

Producing Local Color: A Study of Networks and Resource Mobilization in Three Local Chicago Communities

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Abstract

This study of networks and resource mobilization in three localities shows how professionals and local residents involved in art production accessed resources through social circuits to create markers of the racial, ethnic and class dimensions of their communities. By tracing art production circuits through connections of participants in three distinct urban communities, I saw how mutual concerns for the locality brought circuit participants together and sustained art production activity. I compared art production in three Chicago communities with distinct racial and ethnic composition: one predominantly Black/African American (Bronzeville), one predominantly White/Hispanic/ Mexican American (Pilsen) and one diverse (Rogers Park). Mutual concern was more prominent in circuit connections than trust or reciprocal agreements. Data collected from interviews with 80 people as well as participant observation at their events showed significantly more arts activity within an area than is evident through public listings. Variation among the three localities resulted from the interplay of competing concerns including collective identity, artistic autonomy, property ownership, local sovereignty, youth education and local problem solving. Rather than reproducing historic inequalities by *misrecognizing* a dominant culture as the *legitimate* culture of the community (Bourdieu 1984), participants produced symbolic meanings that contested historic subordinate statuses by representing community history, its people and its

potential vitality to itself and outsiders. This “local color” became another resource to be exploited by individuals and organizations.

Networks of Producers

In *Art Worlds* (1982), Howard Becker provided a definitive exploration of art production as an occupational field in which participants were linked in network relationships. In Becker’s world, participants include all those people involved in the occupational world of art production including artists, curators, actors, photographers, and gallery owners. We understood what they produced by their role in the field as categories of work. By viewing the basic social arrangement as a network, Becker showed creation and distribution of an artwork as the work of a collectivity of producers, each integral to a process leading to the creation of something understood by circuit participants to be “art.” This view throws a broad net including everyone whose participation in the occupation as consequential to the existence of an artwork. For example, he included museum guards or museum janitors among the producers of what was understood to be “art.” Becker provided a useful perspective because he located or localized the knowledge and material resources necessary to produce art to the network of participants involved in the activity. In short, what I will do here, is shift the frame of art production from a “field” (Bourdieu 1984) or “occupation” (Becker 1982) to a “locality” in which I explore what was produced when participants, resources, and aesthetics guiding art production were anchored in a local community. I studied a predominantly African-American (Bronzeville), a predominantly Mexican-American

(Pilsen) and a diverse local community (Rogers Park). In doing so, I looked outside of categories typical of occupational relationships that represent the dominant cultural paradigm and focused on localized network relationships to see who was involved, what resources were used and what was produced.

What is a Network?

Becker's use of the term "network" made it evident that art production is not the same type of production as found in an automobile production plant, nor is it like a textbook flow chart of institutional order within a museum; nor is it the product of a logical progression of time as presented by art history. So if not these, what is a network? Becker has provided at least two images of what networks are and how they operate. On the one hand, he used the term to describe how people are linked through shared knowledge. He said an art world is "the network of people whose cooperative activity organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produced the kind of art works that the art world is noted for" (1982:x). In art worlds constructed by networks, participants may or may not know each other. They are not necessarily in the same locality, city, region or nation; they just know how to do things in the same way. In the second image provided by Becker, networks accomplished instrumental purposes, such as providing access to resources. These networks are built through interpersonal "connections." According to Becker:

[In addition to ability] successful free-lancers also need a network of connections, so that a large number of people who might need their services have them in mind, and in their telephone book, to be called when the occasion arises.... A network of connections consists of a number of people who know you and your work well enough to trust the well-being of some portion of their

project to you. The key element of the network is trust...Through interlocking trust and recommendations, workers develop stable networks which furnish them with more or less steady work (1982:86-87).

In this image, network participants must at least know of each other. There are specific connections between people. There is something accomplished through the network. There is an element of trust involved in the network. These two images of networks are potentially confusing because they lead to contradictory definitions of a network, which in turn lead to divergent methods of study and different academic disciplines.

The study of culture as symbolic networks is an approach typical of cultural studies, anthropology and sociology of culture. It focuses on how shared practices, shared knowledge, and shared ways of doing things place individuals in the same group or classification. A researcher could identify members and classify them in the same group based how they are part of or reproduce the same social or cultural practices. Members could identify others of the same group through recognizing sets of practices. Three studies of class-based cultural practices illustrate such symbolic networks: Rosenzweig's (1983) study of the emergence of the saloon as the center of working-class men's social life; Radway's (1984) study of working class women who read romance novels to escape and resist their ascribed roles; and Bourdieu's (1984) study of status and mobility among middle and upper class museum goers. Each of these studies show how symbolic practices create aspects of an art world, a social world, and a worldview while expressing group identity.

The study of culture through networks of instrumental activities links Becker to network analysts working in business schools, in the sociology of organizations and in technology, who have studied the functions and purposes of networks, say, for example,

job seekers' networks (Granovetter 1973), the network form of management in technology businesses (Burnes and Stalker 1961), networks of organizations within a discipline or with a shared purpose (Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld 1998), and network relationships among businesses (Podolny and Page 1998). Such studies show how network structures can be functional and effective where hierarchically designed rational organizations or market competition fails. For example, researchers studying business innovation (Burns and Stalker 1961) and cultural trends (Fine and Kleinman 1979) have shown how network structures are the most effective operation in changing unstable conditions or where rapid transmission of information is necessary for problem solving and creativity. Among other benefits, firms participating in network relationships learn new skills, acquire new knowledge, improve economic performance and manage resource dependencies (Podolny and Page [1998]2003:2).

In their review of the "network form of organization" Podolny and Page define a network:

[From] a structural perspective, every form of organization is a network, and market and hierarchy are simply two manifestations of the broader type. However, when considered as a form of governance, the network form can be distinctly characterized. We define a network form of organization as any collection of actors ($N \geq 2$) that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange. (Podolny and Page [1998]2003:2)

This is useful because it highlights that network relationships are more than chance meetings; they are repeated and enduring relationships. Rather than relying on authority relations, typical of hierarchical organizations or competition, typical of markets, networks rely on something else to maintain the relationship. What is this something else? As Becker highlighted, some network researchers have focused the governing

principal on trust (Powell 1990, Schuler 1996), others have focused on an act of reciprocity, that is, the give and take involved in an exchange (Powell 1990, Putnam 2000), still others have focused on mutual benefits rather than individual gain (Burnes and Stalker 1961, Putnam 2000).

Applying this approach to the study of art production, Gilmore (1993) and Giuffre (1998) both showed how reliance on network relationships is functional because it provides stability in an unstable work environment and provides access to opportunities necessary for success. To maintain stability, Gilmore showed how dancers engaged a large pool of potential collaborators by becoming “well connected:”

[being well connected means]...networked to a variety of interpersonal sources transmitting information about potential collaborators. Searchers (or attractors) who successfully use informal channels to find potential collaborators tend to be highly socially active, both in terms of initiating contacts with other social world participants and in terms of receiving contacts (Gilmore 1993:282).

Access to information through such informal networks was strategically necessary for both dance organizations and independent dancers because neither the freelance artist nor the formal arts organization had access to the financial resources to call into play the type of control and sanctions operating in traditional labor markets. Similarly, Guiffre (1999) found that careers of prominent photographers were enabled by broad weak ties and structural holes rather than tight cliques that limited access to opportunities. Network relationships make sense to art producers because they provide access to opportunities and stability in an occupational field where the majority of workers have irregular and temporary employment, or produce art as a second, and often unpaid career. Rather than being a diffuse or disorganized world, an emerging market or an informal organization –

all lesser forms of a more developed system – these studies led me to consider if and how network relationships are effective to produce art and how they might provide the type of benefits to local communities as those found in occupational and business relationships.

