

BEYOND THE STAGE:
VERBATIM THEATRE AS A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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By

JOEL BERNBAUM

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Dean
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University of Saskatchewan
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9 Canada

Abstract

This dissertation explores the potential of verbatim theatre to be used as a community development process. It examines how social capital might be re-envisioned as a network of place-based relations, with the view of community as *process*; one which must be constantly and consistently repeated and maintained. The central argument is: verbatim theatre can be used as a way to create a non-literal *place* for ‘communing’ where humanization can occur. The conceptual framework is inspired by Indigenous knowledges, and critical discussion of the creation of place including race, dehumanization, and humanization. Indigenous knowledges offer non-colonial ways of conceptualizing how we understand, measure, and value spaces, places, and the interconnected relationship between all things. Social capital can be seen as sociality, or networks of relations between people and spaces that become places when they are endowed with meaning. This meaning is produced through relationships between people, which can only happen in place. Theatre arts have the potential to create places where ‘systematic humanizing’ can occur. These places can be both literal and imaginative.

Two main methodologies are used: the methodology of a/r/tography to directly situate art and the artists journey within the work, and exploratory case studies to learn about the practices of two companies using the arts for social change (Forklift Danceworks and BIG hART). The main methods are research-based theatre and verbatim theatre - the process of making a play out of interviews. Findings reveal methods and tools for using the arts to create places of humanization, as well as a specific process for using verbatim theatre for this purpose. This research includes the new verbatim play *Pleasant Hill Talks*, edited from interviews with one hundred people in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The play is an example of how verbatim theatre creates a place for humanization. Specific findings about the process and the Pleasant Hill neighborhood are included both inside and outside the play. These findings relate to the strengths, challenges, and hopes of people in the Pleasant Hill community, as well as the method of using verbatim theatre as a community development process.

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Dedication

To Judah: may you learn the meaning of community.

**“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,
then let us work together.”**

-Dr. Lilla Watson

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Chapter One: Introduction: An Attempt at Understanding

1.1. My Research Journey

I am interested both in what theatre can be, and what theatre can *do*. When I returned home to Saskatoon in 2013 after 14 years of study out of province and travel/work abroad, I looked at our city's theatre scene and was struck by a simple realisation: theatre companies were making theatre for people who already went to theatre. Professional live theatre was an exclusive activity. I started thinking. How could theatre be created to reach people who have never been to see a play? I realised the two main obstacles preventing people from participating in theatre were cost and location. So, in 2014, I collaborated with local artists who shared my values and created Saskatchewan's first free professional Theatre in the Park, touring a play to a different community park every night of the performance run. For the past eleven years, thousands of people have participated in Theatre in the Park. Simultaneously during these years, I had the privilege of interviewing hundreds of people to create three verbatim theatre¹ plays, on the topics of houselessness, the refugee experience, and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. These conversations have changed my life, and the plays created from the transcripts have been seen by thousands of people. With both my work on Theatre in the Park and with verbatim theatre, I felt theatre was *doing* something quite powerful, but I was not sure exactly what. This curiosity led me to a PhD program. For my own personal growth, I wanted to dig deeper into my practice and answer the questions—what am I doing? And why am I doing it? These basic early research questions led me to the idea/ideal of *community*.

1.1.1 The Problem

As a society we value the notion of *community*, but there is little consensus about the best way to build one. My initial curiosity evolved and as I began my literature review and I began to think about *How might the theatre arts create artistic opportunities for citizens to connect to each other?* I believed this was a useful question to ask, because the creation of community has the potential to bring people together in relationships. These relationships in turn have the potential to solve problems in our cities related to health, safety, and inclusion. The strengthening of communities relates directly to the academic study of social capital. Social capital has three main components: social networks, social norms, and most importantly, trust (Nanetti & Holguin, 2016). Trust pertains to the strength of bonds between people. Participation in live theatre or other public art is an act of community engagement with the potential to create social bonds between people through the sharing of a meaningful experience. Theatres offer spaces where new possibilities for humankind can be imagined (Nicholson, 2005), such as the performance of different ways of being and doing. But how are theatres fulfilling this potential?

Participation in community-based art can bring people together (Atilli & Sandercock, 2013; Bernbaum & Nolan, 2022). Involvement in the artistic process can mobilize and empower

¹ Verbatim theatre is a kind of theatre where interviews are used to make scripts. I discuss verbatim theatre in detail later in this dissertation.

communities (Picasso, 2008) and humanize citizens (Freire, 2000). The study of public art and humanist geography overlaps in the analysis of creating shared spaces, experiences, and beliefs (Cartiere, 2010). However, previous research in these areas does not directly address the use of theatre to intentionally benefit a city through the strengthening of social bonds between people in given communities. The strengthening of these bonds has the potential to increase trust and lead to healthier and safer relationships between people. There is great opportunity for public value here. Public value includes the impacts on people in a community (Alford & O’Flynn, 2009). Art can play a role in this by catalyzing issues and empowering communities to act (Atilli & Sandercock, 2013). This is only possible if the art is accessible and meaningful to people in a city. If theatre experiences are accessible and meaningful they have the potential to create public value and help develop more engaged and active communities.

Unfortunately, this is not the norm. Theatres are not fulfilling their potential as community builders. They seem to be focused on selling tickets as opposed to engaging with the communities they serve. Theatres are not the only artistic institutions falling short on this front. Research into civic art museums shows while they can engage communities and promote citizenship, they too often cater to a small group of elites (Budney, 2018). A similar problem exists for traditional theatres. They are focused on sales to a largely pre-determined audience of subscribers. Like art museums, theatres create “passive audiences in a consumer model of culture that is finding less and less of a public audience” (Budney, 2018, p. 4). This model is a form of consumer engagement rather than a broader kind of citizen engagement. This is a missed opportunity. Public value can be constructed when organizations engage citizens in a trust building process (Benington, 2009). My research initially set out to explore and test innovative ways theatre might be used to engage citizens to strengthen bonds between people in given communities.

1.1.2 Research Questions

I began with a broad overarching research question: *How can theatre make a city civically stronger?* Within this, I initially thought my research would focus on three main sub-questions: First, *how can theatre companies create space to build social capital?* Second, *how can both civic leadership and urban community associations work with theatre companies to use this created space to strengthen their communities?* And finally, *how can these findings be used by mainstream theatre companies?* I felt the main goal of this research was to discover new ways the theatre arts could be used to foster community and promote civic engagement. However, as my research evolved, so did my questions. I learned cities are really comprised of a collection of communities. I felt called to work with people in the Pleasant Hill community in Saskatoon. I also realised it would be most potent to focus on one theatre method. I chose verbatim theatre because of its potential to include community members throughout the theatre making process, and its power to humanize both issues and audiences (Kushnir, 2016). My main research question became: *How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?* With the sub-question: *What are the methods of different arts companies who are using the arts for social change?*

To answer these two questions, I divided my research into two main parts. The first is exploratory case studies (Yin, 2014) of two different organizations: Forklift Danceworks (Texas)

and Big hART (Australia). After surveying arts companies across Canada who work with/in communities, I chose these two international companies because of their methodologies and their long track records of success working with communities. Relationships and responsivity were key criteria in choosing these companies. Specifically, I was drawn to these two companies because they commit to spending a significant amount of time in communities before they create art, and both use the arts to respond to local issues. To enrich my research journey, I had the privilege to travel to witness their work. I was both honoured and inspired by what I saw. Both companies' work exemplifies how the arts can be used as a tool to create place-based social capital within a community.

In 2019, thanks to the support of SK Arts, I travelled to Austin, Texas, and participated in Forklift Danceworks' *Givens Swims* project. This project was part of a three-year residency/partnership between Forklift and the City of Austin's aquatics department called *My Park My Pool My City*, which included performances at three different community pools which had ailing infrastructure. As described in detail in Chapter Four, I was drawn to Forklift because of the way it does its work through immersing itself in different communities, often shadowing groups of workers. Public exposure to the *My Park My Pool My City* productions correlated with the passing of a bond package in a municipal election allowing for critical financial support for these community pools. For ten days leading up to the *Givens Swims* production, I watched the work unfold and assisted in whatever way I could, including ending up in the show when one of the community members was unavailable. Rehearsals and performances took place in the Givens pool, built in nineteen fifty-eight for Austin's Black community and named after one of Austin's first Black dentists, Dr. Everett Givens. Forklift's Artistic Director Allison Orr felt the stakes were high on this production as the Givens pool was one of the last Black gathering places in East Austin. According to Orr (2023), Forklift's work *activates* communities.

I watched as the *Givens Swims* project activated community members and created a new place for gathering and connection. With the new city funding in place, discussions were underway about the sensitive process of designing the new Givens Pool. In an area already gentrifying quickly, the *Givens Swims* project offered people a chance to connect and share the history and culture of the project. There were so many moments I remember from this experience, but I will highlight two. The first was meeting the lifeguards of the pool and assuming they were carefree teenagers like the lifeguards here in Saskatoon. As I watched rehearsal, an audio interview with one of the lifeguards played over the speakers as she cleaned the pool. She talked about being a single mom and working long shifts at the pool to make ends meet. I clearly saw my assumptions and never looked at a lifeguard the same way again. On my second day of rehearsal, I was introduced to a group of Black community youth who were in the show. Ranging from ages eight to fourteen, these youth were enthusiastic and proud to be involved. Their warmth and kindness ran parallel to the team of Forklift artists. Both the artists and the youth all individually greeted each other (and me) by first name at the start of every rehearsal. I was struck by one youth in particular: a charismatic twelve-year-old boy with a huge smile who I will call James. James was not a formal leader in the group per se; rather he was a leader by example, the first to jump (cannon ball) into the pool, the loudest laugh when something funny happened, and the first to high five everyone after a successful run through of choreography. On opening night when we finished the show, hundreds of people in the audience were giving us a standing ovation. In the shallow end of the pool, I just happened to be beside James and he turned to me. He said, "We

did it!” with a huge smile and he gave me a big hug. He was crying with pride, and that made me cry with empathy, and the true power of Forklift’s work hit me in the heart.

