential models of practice and community engagement, or at least examples of practices across the United States for more in depth analysis and comparison, expanding understanding of community-based practice and providing examples of alternative models of contemporary arts production outside of urban areas.

VI. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Overview

This study will utilize case studies that will incorporate a broad range of methods, including interviews, document, media and data analysis, and artist questionnaires. Document and media analysis will provide situational data found in documents, databases and online that will support my case studies, allowing me to utilize information that is mostly publicly available. There may be some documents, such as evaluation and impact reports that will need to be requested. I will need to identify the gatekeepers of this information and approach them for to request access.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with organization leadership or key administrative staff off-site electronically or by phone. One interview last approximately one hour will be conducted per person, with 1-3 people being interviewed per case study. Follow-up interviews may be requested for clarification or for more information. Interviewees will receive a brief outline of the study and a letter of introduction, as well as required to sign a consent form.

A questionnaire will be distributed once to the entire sample of current participating artists active within the organization. Questionnaires will be sent through mail as well as electronically through email. Brief follow up interviews may be requested with artists for further clarification. Literature review will also be integral to this study, and will help define context within an area that is lacking thorough research.

Research population and recruitment methods

I will use purposive sampling to select 1-3 organization leaders or key administration from each case study with important insider perspectives on projects and programs. They will be individually selected based on their position within the organization, familiarity with the organization's practices and projects, and understanding of greater community impact. Questionnaires will be distributed to the entire sample, or the current group of artists active within the organization. If this group of artists just started their residency or time within the collective, then I would fall back to the previous group.

Informed consent procedures

Prior to investigation of the case study sites, a recruitment letter and consent form will be distributed to those individuals selected to participate in the interview process. Questionnaires include a disclaimer that guarantees that no personal contact information will be made public.

Provisions for participant and data confidentiality

No names or personal contact information of any of the participating artists will be made public. Due to the nature of the case study organizations being small and with few staff, it is unlikely that anonymity will be important as this information is publicly available, but personal contact information for all interview participants will remain confidential. Any sensitive documents or data will also remain confidential. All unnecessary personal information will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Potential research risks or discomforts to participants

Questionnaire participants and interviewees may be uncomfortable expressing critical opinions about the organization in which they are involved or its impact in the community. As with most case studies, there is risk of influencing the image of the organization in a way that is not desirable. The main risks are associated with keeping confidentiality of participant contact information and any sensitive documents or information.

Potential benefits to participants

Participants have the opportunity to contribute to a study of an emerging genre in the field of rural arts. Such research will hopefully serve as a catalyst for continued inquiry.

Data collection and disposition procedures

Interviews will be audio recorded and notes recorded onto a computer by a research assistant so that I may be free to direct questioning and flow of the interview. Data from questionnaires will come back through the questionnaire forms either electronically or by mail. To ensure confidentiality, artist names will be coded anonymously and all data will be securely stored both physically and electronically, with access provided only to the researcher. Due to the relevance of this study to my professional goals, only personal contact information and identifiers will be destroyed after the study after been completed. Audio recordings and data from interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis will be kept in a

secure location for future review which may include professional development, further data analysis and research related to the study.

Preliminary coding and analysis procedures

All relevant data gathered through these data collection methods will be organized into formal data collection sheets and coded through the following code system for analysis:

Main Category

O: Organization

E: Experimental Contemporary Art

A: Artist

Sub Category

R: Related to role of artists

P: Related to place relationship

PS: Related to program strategies

S: Related to structure (organizational and financial)

HP: Related to history and purpose

C: Related to challenges

I: Related to impact

E: Related to evaluation

Strategies for validating findings

To validate my research findings, I will employ a variety of strategies for validation and reliability suggested by research methods expert, John Creswell, in his text *Research Design* (2014). I will utilize triangulation of data sources, which include interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, for a rich, layered analysis. I will maintain referential adequacy, or a well-developed data corpus, through detailed notes and clean, well-organized data that is consistently managed in an organized manner. Developing a specific coding strategy prior to data collection and utilizing consistency in coding throughout the research process will help ensure reliability. Comparing interview notes to audio recordings, and inviting respondents to confirm the accuracy of their statements will also help validate this study. I will utilize the academic network at University of Oregon for peer debriefing and will submit a draft of my research findings to my

academic research advisor for review. Lastly, I will keep a research journal to clarify my own biases and position throughout the research study.

VII. Investigator Experience

Stacey is currently attending the University of Oregon as a candidate for a Master's Degree in Art Management and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management. In 2012 she received a BA in Art History and a BFA in Studio Art from Montana State University. Her professional background includes work with a range of arts-related organizations: UO Center for Community Arts and Cultural Policy, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, MSU student government Arts & Exhibits Director / Gallery Director, and Sales and Marketing Director for Banovich Art, Inc.

X. Appendices

- a. Conceptual framework schematic
- b. Data collection schematic
- c. Detailed research timeline
- d. Research instruments
- e. Recruitment instruments
- f. Consent forms
- g. Resume
- h. CITI training completion form

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