Circuits in a Network

I use the concept of a “circuit” to describe a subset of social relationships found in local communities that produce art oriented toward specific local purposes. The concept of “a circuit” comes from the in vivo slang reference by arts producers to refer to location-specific patterns of work relationships. Occupational circuits of art production might include “the club circuit,” “the nightclub circuit” or with visual artists “the gallery circuit,” “the museum circuit.” Local circuits might link to larger networks involving institutions, organizations, occupations or political relations within and beyond a locality.

Circuit structures cross boundaries of traditional organizational structures. Furthermore, they cross boundaries of the traditional “public” and “private” dichotomies. However, this study shows subtle interrelation between what is public and what is private; how public art monuments represent the private concerns of local residents; how private collections are amassed to represent the quality and diversity of a community of art producers; and how interpersonal circuits of arts producers establish local community identities that are in turn exploited by private and public entities. Relationships among circuit participants were not fixed relationships, but rather flexible and shifting relationships. The flexibility of circuit relationships enabled participants to establish new links in a circuit or to a larger network as it suited a need or interest.

Methods

To study how local art production circuits might be different than occupational networks, I developed a snowball sample for three localities from communities that were not traditional players in the occupational world of art production. They were typically not included in the traditional art markets, but there was visible evidence of art production in these localities.

The three communities were within the corporate boundaries of Chicago. They were each similar in their traditional status as subordinate to a dominant culture, and in their active resistance to this ascribed status. The three Chicago communities involved in this study had distinct racial and ethnic composition. Bronzeville was predominantly non-Hispanic Black¹/African American (86%), Pilsen was predominantly Hispanic/White (89%) of Mexican American ethnicity and Rogers Park was diverse, having nearly equal thirds of non-Hispanic Black (30%), non-Hispanic White (32%), Hispanic (28%), with (6%) Asian/Pacific Islander and (4%) of remaining races (*see Appendix A, Table 1: Community Composition by Race*). As these communities existed within the larger context of Chicago, a city whose population was divided nearly in thirds between non-Hispanic Black (36%), non-Hispanic White (31%), and Hispanic (26%), the relative balance of racial proportions was part of the formula that fueled resistance to subordinate status.

The geographic locations of these communities were important to understanding

¹ Following contemporary practices created by African American intellectuals and writers, I capitalize “Black” and “White” when they are used as nouns to describe a group similar to “African American,” “Caucasian” or “Hispanic.”

their local contexts. Bronzeville and Pilsen existed in close proximity to the “loop,” Chicago’s center city, while Rogers Park is Chicago’s furthest northern community area (*See Appendix B, Map 1: Chicago showing locations of Bronzeville, Pilsen and Rogers Park*). Bronzeville and Pilsen both had constructed and natural geographic boundaries (highways, trains, Chicago River, Lake Michigan, and three universities), that while permeable, outlined their areas. The boundaries of Rogers Park were not as apparent from such geographic delineation as they were defined by distance from the city center. Upon entering Bronzeville or Pilsen, difference was evident both in the crossing of these geographic barriers and by the predominance of distinct racial/ ethnic groups: Black people in Bronzeville and evidence of Hispanic people by Spanish language and Mexican iconography in signage and murals in Pilsen. Difference in Rogers Park was evident by the lack of a predominant race or ethnicity. The diversity of the local community included every racial and ethnic background, including an array of relatively new immigrant groups. Also evident was diversity of sexual orientations.

Household income in each of these communities provided a third aspect to the local context. While the median HH income in each of these communities was slightly below the Chicago median household income, the income range presented a different picture (*See Appendix A, Table 2: Comparison of Income Range by Community*). The median household income levels (2000 U.S. Census) ranged from \$24,835 in Bronzeville, to \$27,763 in Pilsen to \$33, 957 in Rogers Park. Each of these local areas was *below* the average median household income for Chicago (\$38,625), Illinois (\$46,435) and the national median household income (\$42,148). Bronzeville had a substantially higher percentage of its residents living in extreme poverty (31%) than

either Pilsen or Rogers Park (both have 14%) and also had a higher number of wealthy. It had an estimated 1600 (2%) with household incomes over \$200,000 compared to an estimated 198 (0.45%) in Pilsen and an estimated 634 (1%) in Rogers Park. The household incomes in both Pilsen and Rogers Park peaked between \$20,000 and \$39,000 providing what appeared to be a traditional “normal” curve. These figures, representing a working class or emerging middle class community, provide clues to values and therefore the kinds of art production that might predominate within these localities. However, Bronzeville’s income curve had two peaks – the first and highest with 31% of its people living in extreme poverty and the second smaller peak with 19% of its residents living in the \$20,000-\$40,000 range. Its relatively substantial numbers of wealthy people also provided clues to the types of values and types of art production one might find.

I developed a snowball sample for each locality by visiting a site that hosted events involving local artists. In Bronzeville this site was the South Side Community Art Center; in Pilsen the Pros Arts Studio; and in Rogers Park, the Insight Arts. As these organizations were small having 2 to 5 employees, I began by interviewing key participants at the site. Use of these sites as starting points to identify participants in local circuits led to identification of public and private circuits of activities. I expanded the scope of my research following referrals by circuit participants at each of these locations. In seeking referrals, I asked who else is involved in the circuit and how informants distinguished their own work from others in the locality. These inquiries allowed me to identify types of people involved in the circuit and the range of circuits involved within a locality. These referrals constructed the conceptual framework for each circuit by linking me first with participants who shared particular interests or practices in arts production,

and second by distinguishing their work from other circuits both within and outside their locality.

I collected data over two years through both semi-structured interviews obtained by informed consent of 80 people, as well as participant observation of their art activities and events including festivals, parades, exhibits, art fairs, performances, open studio events, fundraising benefits, classes and private social gatherings. All of the interviews were conducted in person and ranged from _ hour to 3 hours. Each hour of onsite data-gathering resulted in 3 hours of office work to generate the field notes and an additional 2 hours for coding. To prepare for an interview or event, I reviewed information available through public sources.

Comparison of Concentration of Art Activities

Prior to construction my own typology of art production circuits, I made some comparisons of traditional categories in which arts activities are framed. First, I created maps of the locations. Through these maps I saw dense concentrations of activity in Pilsen and Rogers Park but an almost even disbursement of activities throughout Bronzeville (*See Appendix B, Map 2: Disbursement of Arts Activities in Bronzeville, Pilsen and Rogers Park*).

Next, I created tables comparing public art to ongoing activities open to the public. In 2002, there were 35 sites hosting arts activities in Pilsen (*see Appendix A, Table 3: Comparison of Ongoing Art Activities to Public Art*.) In addition, there are 28

public art sites, which, in Pilsen were either painted or mosaic murals. These sites were concentrated in just a portion of Pilsen's 2.8 square mile area. In Rogers Park, in 2002, there were 32 public sites hosting arts activities in Rogers Park. In addition, there are 4 public art sites, which, in Rogers Park included sculptures, monuments and painted murals. Unlike the murals in Bronzeville and Pilsen that typically remain intact once painted, one of these mural sites was a retaining wall in Loyola Park along Lake Michigan. This was the site of an annual festival, *Artists of the Wall*, where every year the wall was repainted by local residents with new images according to a new annual theme. Rogers Park has the most concentrated number of arts activities and the most concentrated population in its 1.8 square mile area. In early 2002, there were 22 public sites hosting arts activities in Bronzeville. In addition, there were 21 sites of public art/murals created between 1970 and the present. Sites were not concentrated around existing facilities or potential user/customers. (*Detailed maps, Map 3, 4, 5, showing locations of art activities in Pilsen, Bronzeville and Rogers Park are also found in Appendix B.*) This comparison showed that both Rogers Park and Pilsen higher concentrations of arts activities and had more public sites hosting arts activities than in Bronzeville, whereas there were substantially more murals and public art monuments in both Bronzeville and Pilsen than in Rogers Park.