In 2023, thanks to the support of SK Arts and the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation, I travelled to Roebourne (referred to by local Aboriginal people as *Ieramugadu*) in Western Australia, to spend ten days witnessing the rehearsal and performance of Big hART’s *Songs for Freedom* concert and adjacent community workshops. I am drawn to the work of Big hART for two main reasons. Firstly, they have a minimum amount of time they commit to working in any community for a project. When I have asked my friends and colleagues in Canada to guess that minimum, people almost always say a few months. Big hART’s commitment is unheard of in my context; they commit to three *years*. Secondly, I am impressed and moved by the fact that Big hART never knows what they are going to create with a community. They respond to the needs and desires of the community. Sometimes that means a play, a movie, a graphic novel, or a musical event. The area of Ieramugadu has a large Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal people of Australia represent approximately three percent of the general population; however, the incarcerated population in Australia is comprised of fifty percent Aboriginal people. I saw this statistic in real life when I attended a concert in Roebourne Prison, where I counted only two white presenting inmates among hundreds of Aboriginal presenting inmates. This imbalance is one of the reasons Big hART was drawn to do work in this community.

Big hART has been building relationships in Ieramugadu for over thirteen years. They began their work there through a relationship with the family of John Pat, a local Aboriginal young man who died in police custody at the age of sixteen in 1983. When I was in Ieramugadu I heard the story of this relationship many times, and it moved me each time. According to Big hART’s creative director Scott Rankin, he met with the family of John Pat to discuss the possibility of engaging with the family’s story. Rankin says John Pat’s mother was open to this possibility, on three conditions: that there be a place by the river in Ieramugadu where community could gather around a fire, that there be music by that fire, and that what happened to her son never happen again. Rankin made a promise, to do his best to do all these things (Rankin, personal communication, 2023). When I was in Ieramugadu, I sat by the fire at the ‘Peace Place’ designed and constructed by Big hART with the community, I listened to the *Songs for Freedom* concert, and I sat in circle with politicians to hear a policy paper presented by Big hART and their collaborating researchers. I was moved by the fact that Scott Rankin fulfilled his promise and was inspired by the three-dimensional way Big hART does its work.

When I had the opportunity to share a meal with creative director Scott Rankin, I asked him to tell me in one verb, what Big hART really was doing. I did not want to dumb down his work, but rather I wanted to understand what the essence his work as he saw it. I explained how Forklift uses the word “activate.” Rankin did not hesitate and said “intermediation.” He explained that the harder intermediation is, the more important it is. I witnessed intermediation in several ways. The *Songs for Freedom* concert had come home to Ieramugadu after touring several major Australian cities and performing for thousands of people. On every occasion politicians were invited and attended, so they could be moved by the work and advocacy relationships could be formed.

The most memorable part of the experience for me was watching the local Aboriginal youth be empowered through the creation of art. On the first day of rehearsals, I sat in with Big hART artists who were working with two young, local Aboriginal boys on an original song they had created especially for the concert. They wrote an upbeat rap called “Living in Roebourne.” The chorus still sticks in my head: “Red dusty dirt, hot dry winds, sharing, practicing culture, language, family, culture... Living in Roebourne!” Over the ten days the Big hART artists layered support on these two young people, eventually rehearsing their original song with a full band. On the night of the concert, a hugely elaborate stage and technical elements were set up behind the community centre. I asked Big hART’s producer why so much money was being spent on technical elements. He told me that “for this community, good enough has been good enough for far too long” and that “we are going to give them the same quality of technical excellence as their work” (Viney, personal communication, 2023). I watched the two young boys sing their rap with a full band and professional concert stage full of lighting and sound equipment. With hundreds of audience members I was moved to my feet to dance. I smiled and looked around, dancing next to me was the Attorney General of Western Australia. It was fitting that one of the repeated lines of the chorus was “Lift up so we can stand up. Lift up so we can stand up!” As we danced and chanted these lyrics together with hundreds of people, my heart was once again hit with the power of social change through the arts.

I describe my experiences with Forklight and Big hART because they have inspired me and evolved my thinking. They have shown me examples what the arts can *do*. Specifically, how the arts can create a new place of empowerment and empathy within a community. As part of my formal research, I conducted interviews with artists from Forklight and Big hART to understand how they do their work. I asked questions about their values and methods. This international study allowed me to document the innovative ways these artists activated and intermediated within the communities they worked with. The findings from these case study interviews are detailed in Chapter Four. I analyzed the interview data and organized it into thematic categories that directly informed the second part of my work: a research creation project in the inner city of Saskatoon.

The Pleasant Hill neighbourhood is an active community with many socio-economic challenges. The majority of Pleasant Hill residents’ personal income is under \$25,000, and 69 percent of residents are renters. Both socio-economic indicators place residents of Pleasant Hill well below Saskatoon averages (City of Saskatoon, 2019). Pleasant Hill has a reputation for being one of the most dangerous areas in Saskatoon. In the summer of 2019, a large percentage of Saskatoon’s reported homicides happened in Pleasant Hill (Tank, 2019, Aug 25). These tragic deaths are what drew me to work with the community. Members of the Pleasant Hill Community Association have spoken about the “third world” conditions their residents face, ranging from decrepit properties to drug use to gang violence (Tank, 2019, Aug 12). These conditions create very real challenges. Amid the challenges, though, there is also a vibrant community.

Pleasant Hill is filled with active and creative people who are committed to living in their neighbourhood in the best possible ways. Since Sum Theatre (the touring theatre company I co-founded) began the Theatre in the Park program in 2013, they have visited Pleasant Hill Park every year. When the actors arrive, Pleasant Hill Park is often one of the only parks out of the twenty-six that Sum Theatre traditionally tours that is already buzzing with activity. Both

because of this community's challenges and its vibrancy, I wanted to work with Pleasant Hill community members to design and implement a research creation project in their neighbourhood. Using the methodology of a/r/tography (described in Chapter Three), I have been the primary research instrument in this project. Working in partnership with community members and stakeholders in the Pleasant Hill community, we used the verbatim theatre play and the research findings to create a non-literal "place" to build on the active and creative potential of this community. The place we co-created was the play making process and the play itself. It is a social construction, collaboratively created, that offered people in the community the opportunity to come together in imagining different possibilities for the future of the neighbourhood. It is my hope that creating this place can disrupt some of the violence and poverty that is all too prevalent in Pleasant Hill and perhaps also dissolve some of the stigma attached to this neighbourhood. Maybe this work will also help catalyze a larger discussion (and potentially action) about the structural issues that create violence and poverty in this community.

I am grateful for my research journey. I began with a curiosity about what my effect my years of theatre work created in community. This evolved to questions about theatre's potential to strengthen bonds and build social capital. As I read more, I became interested in the creation of space and then place, and how social capital might be envisioned as place. As I describe in Chapter Two, social capital can be seen as the networks between people (Jacobs, 2011). By using verbatim theatre as a community development process, networks between people are created in the non-literal place of the verbatim theatre process. As I read about Paolo Freire and the concept of humanization, I became increasingly interested in the potential of theatre to break down barriers between people. I learned from Métis elder² Maria Campbell about the worldview of *wâhkôhtowin* and the interrelatedness of all beings and the land. I see now that theatre can eventually strengthen social bonds, leading to trust—but before that can happen there is a crucial first step: people need to *see* each other, and verbatim theatre has the potential to make that happen.

1.1.3 Responding to Two Calls

The theoretical structure of this research is in response to two academic calls:

Call #1: Putnam (2000) calls for new and more creative ways to conceptualize and cultivate social capital.

Through this research I explore the idea of social capital, beginning with Putnam's (2000) work. Putnam argues that social capital is important because it is linked to cooperation, community advancement and the overall notion of interconnectedness (Smith, 2009). Social capital scholarship largely evolved in response to declines in political engagement, informal social ties,

² I have had several conversations with Maria about how her role in this project should be recognized. She explained to me that the word "elder" is lacking because it does not actually describe the role someone like her plays in my life, or in a project like this. She said that in *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree) language the closest term would be "kehtehayak" which translates to "old people." Maria said while she is an old person, this word also does not describe her role. She said our conversations have made her curious to find another term and she will take this question to a gathering of people who do work similar to her. In the meantime, she requested I use the term elder - with lower case letters - as she says capitals make her more important than other people - which she does not believe she is. I am grateful for the learning that happens every time I speak with Maria.

and trust. These declines happened alongside changes in the family structures, and the advance of urban sprawl and electronic entertainment (Smith, 2009; Putnam, 2000).

Community is a medium connecting individuals and society at large (Little, 2016). The networks of a community are constructed through relationships shaped by power systems and the resources attached to them (Findlay et al, 2015). Theatre companies have the tools to respond to the local needs and issues of the communities they serve swiftly and meaningfully. They can do so in a way that offers an alternative to other more dominant forces such as globalisation (Little, 2016). Locally minded theatre companies have the potential to play a role in a city that very few other organisations or even people are filling. Who or what other organisation in a city is well positioned to respond to current issues actively and meaningfully with the goal of bringing people together to engage in learning? Surely some of this task is attempted by civic governments, but because of the inherent bureaucracy they are limited to certain approaches. Perhaps one could argue that religious groups have an intention of engagement for “the better good,” but however righteous those values may seem—they are inclusive only of those within religious communities—and alienating to other people due to lack of religious connection and/or negative (and at times horrible) experiences that have occurred in religious communities. Gathering and working with community associations or service groups has a community-building goal in mind—but as Putnam (2000) clearly shows, the time people dedicate to this activity is dramatically shrinking.

In a city, theatre (and theatre companies) can play the role of responders, connectors, creators, and engagers. They can program content to provoke people to further understand and participate in the world around them. For example, people could go to the theatre and see a play about their community and then participate in a discussion afterwards where they meet an “other” person from their community (someone not like them, who they have not had the chance to meet). This kind of connection has the potential to create empathy and humanization. Theatres have the tools, time, and resources to do this work, but many lack the skills and/or the desire. Little (2016) argues for “community engaged resident artists” who are supported to achieve a goal or promoting social cohesion. In this way, artists within a community can be seen as enablers of the social capital process.

Enabling of the social capital process happens within a space. An “enabling environment” is a space where social innovation is/can be cultivated, and “enablers” can be networks, organisations, corporations, or social capital investors (Baker & Mehmood, 2015, p. 326). Baker and Mehmood see social innovation as both dependent on, and as a source of social capital, but not as the same thing. Social innovation to Baker and Mehmood has the potential to satisfy needs, and strengthen place-based social relations (2015). I am particularly interested in how links between people are place-based. Through this research I will offer one answer to Putnam’s call and explore a new view of social capital.