Third, I segmented the sites into *type of business location* including for profit, non-profit, informal, park and university sites, a different picture emerges (*See Appendix A, Table 4: Comparison of For Profit, Non-Profit, Informal, Public Parks and University Sites*). Rogers Park has the highest numbers of formally organized for profit and non-profit sites for arts activities, whereas Pilsen has significantly more informal but regularly

organized arts activities open to the public than either Rogers Park or Bronzeville. This means that conclusions about the prevalence of arts activities might vary significantly based on the source of information, the type of organizations studied and the level of visibility through public listings.

While locations of sites in Bronzeville were not concentrated compared to the dense concentrations of arts activity seen in Pilsen or Rogers Park, Bronzeville was the location of the greatest concentration of art activity within any predominantly Black area in Chicago. Both Rogers Park and Pilsen had more public sites hosting arts activities than in Bronzeville, whereas there were substantially more murals and public art monuments in both Bronzeville and Pilsen than in Rogers Park.

A more in depth look at the circuits of producers involved in these activities showed how in Pilsen and Rogers Park these publicly listed sites were centers of activity where circuits of arts producers converge, whereas in Bronzeville, active circuits involved in collecting circuits and in producing public art were not centered around such organizations. Information from interviews showed significantly more arts activity within these areas than was evident through public sources. As there were more events than there were public notices for events, being part of the production circuit responsible for the event or knowing someone who was part of it, was the best way to find out about something happening.

Overview of Circuit Types

Circuit type was the result of the interplay between participants, access to resources and local concerns. I created a typology of circuit types (*See Appendix A, Table 5: Comparison of Local Art Production Circuits*), which included territorial circuits, collecting circuits, autonomy circuits, gentrification circuits, community building circuits, and youth services circuits. Below I discuss the predominant circuit types in each locality, and include a discussion of the local resources, concerns, and the art produced. It is the difference among the types of circuits that predominate in each locality that produce “local color”.

These local socio-economic conditions provided varied opportunities and constraints on resources. Among the resources that varied in these localities were *financial resources* – which ranged from large grants from federal, state and municipal agencies for community and economic development; small grants from arts agencies for arts programs; and subsidies, purchases and donations from personal income of people involved in arts production; *space resources* – which included varied access to live/work space for making art as well as varied access to public, private and commercial space for art presentations, exhibition, festivals, parades, murals and facilities; and *human resources* – which included varying classes of people to be audiences or participants, varying levels of involvement by artists, political and community leaders, adults, families and children. Skill of artists appeared to be a constant among these communities as each had a range of artists that were both self-taught and highly educated.

Bronzeville Circuits

In Bronzeville, the primary resource was the growing population of Black, middle class professionals, establishing or re-establishing residences in this area. The in-migration of middle and upper class Blacks was valued in this community that had experienced decades of disinvestments and still has 46% of its population living in poverty. Two circuits of production were active in Bronzeville, *Collecting Circuits* and *Territorial Circuits*. As discussed below, arts producers involved in the two realms in Bronzeville rarely intersected because of the distinct roles and distinct ends accomplished by the circuits.

Most indigenous to the local culture are the *Collecting Circuits* involving artists and collectors who have built a social life centered on producing and collecting “African American-made” art. The *Collecting Circuit* involved middle class participants in a social world revolving around the selling and buying of art. Collecting was a social activity creating a cultural community around art objects that represent African American culture, values and history. Artists produced small-scale objects for private display in homes of middle class collectors. Artists were both men and women from 20 – 70 years, many having college degrees in art, art education or graphic design, or BFAs or MFAs from an arts institute. Collectors were Black men and women, middle-aged, middle class professionals, many of whom work for various federal, state or local government agencies, or were administrators or teachers with Chicago Public Schools or area colleges and universities. They owned hundreds of pieces that were displayed predominantly in private residences. Exchanges within these social circuits occurred primarily in private – in collector’s or artist’s homes or studios. While public exhibition

sites existed in Bronzeville, such as the South Side Community Art Center, a center established in 1941 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA); the South Shore Cultural Center; ETA Creative Arts Theater; and, the Bronzeville Military Academy, the circuits did not emerge from and they did not revolve around these or other nonprofit organizations or commercial businesses, nor were they dependent upon these sites for their existence. Exchanges within these social circuits typically occurred between the collector and the artist rather than being mediated by a gallery owner or artist representative. These social circuits involved the broader community of Black Chicagoans beyond the area designated as historic “Bronzeville.”

Second were *territorial circuits* that created large-scale public monuments and facilities. *Territorial circuits* were largely public. Participants included an array of public officials including alderman, commissioners, bureaucrats, public and private agency employees, consultants and artists. They created public projects that were accomplished through strategic access to large cachets of external public funds. The territorial markers staked out local wards. These markers created the name and the historical narrative linking the area to historic “Bronzeville,” the place described by Poet Gwendolyn Brooks where a racially segregated but economically diverse Black community was once contained on Chicago’s south side. By placing “Blackness” as a central theme into public discourse in the form of permanent public art objects, these territorial markers existed at the nexus of the struggles over cultural meanings and the future of this local area. They created a social and political identity for the growing population of educated, middle class professionals establishing residences in this area and marked the territory as historic property of the Black community. Territorial markers

codified knowledge about the area called “Bronzeville” within the larger metropolitan context of Chicago. Among these territorial efforts were: identification, landmarking and mapping of historic sites such as the homes of author Richard Wright, author and activist Ida B. Well and musician Muddy Watters; landmarking, preservation and restoration of the Bronzeville Military Academy, as well as eight business buildings constructed by Black entrepreneurs from 1920-1945; the restoration and preservation of historic public murals done by Black activists between 1970 and 2000; the construction of a series of bronze artworks including “The Monument to the Great Northern Migration,” a bronze map naming the area “Bronzeville,” a series of artistic park benches and 91 bronze plaques comprising the “Bronzeville Walk of Fame” of historic “he-ros and she-ros of the community”; and the construction of three new art facilities on 47th Street. These territorial projects placed “Blackness” into public discourse in form of permanent public art objects. While the territorial circuits had an eye on owning Bronzeville, the collecting circuit focused more generally on owning African-American culture as represented by predominantly local African American artists.

Pilsen Circuits

In Pilsen, the primary resource was a concentration of art activity around an array of public displays including open studio days, exhibitions, murals, processions, parades, and cooperative opening nights for home/studio-based galleries. This concentration of activity created visibility for a range of arts activities along Halsted Streets and 18th Streets. While there was fairly rapid turnover among local circuit participants, the visibility and concentration of activity meant that vacant positions were quickly filled.

Within this concentration of activity, there were three different types of circuits. In east

Pilsen activities focused on the autonomy of the artist; arts activities in central Pilsen focused on community-based art service activities for local children and families; and arts activities in west Pilsen focused on local sovereignty of Mexican-American ethnic culture. Each circuit of production represented a different facet of the local struggle for control over the future of the area, although the art production circuits shared some of the same participants. Struggles over ethnicity, local sovereignty and artistic autonomy distinguished the three art production circuits in Pilsen. However, these distinct groups were united when outside forces threatened local space.

In East Pilsen, the primary resource was more than a hundred rental properties owned by a single family of Czech descent, the Podmajerskis. The concentration of artists and artists' spaces created an *Artistic Autonomy Circuit*; i.e. a community of artists who valued the artistic autonomy afforded through these types of spaces over traditional institutional or art market relationships. The exchanges among circuit participants were agreements to act cooperatively, particularly in scheduling opening nights together, marketing galleries and participating in group exhibitions. By sharing audiences through cooperative openings and maintaining communication through email, artists in east Pilsen maintained loose social connections designed to share access to potentially career-advancing opportunities. Among the participants in this circuit was the landlord family. This family descended of the first wave of eastern European immigrants that settled Pilsen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since the 1960s', they have been purchasing, designing, rehabbing and marketing rental properties to the needs and interests of highly educated, predominantly White, art school graduates who valued artistic autonomy provided in such spaces. Artists rented studios or artist spaces in which

they lived and produced work. They often presented works to their friends and to the public from their living rooms or in gallery spaces in place of living rooms. The spaces range from loft buildings, storefronts and wood frame 2 or 3 flats that have been architecturally altered to create open spaces out of numerous small rooms that once housed large immigrant families. An annual open studio event organized by Podmajerski and Associates involved 50-100 artists and was designed to attract art buyers from outside of Pilsen. In addition, a circuit of artists hosted monthly exhibition openings on second Fridays. Artists renting spaces here reported selling works on occasion, but their major source of income was through employment and freelance jobs in “Loop” locations working in arts administration, graphic design, web design, exhibition preparation, and construction. Exhibitions were mounted in artists “domestic spaces” which included, in 2002, Apt 1R, Unit B, Bucket Rider, Drive-Thru Studios, Gallery 645 and Dogmatic Gallery. These exhibitions crossed the public/private boundary in that they were publicly announced but existed in private domains. While artists reported selling works, a circuit of collectors did not live in Pilsen nor supported social life as was the case in Bronzeville. Buyers were typically not Pilsen residents, but came to openings and events from outside of Pilsen. Exhibition organizers maintained mailing lists of exhibition attendees and art buyers and distributed monthly announcements to events via email and by postcard.

In central Pilsen, the primary resource was access to a range of short-term contract positions through several nonprofit arts organizations, social service agencies and public agencies. Artists from various ethnic backgrounds intermingled to fill temporary positions in a *Youth Services Circuit*. Among the participants were artists

living both within and outside of Pilsen, local families, arts administrators and workers from social services, public parks and other public agencies. Contract positions were funded through grants given to several nonprofit arts and social service agencies, neighborhood development corporations, local schools and parks for arts programming. Women filled paid arts administration positions. They worked in nonprofit arts and social service agencies to raise the money needed for such local arts activities. They maintained cohesiveness in an open circuit of paid collaborators by acting as intermediaries in conflicts that might arise and recruiting new participants who “bought into” the community-based emphasis. Recruitment occurred through local referrals or at events sponsored by the organizations.

In West Pilsen, the primary resource was access to permanent or higher status positions with a major cultural institution, the Mexican Fine Arts Museum Center, dedicated to Mexican cultural history and fine art. The museum provided cultural programming to the Mexican American community that surrounded the museum and displayed Mexican and Mexican-American artists’ works as part of its educational displays. It also provided permanent and contract employment to Mexican-American artists through its main Museum facility, its satellite youth museum, radio station and various festival and school-based programs. The Museum regularly attracted high profile figures like Mexican President Vicente Fox and featured the work of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in 2003. Its exhibitions and performances often attracted audiences of 50,000 or more over the course of several months. Its exhibitions regularly “cross over” ethnic and racial categories to attract Black, White and Hispanic audiences. The museum was criticized for not doing more for the substantial community of independent

Mexican artists living in Pilsen. While there were several commercial galleries in River North and two Pilsen-based collectives, Colibri, and Polvo involving Mexican American and other artists of Hispanic descent, local Mexican American muralists, printmakers and photographers through out Pilsen, lacked the type of non-profit and small business organizational support found in Rogers Park, the organizational and technical support found in east Pilsen and social support found in Bronzeville.

Rogers Park Circuits

In Rogers Park, the primary resource was an activist community that involved residents, small for-profit businesses, a community development corporation, and several nonprofit or for profit arts organizations creating a dense and interconnecting *Problem Solving Circuit* intent on *community building* in this diverse locality. The exchanges in this circuit were among community volunteers who donated their time, energy and money to organize and attend the free festivals, as well as collaboratively promote events, and engage youth in art activities for the purpose of building community. As the dominant leaders in Rogers Park were small business and residential property owners, they supported arts activities having clearly defined community-level outcomes. These leaders hosted regular networking breakfasts and evening gatherings sponsored under the auspices of “Arts and Business Network.” Art activities sponsored within this circuit existed to solve problems encountered by local residents and small businesses. Among these, graffiti on the retaining wall was solved through an annual community mural painting festival; customers from outside the area were attracted to area restaurants and

cafés through collaborative music festivals, regular poetry events and art exhibitions; a vacant building on a crime corner (that included a murder in 2001, drug dealing and prostitution) was rehabbed into artist studios to attract “artists-in-residence” who were viewed as more desirable tenants and customers; and the harassment of both the Arab and South Asian community members after 9/11 was addressed by a neighborhood march and forum featuring poetry and performances by South Asian and other artists.

Structural Detail of a Collecting Circuit in Bronzeville

In this section, I show in detail the structure of a *Collecting Circuit* in Bronzeville. The type of detail presented here shows how the circuit operates similar to the network structures outlined by network analysts. As already discussed, network analysts show how connections in instrumental networks exist through repeated and enduring relationships among the participants. Without organizational authority or market competition as central to network activities (Podolny and Page 1998) the governing principals within these relationships might involve trust (Powell 1990, Schuler 1996); they might involve reciprocity, that is the give and take involved in an exchange (Powell 1990, Putnam 2000); or they might involve mutual benefits (Burnes and Stalker 1961, Putnam 2000).

In Bronzeville, *Collecting Circuits* existed through repeated and enduring exchanges between Black artists who made relatively small, portable objects and collectors who purchased works for display in private local residences. There was cohesive interest among circuit participants in nurturing a social environment in which art

objects could be created by Black artists and owned by Black collectors. Art collecting was a social activity comprised of interpersonal exchanges taking place through artists' home-based studios and through parties in collectors' homes. Artists were both men and women from 20 – 70 years, many of whom have college degrees in art, art education or graphic design, or who have BFAs or MFAs from an arts institute. Collectors were Black men and women, middle-aged, middle class professionals, many of whom worked for various federal, state or local government agencies, local colleges or were administrators or teachers within the Chicago Public School system.