Call #2: Norris (2000) calls for drama to shape the entire research process.

Norris (2000) argues the play-making process can be seen as research—a play can itself be an “analytical act” and the play-building process is a non-linear spiral in which data collection, analysis, and dissemination both overlap and influence each other (pp. 44-46). Playwrights,

actors, and audience come together to be participants in the research in a more participatory way than other methods such as focus groups (Norris, 2000, pp. 45-46.) Norris writes that for the full potential of drama as research to be unlocked, it should be used throughout the research process “as both a process of meaning making and as a presentational/representational form”(Norris, 2000, p. 40). In the decades since Norris advocated for a more fulsome use of drama in the research process, research-based theatre (RBT) has grown as a more accepted and practiced methodology (Belliveau & Lea, 2016).

Theatre can be both art and research. Theatre has a long history of both reflecting and provoking current events. Art-making is the heart of research-based theatre and can be a catalyst for new ways of combining theatre and research (Belliveau and Lea, 2016.) Research-based theatre is a range of theatre practices with connection to research (Belliveau and Lea, 2016). Belliveau and Lea (2016) outline some of the strengths and challenges of research-based theatre. They position it as the re-telling of stories we know in a way that shows (as opposed to tells), generating empathy. Belliveau and Lea (2016) encourage thinking about evaluation of research-based theatre (RBT) as guideposts instead of a system of tests. They use the work of Belliveau and Prendergrast to suggest four guideposts: creating balance, sharing work in academic articles, sharing work in the theatre, and honouring the research context (Belliveau & Lea, 2016, p. 11). These guideposts offer flexibility to the research-based theatre process, allowing for different methodologies and methods to be used as needed.

For this research-based theatre project, I have chosen the methodology of a/r/tography. A detailed description of a/r/tography follows in Chapter Three. Research-based theatre and a/r/tography are similar in the way they are both relational (Belliveau and Irwin, 2016; Belliveau and Lea, 2016). As a method within a/r/tography, I use verbatim theatre. Verbatim theatre is the creation of a play script out of interviews or transcripts (Padget, 1987). I am interested in verbatim theatre’s potential to create a participatory place for humanization. Botelho (2009) writes about the power of verbatim theatre in “creating a forum in which together, if separated, members of all communities can regard themselves and one another from a distance that fosters reflection” (p. 85). Verbatim theatre creates a place both between people and others, but also between people and themselves, so everyone can take a step back and see identity and relationships from a distance. These plays engage empathy in a complex and spatial way. Instead of a straightforward empathy attached to one person or group of people, audience members are positioned as a part of community. Ideally, the audience feels pulled in all directions in a way that hopefully helps them see their own biases and pre-conceived ideas about issues and the people who comprise them (Botelho, 2009, p. 85-86; Kushnir, 2016).

To respond to both calls, it is important to view the examination of the connections between social capital, place creation, and theatre as a *creative process*. This prompts further questions for this research: *What are the ingredients of this process? Does the process create or strengthen bonds between people? How do these bonds happen in place?* To continue this research in a way both respectful and empowering of the creative process, it is crucial to use a methodology which itself is creative. In the following chapters, I will explore relevant literature about social capital and the methodology of a/r/tography.

1.1.4. Guided by a Metaphor

The empirical work of this dissertation is a research creation project. It is rooted in art and theatre. Art (and the methodology of a/r/tography) uses metaphor to discover and interpret meaning. The metaphor of a forest of trees guides this research. Processes of the natural world interact, respond to laws, and represent values (McHarg, 1992). The actual structures of nature have been studied in relation to urban design (McHarg, 1992). In addition to copying natural processes for design success, the natural world is helpful in responding to the question of how to look at theoretical concepts, such as social capital, and community, in a different way. In this case, the answer is trees. Simard's work on the interconnectedness of forests is a useful metaphor in rethinking social capital. In her work, Simard describes how trees within forests are complex interconnected networks—they communicate with each other and share energy. There are even “Mother trees” that take care of younger trees (Simard, 2021).

Simard's incredible research presents opportunities for both trees and humans alike. In the context of my research, it helps us reframe and rethink the idea of community. Instead of thinking of community as something that needs to be created, it offers a new thought, as old as the trees themselves. The connections between people, just like trees, are *already there*. We have the potential to communicate with each other, to share with each other, and, whether we like it or not, our actions affect each other. If, like trees in a forest, we are already connected as a community the critical initial step towards strengthening our connections is to first *see* ourselves as connected. While Simard and other scientists' work is relatively recent, Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers have understood this interconnection since time immemorial. An example of this view is the world view of wâhkôhtowin—the interrelatedness of all beings and the land (Campbell, 2007; Settee, 2013).

The arts, and specifically theatre, can offer processes to generate the seeing of connectedness. Theatre is created out of metaphor; it is a representational medium that facilitates an “empathetic leap” (Kushnir, 2016, p. 96). The empathy generated through theatre invites people to see things differently. Verbatim theatre, especially, is a way to bring the connections between people into sight. If we can see these connections, and *feel* these connections, we then have a better chance of communicating and sharing. Hamdi (2004) writes that community development needs to be seen as interdependence. In other words, when people that are not normally connected come together as a group they are developing. Nature provides another example with the uncanny ability of slime mould to navigate mazes by communicating through cells without brains (Hamdi, 2004). These natural systems provide models for interdependence and connectedness. The scientific term for the ability to develop in this way is “emergence” (Hamdi, 2004, p. xvii). Hamdi argues that humans need structure, routine, and systems to nurture this kind of development. The verbatim theatre experience is a system with the potential to illuminate, and then strengthen, the connections of our human forest.

1.2 Theoretical Summary: Communing

A crucial component supporting my theoretical research is the idea that communities are *processes*. This is supported by the notion community is a *verb* not a noun, and that the action of community is what creates the space for community (Studdert, 2016). Spaces become places

when they have power and meaning (Creswell, 2004), and the meaning is often constructed from relations between people (Lefebvre, 1991). The process of place-making is about involvement, value, and belonging (Creswell, 2004). Belonging is an illustration of interrelatedness (Brokenleg, 1998). Places then, are networks of relations (Massey, 1997). These relations are behavioural (Brokenleg, 1998). In other words, community happens actively between people; it is a process that depends on people interacting with each other. The more this interaction can activate (Orr, 2019, personal communication) or intermediate (Rankin, 2023, personal communication) the more likely space for future processes of communing can occur. Collaboration and co-creation between people can serve to humanize the other (Freire, 2000). In my view, community is produced and re-produced over time, ever evolving, through the active process of communing.

My theoretical work is aimed at exploring how the theatre arts might serve as a medium for activating and intermediating the process of “communizing”. Verbatim theatre has the potential to create the process of humanization (Kushnir, 2016). This process includes people who feel empathy for each other. My thinking is largely shaped by Indigenous knowledges, especially the nêhiyaw worldview of wâhkôhtowin—the interrelatedness of all beings and the natural world.

Indigenous knowledges also offer non-colonial ways of conceptualizing how we understand, measure and value spaces, places and time, including the view in some cultures that space and time are the same (Smith, 2012). Social capital can be seen as sociality, the ongoing process of networks of relations between people (Jacobs, 2011; Studdert, 2016).

The work of humanizing in place is necessary. Many people in our society are systematically dehumanized (Razack, 2002). This is not only morally wrong, but also costly to our society. Verbatim theatre has the potential to humanize participants (Kushnir, 2016). It has the potential to do this in a way that creates both literal and imaginative places for the process of communizing to occur. The verbatim theatre process creates a place, and when this place is utilized in the place of community, humanization can occur. This dissertation supports the idea that verbatim theatre creates a place for a humanizing communizing process to occur.

1.3 Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter has positioned my dissertation research personally, conceptually, and methodologically. I have begun telling the story of my research journey. This introduction sets the stage by introducing my main research question: *How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?* In addition to tracking my refinement of this question, I have described two academic calls this research responds to: Putnam’s specific call for the arts to be used in a new investigation/conceptualisation of social capital, and Norris’ call for theatre to be used throughout the research process. I have also introduced the metaphor of a forest as a community. Trees are connected and support each other within a forest. I have identified a/r/tography as my main methodology and described research-based theatre and verbatim theatre as the main methods of my work. Finally, this chapter includes an introduction to the discussion of how space and place are socially constructed, and how community can be seen as a process of communizing.

Chapter Two includes a literature review of scholarship connected to my research. I begin with a discussion of community and writing from critical authors who believe neo-liberal forces have damaged the sense of community and democracy in Western society. I argue this damage is a dangerous trend. The chapter continues with a review of the concept of social capital, including an academic history of the term, and a range of definitions and critiques of the concept. The third section of the literature review includes a discussion of space, place and race, and how these three areas relate to each other. The chapter ends with a discussion of socially engaged theatre, including examples of how different artists create place through their work.

Chapter Three includes explanation of my research context in the Pleasant Hill community, and the sharing of my own values, standpoint, and reflexivity. I then describe my chosen methodologies: exploratory case studies and a/r/tography, discussing how both of these qualitative methodologies serve my research creation project. I briefly write about my epistemological view, and how I believe knowledge is created and often co-created through experiences in given contexts. As my main methodology, I share why I chose a/r/tography to create a place for my own understanding, using research-based theatre as my main method.

Chapter Four outlines the findings of my exploratory case studies, sharing and discussing the data from interviews with artists from Big hART and Forklift Danceworks. The chapter begins by introducing the work of Big hART, including the artists I interviewed and a few of the programs they work on (*The New Roebourne Project*, *Neo Learning and Project O*), and the explanation of their guiding concept of the “domains of change.” I then divide the interview findings into five main categories: community, process/methods, partners, outcomes, and challenges. The second half of the chapter begins with an introduction of the work of Forklift Danceworks, including their artists and a few of their programs (*The Trees of Govalle* and *My Park My Pool My City*). I then divide the Forklift interview findings into the same categories and summarize the resonant findings from both exploratory case studies.

Chapter Five is a three stranded braid. The first strand is the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*, which is the artistic output of the research creation project created with the Pleasant Hill Community. The first half of the play is included. The second strand is my personal reflections on the research journey, beginning with the origins of the research creation project and ending with the debrief after the first community sharing of the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*. The third strand composed on analysis of and findings from the interview data, including an introduction to the research and the data in response to the questions “Pleasant Hill is...?”, “Community is...?”, “My community is...?”, and, “What is one thing you want people to know about Pleasant Hill?” Along the way I offer connections to my theoretical framework, my central argument, and the learning from the case studies.

Chapter Six is a continuation of the braid from Chapter Five. Scenes from the second half of *Pleasant Hill Talks* are included. The reflections on my journey continue with the work done in response to the initial community sharing, including the integration of Pleasant Hill Youth rappers for the *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0* sharing. These reflections continue with writing about children and youth, community, coding, and playwrights’ coding. The research strand of the braid in this chapter begins with the answers to the question “Art is...?” and continues with analysis of the answers to the questions “How could a theatre company work with the Pleasant

Hill Community?”, “What are the biggest challenges facing your community?”, and “What are the Blue-Sky ideas you have for your community?” Chapter Six ends with a conclusion summarizing the research findings.

Chapter Seven offers some conclusions and recommendations stemming from this research. It begins with a recap of the research problem, revisiting the idea that neo-liberal forces work against the creation of democracy and community. I also revisit the research questions and track how they evolved from the very broad *How can theatre strengthen a city?* to the more focused *How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?* The chapter continues with a review of my central argument: that verbatim theatre creates a place for a systematic humanizing to occur. I then briefly summarize the objectives and findings of the work before moving to some recommendations and opportunities for future research. I recommend verbatim theatre can and should be used as a community development process, that there should be equitable support for the Pleasant Hill community (and all similar communities) and that playwrights’ coding continue to be used in academic contexts. Finally, in looking at opportunities for future research, I advocate for a continued rethinking of the concept of social capital, as well as continued learning from Indigenous Knowledge and science. I then recommend the development of a rap opera project in the Pleasant Hill Community and conclude with a call for publicly funded theatres to be more connected to the communities they serve.

Chapter Two: Humanizing Places: A New View of Social Capital

2.1. Deconstructing “Community”

How can we create conditions so people in a city see each other as connected and related humans with a common purpose? Why is community even important? Strong community bonds lead to safer, healthier, and more inclusive cities. However, before we can expect individuals to bond together and construct communities, we need to find a way for all people to move towards humanization. Journalist and documentary-maker Sebastien Junger describes a moment of humanization after an earthquake in Avezzano, Italy, in the early 20th century when approximately 95% of the population was killed:

People had to rely on each other, so everyone—upper-class people, lower-class people, peasants, and nobility—sort of crouched around the same campfires. One of the survivors said, “The earthquake gave us what the law promises but does not, in fact, deliver, which is the equality of all men.” (Cited in Ferris, 2017, p. 421)

Locally, we have seen an example of instant empathy creating a kind of community after the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy. Hockey sticks were placed outside doorways as a kind of human unifier, and “Humboldt Strong” logos and flags adorned many shop windows and t-shirts. This empathy led to over fifteen million dollars being raised to support the grieving families (Mattern, 2018). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we were challenged to see each other as “in this together” by wearing masks and practicing social distancing. Certainly COVID-19 has given us pause to think about the value of connectedness. As we emerge from the pandemic, research about connections in our communities has even more resonance. Can this type of connectedness through humanization between people be strengthened without the catalyst of tragedy or disease? How might this kind of support be generated for all worthy causes, not just certain ones? What are the factors, such as race/racism that influence our reactions? If our society wants to move toward a safer, healthier, and more democratic future—and away from the dangers of neoliberalism that are eroding our democracy, I believe we must work towards greater connectedness. How might a move towards a better future happen?

This dissertation proposes artists can (and should) play a role in communicating and supporting ideas about democracy and community. In our current moment, democracy seems to be at risk and the bonds in many communities appear to be weak. My work investigates how the theatre can be cultivated as a place to rehearse new ways of being. In our modern societies, other than in faith-based organizations³ there are limited opportunities for people to gather in a way where their common humanity is encouraged. This research examines how theatre artists might work as public entrepreneurs by creating places for/of humanization. This project is an attempt to restore and enable successful democracy, against the strong tide of our neoliberal culture currently threatening human connection. At the root of this research is the belief in the nêhiyaw worldview of wâhkôhtowin—or interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all beings. I believe interconnectedness/interrelatedness is fundamentally good. If we do not strengthen the bonds in

³ As alluded to in the introduction, many faith-based institutions are problematic due to their histories of abuse.

our communities, we create social, cultural, environmental, and cultural risks that will be costly and dangerous for our cities and the people who live in them. We are already seeing examples of this with the climate breakdown and the dehumanization of houseless people.

One of the core concepts guiding this research is the ideal of humanization. Before trying to connect people, we must begin the work of humanization. I use Freire's view that humanization is a *process* where individuals increasingly become more fully human. Freire believed one could never become fully human, but that we can all become more human through critically conscious dialogue with each other (Freire, 2000; Roberts). He saw humanization as a struggle against dehumanization—which happens because of unjust order. Freire believed the process of humanization has the potential to liberate both the oppressors and the oppressed (Freire, 2000). For the purposes of this research, I build upon Freire's work and define humanization as a *process* where people see themselves and others as becoming more human through dialogue.

This literature review will outline key areas relevant to my research, providing a conceptual framework and point of departure for the dissertation's empirical work. It begins with a discussion of some of the root causes of our current circumstances and a look at what Indigenous knowledges might contribute. The chapter continues by exploring three main areas: social capital, the creation of place, and socially engaged theatre.

2.1.1. How did we get here?

Before looking at potential ways to humanize people within a community, it is useful to briefly examine how we came to be in a society that values individuality and consumerism over seeing each other as connected and related. The roots of this dissonance are in the growth of capitalism. In arguing for an engaged and educated population, Giroux (2020) traces the steps Western society has taken to become a consumer-driven machine. He argues in the United States during 18th and 19th centuries, progress was linked to “moral self-improvement and self-discipline in the interest of building a better society” but that “progress in the 20th century was stripped of its concern with ameliorating the human condition and became applicable only to the realm of material and technical growth” (p. 24). Similarly, Gramsci (2018) believed the rise of modern technology allowed societal control to be achieved through social means as opposed to physical force, through a process he described as *hegemony* (Gramsci, 2018; Giroux, 2020). In other words, instead of using physical force, a society could be taught and controlled ideologically by a dominant culture. Giroux (2020) argues that neoliberal pedagogy has pervaded our daily lives and wider culture, destroying our social state.⁴

This influence is captured in Giroux's (2020) discussion of corporate time's encroachment on public time. He argues corporate time has invaded the public sphere. Although Giroux's work largely focuses on the corporatization of higher education, his arguments are relevant in other contexts. Popular culture, after all, is a “teaching machine” (p. 6) and so critical thinking must extend beyond the classroom (p. 2). The growth mentality of the 20th century has replaced citizen rights with consumer values (p. 69). We have become “good tourists” instead of “good citizens,”

⁴ Even prior to neoliberalism, the social state was undermined by history of colonialism and racial capital. As Razak (2002) explains, the story of racialized place with roots goes back hundreds of years to the legal doctrine of *terra nullius*—or so called “empty lands.” So in addition to capitalism, racism is also a major factor in our situation.

being urged to constantly consume and keep moving (p. 132) instead of taking the time to be engaged in relationships with the people and places around us. This commodification of public life and public space creates a “consumer place-lessness,” and a “geography of nowhere” (p.137), where corporate brands are more present and accessible than critical ideas.

This replacement of citizenship with consumerism is a form of ideological hegemony in the way Gramsci describes. Ignorance is performed as the act of ignoring (Giroux, 2020, pp. 94–95). Privilege can easily stifle discourse if those in power are keen to remain innocent from their role in the promotion of inequity (McIntyre, 2000). In short, people are being taught to ignore critical thought. This has disconnected people from what is happening in society where senses and emotions have been blunted or erased (Sperling, 2018). This dissertation proposes that a necessary first step toward building community is to nurture the relationships between people living in the same place. These relationships begin with people seeing each other as fellow humans. Sadly, some people’s seeing or not seeing has more or less influence, power, and status. Razak (2002) offers the ironic Canadian example of white settlers from Europe and their anti-immigration sentiments towards new immigrants. It is my hope that theatre has the potential to change these attitudes, if even momentarily, through humanizing the “other.”

When our feelings of connection to others have been blunted or erased, what do we get? A society where institutions designed to prevent fascism are dysfunctional, resulting in prominent signs such as a tyrannical tweeting American president (Hedges, 2019). As Hedges (2019) makes clear, Donald Trump is not the problem; he is the symptom of a larger failure, the “grotesque product of our failed democracy,” that has been in the works for some time. To combat this dangerous shift, we need educated and engaged citizens to create a successful democracy. In writing about playwright and former Czech leader Vaclav Havel, Paul Berman (1997) explains Havel’s belief that democracy must be built on the small scale, in ways which individuals can participate in. According to Berman (1997),

Democracy requires a certain kind of citizen... citizens who feel responsible for something more than their own well-feathered little corner; citizens who want to participate in society’s affairs, who insist on it; citizens with backbones; citizens who hold their ideas about democracy at the deepest level. (p. 37)

This dissertation begins to explore how engaged citizens can be cultivated. This work happens in place. By humanizing people in a community, we can begin to move towards having responsibility for each other. To do this, we must intentionally push back against dominant paradigms to create places for connections between each other to occur. Instead of the placelessness of consumer culture, we need to learn how to have placefulness (Odell, 2020). Education and politics are inherently linked (Giroux, 2020, p. 71). Giroux calls for culture to be a site of struggle and sphere of education (p. 55) and for the creation of more equitable public spheres (p. 68). He cites Gramsci’s idea of “new and oppositional culture” and calls these places “alternative public spheres” (p. 71) or “counter public spheres,” giving examples of new technologies or new mediums being used as platforms (p. 73). According to Giroux, these alternative public spheres can be anywhere. What’s important is that they create places for democratic struggle. The creation of these places requires a new kind of engagement from public intellectuals who, as Gramsci saw it, need to connect theory and practice with “moral

compassion” and “practical politics” to be more engaged “democratic philosophers” (Giroux 2020, p. 72; Gramsci, 2018, p. 350). This resonates with Said’s (2000) call for committed scholars to lift complex ideas into public spaces (p. 8).