Collectors were buyers of art who had assembled hundreds of art objects for display in their homes (*See Appendix B, Figure 1: Sitting area off of Patric's living room*). Collectors experienced an intimate social exchange of respect and appreciation with artists and with other collectors. For Patrick, the role of the collector was like being an artist; just as artists received satisfaction from the attention they received when showing their work, so does the collector. With a collection containing hundreds of pieces, Patric had an identity in his community that attracted people interested in art to him and to his home. Visitors to his home often exchanged mutual respect and admiration of particular pieces in his collection. This amounted to satisfying interpersonal interaction for Patric. The night I went to Patric's house, several people showed up including: Dan, a collector, Dale, an artist and Todd, another friend. When I arrived at Patric's home, he encouraged me to walk freely through his home and look at the art that filled nearly every square inch of wall and table surface. At first, Patric and others informally accompanied me. Our discussion was structured by where we walked. As we walked through various rooms, Patric talked about pieces I pointed out or I asked

specific questions about. Some times the others at the party looked on and participated, other times, they broke into their own groups. That night, there was a lot of energy. The interaction fit Simmel's analysis of sociable conversation in which "the telling and reception of stories, etc., is not an end in itself but only a means for the liveliness, harmony, and common consciousness of the 'party'" (Simmel 1950:53). The interaction at this party hosted by a collector, was one in which the participants were viewed as equals and experienced an intimate give and take, i.e. what Simmel calls "two-way-ness" (Simmel 1950:53) or what Putnam calls "reciprocity" (Putnam 2000:20) through discussion about art at the party. Participants shared stories and observations about art, and accounts of the kind of sensory and intellectual experience that characterized aesthetic pleasure. According to Patric:

I see this thing as interaction with other people. It's very similar to an artist showing work. Artists get the joy out of the creation. I get the joy out of recognizing that my eye that saw something in the piece, that I enjoyed it and had a meaning and affect on me. When people are at my house looking at artwork, I like to watch how they react to different pieces. I like to talk with them about the art. When I see it had the same affect; that they are attracted to one over another it reinforces what I saw and the feelings I had about it when I bought it. It is really, it's very satisfying. It's very satisfying. It makes me look at the pieces again and again. You see things that you didn't see before. It will be something new. So it opens up new ideas and experiences.

Patric addressed the uncertainty involved in aesthetic preferences through creating opportunities for interaction among people he had invited to his home. The activity of observing, discussing and being observed at such parties produced knowledge about aesthetic preferences.

Dan, described as a central figure in the collecting circuit (*See Appendix B, Figure 2: View of one room of Dan's collection*), regularly hosted private parties and informal dinners where art and artists were the topic of discussion. These parties functioned to recruit people to be collectors of art works by African American artists. According to Dan:

Before I moved, I had a party. I invited all the artists that I collected to come and art entrepreneurs and people who had a sincere interest in the art. And I had a party so that that level of people could interact. I had other parties and talked about the art as I am talking to you. It was an opportunity to kind of interact. Artists with each other, artists with art entrepreneurs as well as people who had a real interest in collecting art but maybe had only collected one or two pieces. So you try to use your venue as a place of motivation and inspiration. Hopefully, if someone comes here and sees all this art, and they have a Robert Johnson to talk about the art and what it is like to do the art, and see something like this and he talks about how he did it why he did it. It is inspiration, motivation, to purchase the art. When they see it here, they say, wow that's really cool, I would really like to have something like that in my home.

These parties introduced potential collectors to a social circuit and the shared concerns that created bonds among participants. The venue for the party was not always at a collector's home. Artists also held parties. Dayo, a Nigerian artist living in Hyde Park held regular "open studio" events to sell work and collectors to socialize. From Dayo's perspective, people in the Black community can afford to buy art, but there was not a tradition of doing so. "It's a Black thing. Blacks with money are more likely to spend it on cars or electronics rather than art," he said. He sees the education of potential collectors along with regular opportunities to socialize as central to his survival as an artist. At his studio events, he encouraged talk among collectors and artists on what it meant to be a collector of the works by Black artists.

Most every collector I have, they have become friends [with each other]... When someone buys one of my paintings, I say ‘thank you’ and I give them a certificate of authenticity. I make them interact with other collectors of my work. They have a club. They share their collections with each other. That’s a kind of camaraderie I’m creating [through my work].

Both Dan and Patric are members of “Dayo’s club” as each owns several of his pieces and identified others who also were members of the club. Among them, were two women who were school principals.

Joan, the principal at Dixon Elementary School purchased an extensive collection of art, which was displayed in this Chicago Public School. Together with the art teacher, she had purchased pieces over the years through the proceeds of an annual art fair. Dayo’s piece celebrated the leadership of women and was mounted at the school entrance right outside the principal’s office (*See Appendix B, Figure 3: Joan with “Ye Ye Oba” painting by Dayo.*) Joan explained how the piece reflected both women’s roles in African American society and in the school:

Ye Ye Oba, this is Queen Mother. What Dayo was saying [was] that in African tradition, the mother is the strength of the village. It’s the mother who raises up the child, the son, to eventually be the king. So that’s what this represents. This was Queen Mother. You know. It wasn’t King Father who was in charge, who was in charge of molding the next prince or king, it was the mother. That’s kinda like what the school represents. We view ourselves, particularly since 99% of us are females, that we are that yard stick, that strength that molds these children to be whatever they’re gonna be later on.

At first it was a surprising that circuit connections lead me to a school, first to interview a school teacher, then a principal, then to find that they too had built a substantial collection of art that not only created an aura of creativity and identity within the school, but also these works were presented as tools of education. “Every piece on display communicates some value that we feel is important that we are trying to teach our

children. If we don't do it who will? You certainly aren't going to learn anything from all the billboards selling alcohol in our community," explained Joan. These ideas were echoed by Annette, an artist and art teacher at a Dixon Elementary School. She said, the artistic environment is conducive to creativity:

It's a really positive energy that makes you wanta just create. You know. And whenever I go out and I'm with a show or with some of my fellow artists I can go back and really create something. Just like being at Patric's house being exposed to all his art. It rejuvenates, it energizes me... And just being around them helps to, to, vibe off of them, so to speak. Just being around that kind of person that likes to create this positive— being around that kind of energy just helps, helps me create. I think that's [why] I like to sit around with my students, trying to get them to use that muscle, that creative muscle. Its like so wonderful, its just a high that I can't figure out how to describe it.

Annette had been at Patric's just a few weeks before I interviewed her. She explained that she had never been to his place but he had invited her often. That evening, she went with a friend who had just finished designing his shower curtains and chair covers. While she was there, she also met Bryant, the owner of the new gallery Steele Life, located on 47th and King Drive.

[I went with] a friend of mine... She's a, Sylvia —. She's a fine artist who she does textiles. She did his shower curtains and I think he did his couch covers... So, uh, she happened, uh, he had asked me several times to come on over, but I'd never gotten anybody to go with me as an entrée. I didn't want to just drop by, you know. So she said, "well come on" and she called him and said "I'm going to bring Melika with me" and he said "OK". And I finally get to go over there. So that's how that happened. So when I went there, the gallery owner and I guess his wife was there.

Annette's experience showed how a circuit of private connections is built through a central figure like Patric, who not only purchases artwork but his home also is a central meeting place for artists, collectors and even gallery owners.

The bonding experienced through this circuit of arts producers centered on building an understanding of Black history and identity that had at its core resistance to external cultural domination. Most of Patric's collection was contemporary work made by local artists from the 1980s to the present. He focused on artists who interpret "this moment" in contemporary life. Few of the pieces he purchased are literal representations of local life, rather they represent the thought of what art should be and could be in his environment in these times. This includes works that are Black Power movement pieces, abstracts, landscapes, portraits, afro-centric designs and art that is a direct reflection of contemporary events, as illustrated through his description of two collages by Kevin Lee:

This artist did one show at the South Side Community Art Center with these collages then kind of disappeared off the scene. They are very, very interesting collages. They tell the stories of the present culture. This is of Mike Tyson showing him being handcuffed by the dollar, Desiree running for the money, Justice with her boxing glove on saying effectively saying she knocked him out, and Robin wearing the [boxing championship] belt. And then here's his image wrapped up in the flag. I think it is a wonderful encapsulation of the moment. [In the other one] here is OJ and the Bronco, the knife, the bloody glove, Nicole, Judge Ito. The image of OJ, the hero, bursting out like he did on the Hertz ad, is splitting. One image is replacing another. Again, the man [artist Lee] is a genius. We haven't seen him since that first show.