One of the main keys to the creation of these places is what Giroux (2020) calls “educated hope” (p. 140). He argues that education is crucial to citizenship. Citizens must be educated in every aspect of leadership and politics so they can actively exercise their rights by participating in democracy (p. 140). Giroux’s thinking on critical pedagogy is rooted in Paulo Freire’s work. Freire argues for the importance of consciousness raising through dialogue and co-learning between the educator and the educated (Freire, 1983; 2018). Kincheloe (2008) has also been inspired by Freire’s work, notably the idea of “radical love”: a way of involving risky openness to new ideas with loving empathy. Kincheloe argues critical pedagogy must always have radical love as its foundation. With this in mind, we can see educated hope has the potential to create an “oppositional utopianism” where we can imagine a better future and then act upon it (Giroux, 2020, p. 141). To imagine these futures, Giroux calls again for the creation of “new sites of public pedagogy,” where people can learn critical thought (p. 155). According to Freire (1983), an educator is both a politician and an artist (p. 28). It is a small step then to see artists as public political educators. This research explores how the theatre arts create new sites of public pedagogy, where better futures can be imagined.

***2.1.2. What Do Indigenous Knowledges Teach Us?*⁵**

Indigenous scholars have written extensively about the impacts of colonialism on their communities (McGregor et al., 2018; L. T. Smith, 2012). L. T. Smith discusses how to imagine and create public places through a process of decolonization. She provides five conditions to frame the struggle for decolonization: critical consciousness, re-imagining the world, intersections, movement/disturbance, and the concept of structure (p. 201). All these conditions are relevant to this research, but the condition of intersections is particularly resonant. L. T. Smith describes intersections as the places that are created when intersecting ideas or issues meet. The arts allow for critical engagement with space and place in more Indigenous centred ways (Recollet, 2011). Within Indigenous arts practice, creativity is seen as essential for human beings to develop themselves as well as a necessary tool to work towards decolonization (Knight, 2013). This research will investigate how Indigenous knowledge can continue to inform thinking about, and creation of, space and place.

The places L.T. Smith describes can be literal, theoretical, or imaginative. They can also be seen as locations for struggle. In contrast to Freire’s (2018) view that consciousness-raising is always the first step of literacy, G. Smith (2004) argues that participation can and often does come before raised consciousness. Struggle, as an activity within the space created by intersections, is then a way for people to come together to connect and share a consciousness (L. T. Smith, 2012). In an Indigenist community-oriented way, this imagined space could be seen as a circle (Graveline, 1998). Instead of the value of community being supplanted by the progress of the individual, the strength of individuals connecting creates the space of community. Or, as Ermine

⁵ Of course there are countless ways one could draw on Indigenous Knowledges from Indigenous Nations around the world. My personal learning journey has been based on this land and inspired by the nêhiyaw worldview of wâhkôhtowin, as taught to me by elder Maria Campbell.

and colleagues (2004) have described, we could see the circle as an ethical space created by the coming together of diverse perspectives.

L. T. Smith (2012) describes Kaupapa Māori research as a way to retrieve space for dialogue and practices rooted in traditional ways of knowing (p. 185). She references G. Smith's (2004) argument that Kaupapa Māori research is theoretically positioned on the local level (L. T. Smith, 2012). She explains that the traditional Māori concept of *whanau* (roughly, *extended family*) is a key aspect of Kaupapa Māori research. Instead of today's focus on individuals, *whanau* was the "core social unit" in pre-colonial times (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 189). In traditional Māori thinking, *whanau* was seen as a place of socialization, based on kinship ties, where teaching took place (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). I interpret *whanau* as a community of relations, where people are humanized by seeing each other as related. Although L.T. Smith is describing Kaupapa Māori as a research methodology, it has the potential to inform the discussion of the creation of decolonized spaces. Specifically, it relates to my thinking about how to create decolonized space around theatres and theatre productions. Theatre companies often have missions, mandates, visions, and values—but I have never heard a theatre company discuss their *methodology*. I feel this is a missed and necessary opportunity for theatres to articulate how they are doing their work. The Kaupapa Māori worldview offers some hints at how theatre companies might create a localized, imaginative, theoretical space to more meaningfully connect to their communities. Indeed, L.T. Smith offers clear examples of strategies within the space of Kaupapa Māori such as "showing one's face" to build good relationships, building "networks" of community ambassadors, and strengthening community capacity overall. The Kaupapa Māori methodology could be useful inspiration for contemporary Western theatre companies to expand their practices in Indigenist ways, by guiding them towards more genuine relationships with their communities.⁶

2.2. Social Capital

Putnam (2000) argues that the "core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value", but that *social capital* itself seems to have been independently invented on six different occasions between 1916 and 1980 (p. 19). Chronologically, its first use on record is in 1916 by L. J. Hanifan, the state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia. Hanifan explained *social capital* as goodwill and social intercourse (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Because my work focuses on the context of the city, the urbanist Jane Jacobs' use of the term is most useful. Jacobs (2011) argues that the sum of casual public contact between people in a city creates a "web of public respect and trust" (p. 56), which can create networks between people in their neighbourhoods. These neighbourhood networks are a city's social capital (Jacobs, 2011, p. 138).

The networks of a community have multiple attributes. Putnam clarifies *networks* as not simply "contacts" but rather mutual obligations and engagements that "foster sturdy norms of reciprocity" (p. 20). In their discussion of the components of social capital, Rogers and Jarema (2015) further this work, explaining that three common components of social capital have emerged: social networks, trust, and social norms (p. 16). Nanetti and Holguin (2016) argue that

⁶ "Modern" theatre companies must currently contend with capitalist systems such as sponsors and tickets. Pre-colonial Indigenous artists would not have had these constraints. There is an opportunity here to look at how we might reform modern theatre to become driven by a different set of bottom lines.

trust is the most important component of social capital (p. 31). They explain the correlation between trust, risk taking, and cooperation, arguing that social capital “provides and nurtures a type of social organization that is rich in diffused trust and, in turn, enables the collective action necessary for the attainment of public goods and the rooting of democratic practices” (p. 30). Similarly, Cunningham (2010) writes that “while urban citizenship can to an extent be preconditioned by structural influences, there still must be a ‘cultural glue’ binding people across individual differences and committing them to behaviour consonant with the virtues of concern, toleration and, trusteeship” (p. 40). To benefit a community, the process of creating social capital must be catalyzed. This research investigates how theatre experiences might be a catalyst towards creating a ‘cultural glue’ with the potential to bind people together.

2.2.1. Bridging and Bonding

There are two types of social capital: bridging and bonding. *Bonding* relates to “ties which build greater community cohesion”, and *bridging* includes ties that “bridge” organizations and communities (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 20). Initially, my research was primarily focused on how the theatre arts can create artistic opportunities where participants feel more connected to each other in a “bonding” way. A secondary goal was to investigate ways for citizens to feel more connected to theatre organizations and spaces. However, Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bridging and bonding differently. He characterizes *bonding social capital* as “exclusive” links between like-minded people in existing social groups, such as religious groups or ethnic fraternal organizations. He describes *bridging social capital* as “inclusive” or “outward looking networks” that “look to encompass people across diverse social cleavages,” such as the civil rights movement (p. 22). More succinctly, Putnam defines *bonding social capital* as “sociological superglue” and *bridging social capital* as “sociological WD-40” (p. 23). Both glue and lubricant are relevant to this research and will be kept in mind (as Putnam advises) as not interchangeable categories, but also not totally distinct categories.

2.2.2. Critiques of Social Capital

There are several challenges related to the concept of social capital. Even as a proponent of the theory, Putnam (2000) is not ignorant to its less than positive effects. He cites examples of social capital used for negative results, such as terrorism, urban gangs, and the sentiment of “not in my backyard” (Putnam, 2000, pp. 21–22). Beyond these negative uses, there are also critiques of social capital’s theoretical and practical use. Smith (2009) reviews some of the critiques of social capital. He provides a synopsis of social capital theory and research, and explores the significance of the concept for informal education. Writing about the diverse origins and uses of the concept, Smith highlights Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam as key theorists. Bourdieu (1983) explains social capital as a source of perpetual power and wealth for privileged people. Coleman (1988) expanded the benefits of social capital to all people, and Putnam correlated what he saw as a decline in social capital with a large empirical study of declining participation in a wide range of activities in the United States.

Fine (2007) provides a scathing reprimand of social capital, claiming that the concept has had a meteoric rise to become a problematic “buzzword” (p. 567). He outlines twelve problematic features of the concept, ranging from his belief that it is an oxymoron to the way it excludes race,

class, and gender (pp. 567–569). For the purposes of this research, Fine’s first two problematic features are most relevant. He argues that social capital can be anything to anyone, claiming that the amorphous quality of social capital weakens the lineage of concepts it has attached itself to, such as network, trust, and linkages (p. 567). These critiques connect to the discussion of how to measure social capital. Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept (Nanetti & Holguin, 2016, p. 31); this research aims to investigate another way to conceptualize social capital.

2.2.3. *Is social capital a noun or a verb?*

It is worthwhile to contemplate social capital as a process (a verb) rather than a thing (a noun). Carolan and Hale’s (2016) research on participation in urban agricultural projects explores this different view of social capital. They argue that it is useful to use an analogy of “above/below ground” (pp. 531–535), which is a direct parallel to the metaphor of a forest of trees. This perspective encourages critical thinking about the systematic origins of what makes a good community. Carolan and Hale advocate for more focus on the process of community-building, critiquing Putnam’s social capital view of generalized reciprocity and trustworthiness, and calling for new ways to look at the numerous relations and connections within a community. This research embraces the idea of social capital as a verb, exploring how the process is created.

This perspective is resonant with Studdert’s (2016) discussion of the concept of community. This connection is not meant to imply social capital and community are the same thing. However, there is enough resonance between the concepts of community and social capital that the analyses of one are relevant to the discussion of the other. Studdert objects to the way ‘community’ has been characterized as an object and proposes understanding it as a verb: “communing: being-ness produced as an outcome of ongoing action in common” (p. 623). He describes the idea of ‘community’ as a verb as “sociality,” roughly defined as “any and every conversation, every inter-action between people and objects, people and buildings, people and state apparatuses” (p. 624). With this perspective, Studdert argues that we need the plurality of the common world to create being-ness, or in other words, individuals are only individuals because of their actions in public in relation to the actions of other individuals (p. 624). As a result, we can see action between people in shared spaces as creating “linkages, relationships, commonality... [and also] public space, space in common” (p. 627). Simply put, the actions between people require a shared space, but the actions between people also *create* public space.

The act of communing can be seen as social capital in action, or social capital as a verb. Now that we have explored what social capital is, it is useful to point out what it is used for. Why is social capital, or the process of communing, important? Communing processes benefit cities. Neighbourhoods where communing processes are active are better able to deal with risks or problems (Solnit, 2010).

2.3. The Creation of Space

Before exploring how social networks create space, it is helpful to take a step back and review theory about how social spaces and places are created. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) unites different spatial fields as a single theory, aiming to “discover or construct a

theoretical unity” between physical, mental, and social fields. He argues that social space is a “set of relations between things” (p. 83). In short, social space is produced by the relations that exist within it. McNally (2024) argues that human geography can be a useful tool for evaluation of participatory art. He believes the aesthetic of participatory art is the intensity of relations, offering the measure of “relational intensity” (p. 12). He calls for geographers to continue to unpack the complex social relations of participatory art processes. McNally discusses three kinds of spaces: interstitial space, intervening space, and communing space. He explains communing space must both serve the community and create community.

This way of seeing space resonates with Studdert’s (2016) view of sociality as outlined above. Combining these two perspectives illustrates community as set of relations that occurs within a space that *simultaneously produces space*. It is then possible to make a short jump back to social capital, proposing that perhaps a new way of thinking about social capital is by thinking about the space created by relations between people.

To further this discussion, it is important to differentiate the concepts of “space” and “place.” Lefevre (1991) discusses the difference between abstract or absolute space and lived or meaningful spaces—the latter of which can be seen as a social space. Creswell (2004) expands on this thinking by explaining that the ideas of social space and place are quite similar. He writes that “at a basic level, place is space invested with meaning in the context of power” (p. 12). In other words, space is everywhere, but it does not become a place until we infuse or define it with meaning. Along these lines, Tuan (1977) conceptualized space as movement and place as pauses or stops. According to Tuan “each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (p. 6). With this distinction, the space theatre productions can create—one that is intentionally designed with meaning—is actually a *place*. This research aims to explore how tools from the theatre can be used to effectively transform space into place.

Place, as a concept, has some defining features. Agnew (1987) writes that of place has three fundamental aspects: location, locale, and sense of place. Creswell (2004) unpacks these aspects, explaining *location* as the “fixed objective co-ordinates on the Earth’s surface,” *locale* as “the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives”, and *sense of place* as “the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place” (p. 7). While traditional brick and mortar theatre buildings certainly do have fixed coordinates, I am more interested in the way place can be created without location. Langer (1953) gives the examples of a ship sailing across the ocean or a nomadic camp. Both are places, but their fixed location is constantly changing (p. 95). It is reasonable then to conclude, as Creswell (2004) has, that place does not need to have a fixed location (p. 95). This research focuses on the latter of Agnew’s aspects: locale and sense of place. It experiments with using theatre tools to create and nurture locale and sense of place.

Tuan (1974) developed the term *topophilia* to describe the bond between people and place. This bond can be unpacked through discussion of the ideas of *locale* and *sense of place*. To do so, it is helpful to look at Relph’s (1976) characteristics of place. Creswell (2004) distills these characteristics into four main points: visibility (places must have landscapes we can see), sense of community (places engender some sort of community), sense of time (places take time to establish attachment), and the value of rootedness (in a place people feel connected to that place). Do all these characteristics apply to a place with no fixed location? Sense of community,

time to establish a connection, and rootedness all seem in line with the ideas of locale and sense of place. The outlier in this list is visibility. Certainly, a ship moving across the ocean will always have a visible landscape. But what about the place potentially created by a theatre production? This research asks if a place must always have a visual landscape. I believe visibility is not a requirement for place, and that place can be qualified and understood through an emphasis on community and networks of social relations instead of visibility.

Place is about involvement, value, and belonging (Cresswell, 2004, p. 20). While spaces can be arbitrary, places cannot. They must have meaning. It is helpful to think of place as a living organism (Battiste et al, 2005). Places are intentionally created over a period of time, but it seems there is no standard amount of time required for a space to become a place. Looking at the relationship between space and time, and even at the concepts of space and time, is helpful in re-imagining the way social capital works in relation to space. L. T. Smith (2012) writes that Indigenous peoples have a different conception of space than Western peoples. She explains that in the Māori language the word for space and time is the same, and other Indigenous languages have no words for either concept but instead have more specific terms for parts of these ideas (p. 52). She also points to two main conceptions of time and space that are worth deconstructing: whether they exist relationally or absolutely, and the measurement of space (p. 52). Lefebvre (1991) believes the concept of space has been dominated by mathematics, which has framed its meaning. Western ideas about progress have oriented this dominant thinking about time and space, divorcing the two concepts and seeing space as “static” and something to be compartmentalised, defined, and measured (L. T. Smith, 2012, pp. 53–57). L. T. Smith offers the example of the colonial view of land as something to be tamed and controlled. If space is static and commodified, then distance separates the individual from the environment and the community (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 58). In other words, capitalism and individualism work together to disconnect people from the land and from each other. This dissertation looks to Indigenous knowledges for insight into the concepts of space and time, including what they mean and how they are measured.

In re-thinking the concepts of space and time, this research focuses on how to create connections between place and people, and between people in place. One aspect seems clear: “places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 37). In short, a place is a *process*. Not only is place an outcome of social processes, but it is a process of the “transformation of relations” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 29). Seeing place as a process, we can now begin to connect the concepts of place and social capital and begin to see the potential of the theatre arts to strengthen both. Place is an essential part of our experience as human beings. Malpas (2018) argues that place is the setting for us to live our experiences and that we do not even become human beings unless we are in place. It is worthwhile to look at place not as something we experience, but “as a structure *within which* experience (as well as action, thought and judgement) is possible” (Malpas, 2018, p. 75, emphasis in original). This suggests that social capital relations cannot happen without place.

If we see place as a process, we can look at it as a specific moment in a network of relations (Massey, 1997). In other words, a place is a network. As we have discussed above, social capital can also be seen as networks. This research asks whether or not these are the same networks? If so, can the networks of relations that make places be seen as social capital itself? These

questions illuminate gaps in the literature about social capital. They create an exciting opportunity for this research to investigate new ways of understanding social capital as place-based relations.

Public places themselves are “important talismans of a creative process of a changing urban public culture” (Goheen, 1998, p. 494). Public culture is socially constructed within democratic public places, creating an open-ended opportunity for how cities can be defined (Zukin, 1995) and even be re-endowed with social meaning that is currently lacking (Sack 1986). Public culture and public places can then be seen as creative processes that interplay with each other (Goheen, 1998; Briggs, 1968). This interplay happens through people’s connections with each other in a place. Relatedly, Indigenous value systems show belonging as a key principle in partnership cultures and that belonging is achieved through relationship. In the Indigenous view, relationality is a behavioural process, not a genetic one (Brokenleg, 1998). Good relations have the potential to create belonging. Our connections with people and place are braided together in place. This work may help to critically change how we think about the creation, maintenance, and disruption of our everyday lived places (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). To disrupt traditional views of the creation of place, we must critically engage with the factors shaping the process.

2.4. Race, Place, and Power

As explained in the introduction, this research began with the intent to focus strictly on social capital. However, it has become clear that before people can be connected, they must first see each other as humans. Anderson (2000) has written about human self-definition, unpacking the concept of animality as a constructed idea. This line of thought offers some lessons about the humanization process. Most importantly, that any discussion of the creation of place must include critical analysis of power. The most prominent demonstration of power within contemporary western cities is race. In the process of place-making, space is racialized, and race is spatialized (Sriskandarajah, 2019). It is not enough to celebrate diversity. The “salad bar approach” to “diversity without difference”, is problematic in the way it positions multiculturalism as a buffet where one can try a little bit of anything, disregarding the racial and economic realities that prevent some people from not even being allowed into the proverbial restaurant (Levin & Solga 2009, p. 42). Building on Bourdieu’s (1983) concept of habitus, Sriskandarajah cites the work of Bourgois and Schonberg (2007) who offer the term “ethnized habitus” to capture the power dynamic that occurs when large-scale power relations construct racially influenced ways of being. This is reflected and represented by the reputations associated with the marginalized places of cities, and by the idea that the identities of the people are influenced by the racialized spaces they live in (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2007). In Canadian cities, this race-based power imbalance has created a dangerously flawed ‘norm’ due to a troubling history of Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations, leaving us stuck in a status quo of dominant/subordinate entanglement of western monoculture (Ermine, 2007). In other words, the treatment of Indigenous people in Canadian cities is a glaring example of power relations and how they affect belonging.

The spaces of our contemporary western cities become places through the legal enforcement of unequal social relations, allowing for the preservation of a white settler society (Razack, 2002).

Racialized thinking is enabled by mythologies, such as the spatialized stories of the empty land (*terra nullius*) or of immigrants and refugees as late arrivals (Razack, 2002). Razack (2002) calls for the un-mapping and unpacking of these stories and the social practices they support to show that spaces are loaded with meaning and are far from innocent. Of Lefevre's (1991) three kinds of space (perceived, conceived and lived), Razack is most interested in lived space, or how the users of space interpret its practices and representations in everyday life. She uses Soja's (1996) work to describe sociality as something "stubbornly simultaneous" (p. 6), as in systems of racial hierarchies and oppression present in deeply integrated ways. Razack presents examples such as the Starlight Tours, carding, or the padlocking of a public park to show how the law is used to construct racialized boundaries within the supposedly public spaces of a city. Drawing on Foucault's work on the body and its degenerate or respectful qualities, she claims that racialization is also driven by moral as well as legal terms. Razack sees the moral and legal processes of racialization as intertwined with spatialization. In other words, racial difference creates spatial difference. This correlation creates an opportunity. *How might places be created that are potentially transformative for race relations?* This research argues theatre can create one of these transformative spaces.