Patric stops short of framing the plight of these two fallen Black men as their own fault, the fault of the women in their lives or the fault of the larger culture. Instead, he, like the artist, leaves the final interpretation up to the viewer and simply ends his story by stating that the artist is "a genius." With an absence of formal critics writing and critiquing artists works in Bronzeville, it is through such discussion at private parties that artists' reputations are made. In each of Patric's accounts, he told stories about unusual situations in which he bought a piece, such as one from at the Bud Bilakin Parade or another by a "guy who said he was just out of prison," or why he hung it where he did, or

what the piece meant to him. He guided conversation only to the point where others had something to say. Then he stopped talking until the conversation ebbed. Of his place in the circuit, he said:

I've been collecting for 20 years. I like to interact with living artists, mainly someone who is living and breathing in my local community. I learned about collecting from people who have amassed collections that have become important, such as Vivian Hewitt. When you have pieces from people who are signing pieces to the people who buy it, you end up with a collection of work that truly reflects a time period without all that hoopla of the famous artists. It really grabs what people were doing at that time. When it comes to looking at the end of the 20th century, I have a piece of that. [Because] artists tend to know each other and interact with each other, without [having] a clear statement of a movement we become a movement.

Patric sees his collecting activity as part of a “movement.” It is about creating a culture that reflects Bronzeville in the late 20th century. The social connections created through the practice of art collecting help to generate thinking about the connection of such objects to everyday life. Such objectification of life becomes a focal point, according to Dan, to understand one's place in the larger world order. His reasoning showed how art expressed both particular experiences of Black people in the United States and universal experiences. He pointed to the “particular” experiences of Black people in the U.S. through two works on “Black Face” by Julian Williams (*See Appendix B, Figure 4: “Black Face” paintings by Julian Williams in Dan's collection*).

There seems to be two schools of thought in terms of African American art or Black art. One is that art is directly related to the Black experience or [the second] that it is exterior to the black experience and perhaps more universal in its presentation. This particular piece is very germane to the Black experience. In the larger piece [which references the practice of “Black face”] you see the lips are exaggerated. [It] mimics Black people who are mimicking White people who are mimicking Black people. [both laugh] Ok. And so that really is what it is. That shows a Black man, as you

see, with Blue eyes. And if you look at all of his tags from various places he has traveled, he has only traveled to European places. And so he only sees the world from European eyes at the expense of his own Blackness and who he is. That's that piece.

While this piece expressed the experience of racism and inequality, other pieces celebrate the positive aspects of the Black experience. He pointed to a piece by Dayo, of a Nigerian marriage dance, to illustrate cultural rituals and relationships.

The interdependent relationship between artists and collectors was evident in all my interactions within this circuit. Exchanges between collector and artist amounted to more than an exchange of money for art. They were not isolated or objective sales. There is an intimate exchange of appreciation. This was expressed by Dale at Patric's party. "What they do is very special. We are like family. They come to my house and have holidays with my family. We share troubles and successes." Dale, as well as other artists interviewed, reported selling numerous pieces to the same collectors over time, maintaining close personal relationships with collectors of their work, and counting on their referrals to other collectors. In this tight-knit social circuit, artists recognized that art production was about creating objects that were meaningful to people they knew or encountered in their everyday life, i.e. their community. In exchange, artists expected local residents to purchase their work. Collectors recognized both the importance of their monetary support to the artist's work and their role in ownership and care-taking of art objects that were created through their interest and support. As the collectors I met were middle class professionals, most of whom worked for various government agencies or were small business entrepreneurs, they paid \$100-\$3000 for art works. This price range meant that individual artists were surviving and continuing to make art, but that their

household was usually supported by a second income earned by the artist or by others in the household.

The private realm within which exchanges occurred in Bronzeville meant that artists had to be directly involved in sales of their own works and in creation of their own careers. Dale has created a place for himself through maintaining connections with collectors and artists within his community. He hears of opportunities by word-of-mouth. As a form of advice to other artists, he said, "Hear about a reception, Be there. You know somebody there will always know you and they'll refer you to somebody else. [Then] you go and charm 'em to death. You know." Through such informal meetings, Dale makes contacts with potential buyers. He transforms his contacts with potential buyers into relationships with buyers, then transforms these into enduring relationships with collectors. He does this by maintaining and feeding these contacts:

A lot of artists had never thought about keeping, even sending a buyer or collector of their work a thank you card, up until I started mentioning these things. I call them common sense points. [In advise to other artists I say] Send em a thank you card. Someone is interested in your work get their information. You know if they didn't purchase it, [call or send a note saying] "I still have this piece if you're still interested." You know, doing things like that. Um. [Send a note saying] "Thinking of you. Haven't heard from you in six months. Hope everything is fine." People like to know you really care and you are sincere about what you're doing. And it's really appreciated that they have your work. You know when Patrick first purchased a piece, I [just] met him at an art show. [This was] 8-9 years ago. He came to my house for four hours while I cooked him dinner. Then, I sent him a thank you card. A hand made [card which, was basically] another small piece. But it was an original piece of artwork. Loved it! You know, its just having a little bit of class... [laughs] and I found out a lot of my artists friends didn't.

According to Dale, maintaining connections with buyers and collectors is not only common sense but also it amounts to "having class." The assertive role artists played in

the selling of their work and in the creation of their own careers was how things got done in this art production circuit. Dayo was one of the most collected artists on Chicago's south side. Part of the reason was the visibility he generated around his own work. He produced a lot of work, had regular open studio events, showed his work at restaurants, galleries, schools, and private events. He lived off sales and has sold upwards of 300 pieces. "The artist is the person who has to sell their work. Even when you have a gallery or agent, we are the ones who have to make a sale. Until your name is a household name like Picasso, then you don't have to show up. But until then we make the sale." At a show at the South Side Community Art Center, where I first saw Dayo's work, he sold 23 pieces. I asked him how he did it:

I always like to see 1 or 2 dots [on the label indicated "sold"] before I get to work because I know I will work that crowd... 90% of the sales happen opening night...you're lucky if you make 10-20% after opening night. [I have learned] in my 10 years of smooching and necking the collectors, the way you socialize will enhance your sales that opening night in most cases. With each person, you talk, you smooch, photograph, autograph, then you move on to the next person. It is both the muscle of the work and the crowd that creates the excitement on opening night. You feel hyped. Once the first person buys, once he buys it he wants to flaunt it. Once you see red dots flying, it is quite contagious.

The enthusiasm of the night generated an environment that transformed disinterested observers into passionate buyers. The steps up to the opening night that culminated in Dayo's interaction with people at the opening were necessary to transform opening night attendees into collectors of Daye's work, or as Dayo referred to them "my collectors." While Dayo had sold many pieces and is well known in Bronzeville, the market that exists for his work remains intimately connected to him like the bonds among

the participants in the collecting circuit. They revolved around meanings generated and exchanged through these interpersonal interactions.

While the structure of interpersonal exchanges involved with art sales in Bronzeville produced satisfying social relationships and a local art market, artists complained that there was no upscale vehicle to increase the value their work. There were few of the structures in place to generate greater demand for their work, such as networks of permanently established exhibition venues, professional administrators working in both nonprofit and business environments and published information about artists or arts activities. Therefore there were limited links to art markets outside this locality.

By providing monetary support to local artists and through building social life around locally-made cultural objects, participants in the collecting circuit became part of the restoration of Bronzeville's cultural and economic life. These social relationships provided the middle class returning to Bronzeville with a sense of interpersonal connection to the contemporary and historic life in Bronzeville. Their presence in Bronzeville was central to rebuilding the local economy and was indirectly "stimulated" by the infusion of public funds into revitalizing this area.

The *Collecting Circuit* in Bronzeville was not replicated in Pilsen or Rogers Park. As already discussed, circuit participants in east Pilsen reported making occasional sales to buyers living outside of Pilsen. There was not the interaction or mutual concern shared between artists in collectors as in Bronzeville. In fact, one exhibition organizer highlighted that he was not interested in sales because it would require him to "baby sit"

collectors. Rather he liked to focus setting up social situations around art and watching people interact and respond, not unlike the collector's parties in Bronzeville. In Rogers Park, artists reported sales through occasional festivals and shows, but again, buyers were not part of a collecting network sharing mutual concerns, nor were connections between artists and collectors maintained. These accounts are detailed more fully in a larger work.

Conclusions

Through this study of networks and resource mobilization in three localities I abandoned traditional occupational categories to understand how art was produced in local communities. I found, nonetheless, networks operating within local communities much like those constructed within the institutional and occupational categories. In Bronzeville, I found artists, collectors, teachers and administrators involved in art production circuits, however, work occurred in nontraditional sites. The interpersonal interaction in *collecting circuits* produced a thriving local art market. This contrasted with the relationships of powerful people with strategic access to external public resources at work *territorial circuits* producing territorial markers and the agreements to act collectively that were seen in the *autonomy circuits* in east Pilsen.

This study showed how professionals and local residents involved in art production accessed resources through social circuits to create markers of the racial, ethnic and class dimensions of their communities. The qualitative data gleaned from interviews showed significantly more arts activity within the area and significantly greater expansion beyond the borders of the local community than is evident through

public listings. By tracing art production circuits through connections of participants in three distinct urban communities, I saw how mutual concerns for the locality brought circuit participants together and sustained art production activity.

Collecting and territorial circuits in Bronzeville are distinguished from those in Pilsen and Rogers Park in part because of a new class of urban Black professionals were establishing new residences in a community whose meaning centered around the cultural experiences of African Americans. These circuits become exemplary cases showing how art producers mobilized local cultural capital in innovative ways to both stake a claim to local territory and attract external resources to the local economic structure. Art production circuits produced knowledge embedded in art that identified the locality and collective concerns of the community.

These localities shared a common orientation in their resistance to externally imposed meanings and practices rather than reproducing historic inequalities by *misrecognizing* a dominant culture as the *legitimate* culture of the community (Bourdieu [1977]1990). Participants produced symbolic meanings that contested historic subordinate statuses while asserting a local identity.