2.4.1. Belonging: Examples from the Inner City

Belonging is a worldview or organising principle in many Indigenous cultures. In contrast to western dominator values based on individualism, partnership cultures see the concept of belonging as a way to illustrate interrelatedness and interdependence (Brokenleg, 1998). Geographically, belonging can be portrayed as inclusions or exclusions (Sriskandarajah, 2019). Identity-making can be inclusive or exclusive and occurs daily, both nationally and locally. Razack's work focuses largely on race. However, class and socio-economic status also factor into the discussion of power relations. The term "elective belonging" is used to capture the expression of identity based on where people live, but "elective fixing" is better in describing the (often limited) amount of control people have to stay put or move because of class factors (Paton, 2013). To illustrate race- and class-based power relations within cities it is useful to look at the examples of the dehumanization of Indigenous people and the ghettoization of the poor.

2.4.2. Dehumanization of Indigenous People

To responsibly engage with research on this land, it is crucial to reflect on the violence experienced by Indigenous peoples because of colonialism. As a step towards humanization, we must first investigate our tendency to dehumanize (Anderson, 2000). Razack (2015) writes about the dehumanization of Indigenous people at the hands of a settler society. Sadly, in Saskatoon we do not have to reach far back into our history at all to see what Razack means. She discusses the Starlight Tours as a disturbing example of Indigenous bodies being placeless in the racial and spatial economy of our city. She calls this an example of *systemized dehumanization*—a form of deadly violence that secures the settler as the original citizen of the land and city.

Razack explains this violence is directly linked to land use, arguing that settler control of land was the beginning of the systematic dehumanization process. She explains there is no Indigenous control in city spaces, and if anything, the dehumanizing process is a way to control space, by seeing and treating Indigenous bodies as remnants. Tuan (1977) uses the human body as a unit to

measure direction, location, and distance within place. It is useful to pause on the idea the of human body's experience as a tool to measure place. Razack's argument is that now all human bodies are not present or allowed in a city. This research builds on Razack's work in the context of Saskatoon, using the research creation project as a tool to make a diversity of bodies present, as a first step. Once a diversity of bodies is present, and humanized, hopefully the bonds between diverse people in a community can be strengthened through subsequent advocacy work.

Dehumanization involves both race and class. The notion of Indigenous bodies as remnants is disturbingly resonant with the view of homeless people as "a human form of litter" (Creswell, 2004, p. 113). By seeing houseless people as out of place instead of seeing homelessness itself as a product of larger social, political, and economic power relations, the people are dehumanized and the real issues are ignored. Razack (2016) presents the example of Paul Alphonse, a Secwepemc man and residential school survivor who lived on his reserve but spent time drinking in "public" places such as parks and the mall in the town of Williams Lake, BC. Alphonse was in police custody and then in hospital immediately before he died at age sixty-seven with a large boot print shaped bruise on his chest. Razack points out that the inquest into Alphonse's death focused largely on his alcoholism and neglected (even with ongoing pressure from his band and Alphonse's family) the question of Indigenous-police relations in the shape of the boot print bruise.

2.4.3. Ghettoization of the Poor

The power dynamics within a city tell a story. One such story is the Tower of David in Caracas. Souki (2016) describes Venezuela's capital as a performed city. He argues that in Caracas performance has become "a language, a way of being, a state of mind" because of the blurring of the lines between art and activism, protest and spectacle, and politics and fiction. The most relevant example in the discussion of power relations is the Tower of David. Originally built as a luxury office tower, the death and subsequent bankruptcy of its developer left the tower unfinished and vacant. It was then populated and inhabited by over 700 poor families (approximately 3000 people) and dubbed the largest vertical slum in the world. Even though the grassroots eco-system within the tower was celebrated for its diversity—and the government was unable to sell the building itself—the self-assigned tenants were eventually evicted and returned to their pre-tower ghettos. The occupation and eviction of the 700 families is a clear commentary on social power and oppression. These people were electively fixed, and they found a solution in the form of an unused empty building. This very real vacant space was transformed into a useful place by the will and needs of the people, only for their action to be reversed by the government. The Tower of David is a story of both the creation of place and of the systematic dehumanization of a large group of people.

2.4.4. Systematic Humanization

The examples above show how Indigenous people and poor people are dehumanized. Sadly, these are not "one off" examples. Our colonial capitalist society has created power dynamics that lead to systematic dehumanization. In both the story of Paul Alphonse drinking in a public park, and the Venezuelan self-appointed tenants of the tower, we see how it is possible to de-humanize people through their relationship to place. If dehumanization is possible through place, then

perhaps it is possible to also go the opposite direction and humanize people through a connection to place. This research looks to the tools of the theatre to systematically humanize people in place.

There are examples of place-based humanization. Darwin is a white settler city in Australia that now has a diverse population including Indigenous people and newcomers (Lobo, 2018). Lobo (2018) describes Darwin as having many public spaces but claims that there is not much diverse interaction in those spaces. She focuses on the Malak suburb of Darwin, a community she describes as culturally diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged. She describes this area as having a hidden everyday community and emergence of “fleeting friendships” that occur in mundane spaces (Lobo, 2018, p. 628). She emphasizes the importance of grassroots or vernacular creativity in achieving these connections. The community art space in Malak is an example of systematic humanization made possible by place. In the case of Malak, the community art space is housed in an unused section of an underground parking lot. It is perceived as a dangerous place, but Lobo (2018) describes it as the place where connections and diverse intermingling happen through art, resulting in happy people including monthly community dinners attended by three hundred people (p. 629). This is one hopeful example of an alternative public place seemingly off the grid of dominant power relations of the city. However, it does not mean that that power, race, and class can be ignored. In fact, they must be directly confronted.

Anti-colonial thinking is necessary to imagine a better world (Razack, 2016). This could be in the form of a “culture of dissent” where the cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledges also include political and critical dimensions (Settee, 2013). One example of this thinking is a different view of homelessness. Thistle’s (2016, 2017) investigation into Indigenous homelessness positions it as a cultural issue as opposed to a logistic one. He provides examples of Indigenous people who have experienced homelessness to illustrate an Indigenous view of homelessness, one much deeper than not having a structural home—one that means not being connected to Indigeneity. Thistle argues for Indigenous homelessness to be defined from an Indigenous perspective. To do this he first explains the Indigenous worldview of home—such as the *nêhiyaw* (Cree) *miyo wâhkôhtowin* “kinship relations” worldview of being connected to all things, including all people, plants, animals, land, ancestors, and decedents (Thistle, 2016). Thistle then positions Indigenous homelessness as not being in connection with all one’s relations. The *nêhiyaw* worldview of *wâhkôhtowin* is an anchor for my research. It contributes to the conceptual framing of my work by illuminating the view that all beings are not only connected, but also *related*. Sadly, our current contemporary society is prevented from seeing these relations by structures rooted in race and class.

The race and class structures of citizenship discussed in this section have been created through the process of cultural othering (Razack, 2008). The possibility of “otherness” is always present (McAuley, 2005). Razack (2008) believes the dominant white society needs outsiders to feel secure in its own belonging. If white dominance is to continue, difference must continue to be seen as inferior. In a small way, this research project aims to explore how can this story be changed. If deep structural inequalities are addressed, then “the other” can help shape experience and identify as a kind of ecological sense of community, where interdependence is paramount (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2012). Walls can be turned sideways to become bridges (Davis, 2022).

Diverse identities can be a source of empowerment instead of oppression (Wilson, 1996) and identity itself can be seen as a dialogical, relational, and ongoing process with the potential to create empathy (Winters et al., 2009). Critical recognition and awareness of the process of “othering” and “the other” can lead to respect and care for difference (Turner, 2012). For example, Thistle’s Indigenous views of home as relations could come to benefit all people by offering contemporary society a new (and yet very old) way to think about public space. This research argues that socially engaged theatre is a resonant and effective tool for humanizing people in place.

2.5. Socially Engaged Theatre

2.5.1 Theatre’s Connection to the “City”

At the end of *Bowling Alone*, social capital scholar Putnam (2000) dedicates a chapter to “calls to action” relating to six spheres: youth and schools; workplace; urban and metropolitan design; religion; arts and culture; and politics and government (p. 404). The sphere most resonant to this research is arts and culture. Putnam writes about art’s potential to overcome social differences, which helps us connect with people we may not naturally connect with. His call to action in this section is to “discover new ways to use the arts as a vehicle for convening diverse groups of fellow citizens” (Putnam, 2000, p. 411). Florida (2005) springboards off Putnam, arguing that traditional notions of social capital are no longer effective, and that people do not even desire the same kinds of social structures as they did in the past. As described in the introduction, my research answers this call to rethink social capital, using theatre as a tool in the place-based humanization process.

Several studies have connected the arts and social capital, ranging from analyses of museum and opera house outreach activities to hip-hop dance groups and theatre creation projects (Beaulac et al., 2010; Cassidy & Watts, 2005; Chinyowa, 2012; Guachalla, 2017; Kubiak & Skoldager-Nielsen, 2015; Rogaly, 2016). While museums differ from theatres in many ways, Kubiak and Skoldager-Nielsen (2015) point out that cultural institutions across the board are suffering from lower attendance rates, forcing arts groups to focus more on visitors’ experiences (p. 87). They believe that the notion of belonging to a group is essential to audience development and that participation with an arts institution can create pride in a city’s artistic and cultural assets, creating a feeling of shared ownership and a basis for social relations (Kubiak and Skoldager-Nielsen, 2015, p. 93). Guachalla (2017) explains that when new audiences are present at an event, it is likely there will be “strengthened networks and bonds among groups and individuals in society leading to social cohesion which in turn reflects the development of social capital” (p. 2).

Networks and bonds between individuals can also be intentionally cultivated. A commonality between the theatre and dance creation projects is the recognition that even though the work is project-based and culminating in some sort of output or sharing, the bulk of the value lies within the process. Building on Studdert’s work, Rogaly (2016) provides examples of “micro-sociality” throughout the arc of an arts-based research project ranging from connections made with

interview subjects, interactions between student researchers and community members, and introductions to local helpers on the day of the community sharing (pp. 671–673). For this research it is helpful to think of “micro-sociality” in more plain language as “relationships” that occur within the place created by the artistic experience.