Appendix A

Table 1: Community Composition by Race

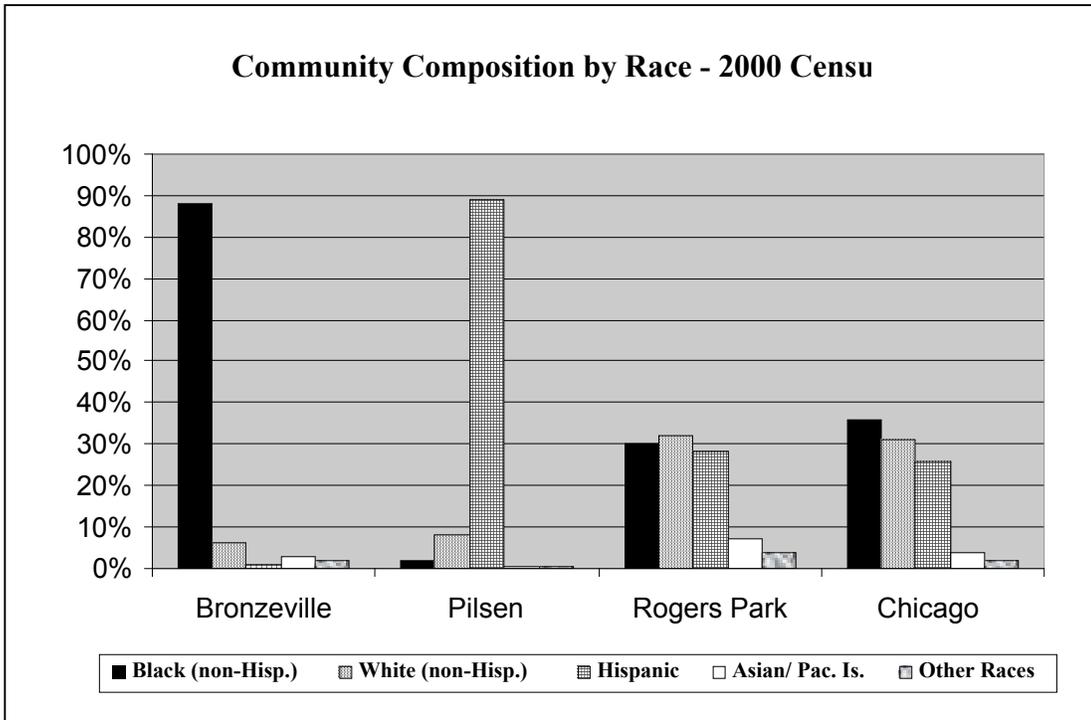


Table 2: Comparison of Income Range by Community

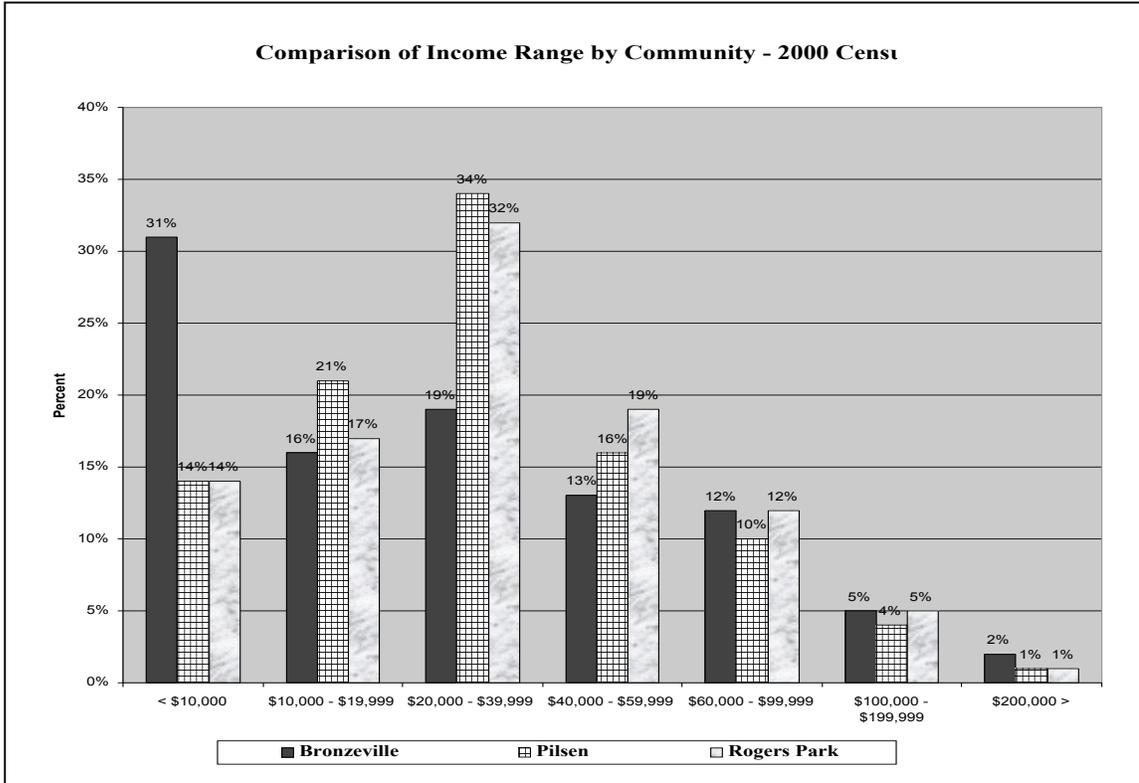


Table 3: Comparison of Ongoing Arts Programming to Public Art

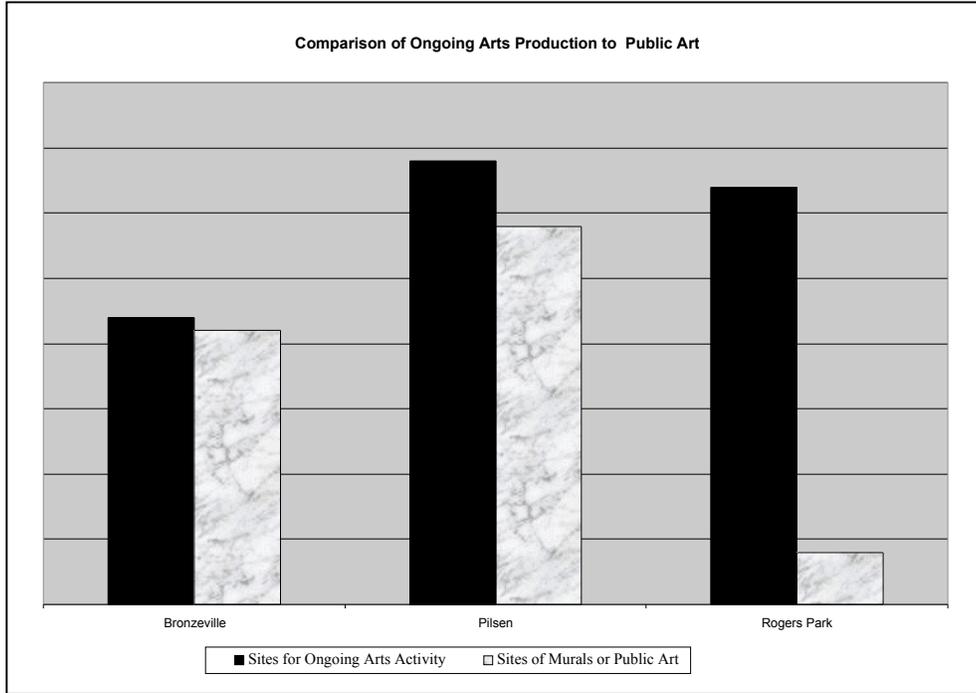


Table 4: Comparison of For Profit, Non-Profit, Informal, Public Parks and University Sites

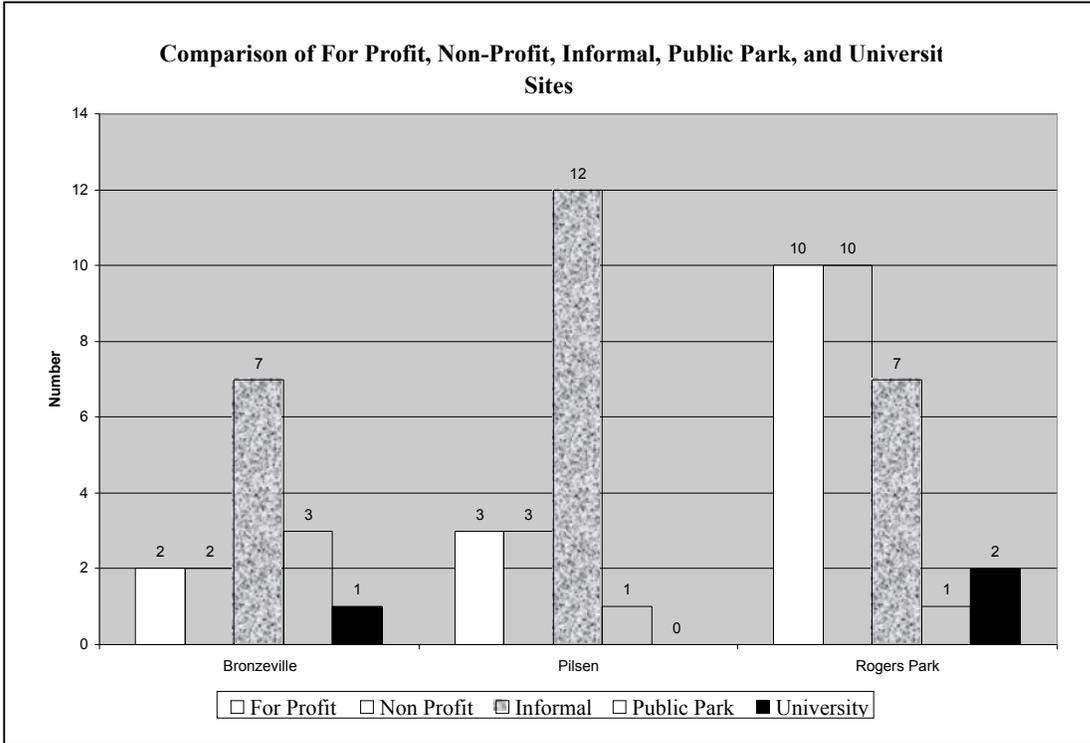


Table 1: Typology of Local Art Production Circuits

Types of Local Art Production Circuit	Purpose	Types of Participants	Activities	Funding Source	Communication
Territorial	To mark and identify local territory	Local citizens, other political actors, and artists	Produce physical structures that identify and stake a group's claim to a local place including territorial markers, historic structures and monuments.	Public funds	Public meetings, Official documents, news reports
Collecting	Cultivate values and meanings about cultural objects	Collectors, artists, performers, audience members	Assemble and present cultural objects for temporary displays	Personal funds of middle and upper class art buyers	Interpersonal
Autonomy	To increase access to artistic opportunities	Cutting edge artists, and small business owners	Produce objects or events with artistic value	Personal funds of entrepreneurs	Publicity via internet or email list-serves, direct mail, newspaper listings and stories
Gentrification	To increase value of local property values and resources in local economy	City bureaucrats, real estate developers and agents, business owners, property owners, artists	Build spaces and facilities for private, commercial, or public use by desired investors.	External Investments	Public meetings, official documents, news reports
Problem-solving	To solve a local issue or problem	Community volunteers	One time activities or products	Donations	Interpersonal, pc networks, social events
Youth Services	To involve adults and youth in educational activities	Administrators, instructors, families, parents and students	Regular activities in school, after school on holidays or on summer break.	- Public Funds - Personal funds of middle class parents	Interpersonal, interagency

Appendix B

Because of the size of the files for maps and pictures, they are contained in a separate document file. Please download Producing Local Color, Appendix B, from the website.

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