Bourriaud’s (2002) work positions art as an important catalyst for relationships. According to Bourriaud (2002), the social exchange between people is the art and the real value is what happens after people engage in an artistic encounter. This type of thinking is a part of a “dialogical turn” in the arts where knowledge is co-created and difference and diversity between people is not an obstacle but a resource. This dialogical turn resonates with Bourdieu’s (1983) argument that no cultural product exists by itself. He describes art as a demonstration of relational thinking, not individual relations (although those exist) but structural relations in the form of forces and struggles that occur within the field of cultural production. Bourdieu (1983) argues art is a manifestation of the social history and the social conditions where it is produced. He also describes artists as cultural products, who (if they are aware of the “critical genealogy” of their work), can create critical definitions of the social world (pp. 44,180). In other words, because art/artists are a product of the entire field of cultural relations, they have the potential to either reinforce existing relations, or reflect upon and unpack relations from the inside out.

Bourdieu’s (1983) concepts of the social field and habitus are also helpful in connecting relationality to a spatial dimension. This thinking can be applied to the social dynamics within a city. To Bourdieu, social life is relationally constructed (Sriskandarajah, 2019). This resonates with Freire’s (2000) idea that humanization is a process achieved through dialogue. Sriskandarajah interprets Bourdieu’s notion of fields as positions that influence our actions, describing how fields are continually re-created, and that the field shapes our perspectives. Sriskandarajah positions the neighbourhood as a field that structures people’s habitus (Sriskandarajah, 2019).

Cities can be seen as ecosystems, and neighbourhoods within cities are also ecosystems (Jacobs, 2011). Within these smaller ecosystems are the places where theatre performances occur. These places are constantly re-created because of the public’s participation in the performance of the city itself. A city itself has changed from a space (52.1579° N, 106.6702° W) to a place (Saskatoon) because the actions of people have infused it with meaning. An example of this re-creation is the potential of street parades to catalyze a temporary community which in turn creates a place (Rogers, 2012). Performances have potential to create opportunities for encounter by re-constructing places in an imaginative way, but arts events can also be elite and exclusive. Rogers calls for more interdisciplinary exploration into the connection between the urban environment and the performing arts (Rogers, 2012). This dissertation also begins to answer Rogers’ call by using theatre to create place in the urban environment.

Theatres have the potential to be both spaces and places. In his broader analysis of theatre’s connection to social capital in early 1600s London, Bayer (2011) describes the popularity and function of large public amphitheatres (p. 6). In contrast to unaffordable elite indoor buildings, these large venues were geographical spaces that became accessible gathering places where audiences actively participated in relations with the performers and fellow audience members. According to Bayer, people do not even have to share the same goals and values to create social

capital relations; they just need to realize that connection will be mutually beneficial. Regardless of the reason people chose to attend the theatre, the place of the performance was created *for* and *by* people connecting.

This shared place created by theatre can also have shared purpose. Chinyowa (2012) compares Augusto Boal's forum theatre and the traditional Shona space called *dare* in Zimbabwe. Forum theatre is interactive and participatory and aims to create "a public space where people can express their ideas, feelings and concerns about problematic issues through theatrical" experiences (Chinyowa, 2012, p. 74). Chinyowa writes that the *dare* space allows people to gather in an open space under a large tree or semi-enclosure and that traditionally this open space

is where culture is produced, protected and celebrated...It is the nerve centre of the African communal philosophy of unhu or ubuntu (humanism). The essence of being human is closely associated with what happens at the dare. It is there where the community's values, beliefs and practices are shaped and imparted: court cases are held, stories are told, drums are beaten and songs and dances are performed. More important, however, most problems confronting the community are discussed and deliberated there, making the dare a forum for resolving conflicts and building peace. (p. 74)

This is a powerful illustration of socially created space as social capital. The area under a large tree in a village exists as a literal place. The meaning of the *dare* is created by the social action within the space. With this social action, the space under the tree becomes the *place* under the tree. The participatory artistic place created by a theatre project is like the place of the dare. It is intentionally created by the relationships that occur between the participants in the process. It is easy to draw a connection to the theatre: the building of a theatre is like the literal space under the tree, but the work of a theatre is what creates the kind of place it is.

The following five examples of contemporary socially engaged theatre illustrate the process of humanizing in place.

2.5.2. How Can Theatre Help Heal?

In her history of Indigenous Canadian theatre, playwright, director and dramaturge, Yvette Nolan (2015), describes the Indigenous worldview of medicine as being "about connection, about health" (p. 1) and as something that "makes community" (p. 3). Nolan argues that Indigenous theatre is medicine. In her book, *Medicine Shows*, Nolan (2015) traces contemporary Indigenous theatre in Canada from 1982 to 2015 and argues that in an Indigenous view, theatre is medicine. Nolan writes that Indigenous artists make medicine by "reconnecting through ceremony, through the act of remembering, through building community, and by negotiating solidarities across communities" (p. 3). She defines theatre as "a dialogue between artists and audiences" (p. 16) and provides examples of how theatre educates, heals, and empowers (p. 22). In orienting Indigenous theatre in the context of theatre in general, she builds on the work of Indigenous academic Hayden King; Nolan recalls a public panel discussion she and King took part in at the Theatre Centre in Toronto (personal communication, September 8, 2020). During this panel discussion, King shared his belief that Indigenous peoples have a different "moral compass" than non-Indigenous peoples, shown by three main differences: "First Nations' respect of community

over individual, their recognition of women as leaders, and their sense of humility, which is defined as an understanding of one's place in the world as neither above or below nature" (cited in Nolan, 2015, p.9). Nolan provides examples to illustrate how these moral values shape and guide Indigenous theatre practices and productions. This research explores how Indigenous values might shape the way theatre creates space.

Nolan (2015) writes that "from the beginning, the making of art created community" (p. 75). This community is created both on and off the stage. For example, Delaware poet and playwright, Daniel David Moses, observes that the protagonist in an Indigenous theatre piece is often a community, as opposed to an individual (cited in Nolan, 2015, p. 41). Non-Indigenous culture is populated with examples of individual protagonists, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to *Mad Men*'s Don Draper to the next Marvel superhero. Nolan supports Moses' idea with numerous examples of plays where the community tells the story, including Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, the collective works of the Turtle Gals, and Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters and Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (p. 41). Nolan also discusses the process of creating *Death of a Chief*, an Indigenous adaptation of *Julius Caesar*—a creation she facilitated in response to Indigenous actors' desire to develop their Shakespeare skills while she was artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts in 2004. Throughout this entire project, it was decided that the production would "model Indigenous values of negotiation, consensus building, and community" (p. 76).

The production of *Death of a Chief* provides an example of socially engaged theatre creating new space. Right at the start of the process, several of the main characters in the adaptation became women. This created space for women to take on roles that have been limited to men for centuries. This was only the beginning. Nolan describes a day in the rehearsal process where the entire company stopped working on their feet, feeling the need to sit down on the floor, and brainstormed answers to one of the Plebeians' questions from the play: "what will we look like in a different light?" The company spent an hour imagining the community that they would want the fictional Rome, Ontario, to be. They generated a list with items including "reclaim languages," "autonomous land base," and "water you don't have to boil" (Nolan, 2015, p. 81). According to Nolan, generating this list was an "act of medicine" for both the characters of the play and the artists who were creating it (p. 81). Theatre offers the opportunity to imagine a different future; it creates a space to dream but also to model those dreams. Or, as Nolan puts it, "if we are to heal our communities and ourselves, then we need to establish some kind of value system by which this community could be governed" (p. 82). The process of *Death of a Chief* provides an example of theatre creating a space governed by values. Nolan concludes that process of *Death of a Chief* was "the process of making community," writing that 27 artists and numerous scholars participated in the community while the show was presented at two major Canadian theatres—Native Earth Performing Arts and The National Arts Centre (p. 82).

Nolan (2015) provides numerous examples of contemporary Canadian Indigenous theatre offering an opportunity to explore the troubled history of Canada. The ramifications of colonization are very evident in the stories being told. For example, the immense impacts of the residential school system are so profound that it is "hardly surprising that Indigenous artists are working out its effects in their theatre" (Nolan, 2015, p. 13). Nolan then explores the difficulty Indigenous artists have had in recruiting non-Indigenous audiences for their shows. She

compares two different productions mounted in Toronto at the same time—African Canadian playwright Donna-Michelle St. Bernard’s *Gas Girls* and Mowhawk/Tuscarora theatre artist Falen Johnson’s *Salt Baby*. Nolan was producing *Salt Baby* at Native Earth Theatre, but according to Nolan, due to friendships of the artists involved (and the fact theatre artists are often broke), Native Earth shared all their resources with the *Gas Girls* production, including the same set, lighting designer, marketing expenses and printing (personal communication, September 8, 2020). At the time, Nolan was bewildered over the fact that the dark story of women in Africa trading sex for gas was selling so much better than a comedy about Indigenous identity in Canada. However, the chair of the board of Native Earth Performing Arts was not surprised at all, explaining to Nolan that because Africa was so far away, Canadian audiences could watch the story from a distance and not feel implicated: “Why would a person pay to go into a theater and be made to feel guilty?” (Nolan, 2015, p. 18). This has been referred to as “the dark cloud of Native theatre” (Nolan, 2015, p. 18): even though the opportunity to share is there, the idea of sharing such a challenging space can be repulsive. My own project proposes and investigates a way theatre can be used to create place where people feel supported to engage with art that challenges them in a way that makes them uncomfortable.

2.5.3. How Can Theatre be Used to Create Place?

Theatre artists can also use their tools to create literal spaces. In the spring and summer of 2013, theatre artist Will Weigler worked with an intercultural and intergenerational group of community members to create a labyrinth filled with devised theatre pieces. The group’s intention was to “create and perform an unconventional theatre production” about reconciliation, offering “a creative and stimulating way to create public dialogue” among Canadians (Weigler, 2015, p. 3). Explaining the genesis of the project, Weigler drew on Paulette Regan’s (2010) notion of “critical hope,” explaining that Canadians who benefit from colonization have the responsibility to take steps toward reconciliation (Weigler, 2015, p. 8). Weigler also cites Roger Simon’s (2005) work on “transactive memory.” According to Simon (2005), learning and reflecting on our collective history can potentially create a personal connection between our current, past, and future selves. In other words, if we can create the conditions for people to feel they are meaningfully engaged with the past and history, it may affect their behaviour. To do this, Weigler facilitated his project “using theatrical forms to add dimension and richness to the telling of stories” (2015, p. 14).

Like the *Death of a Chief* example above, the process of *From the Heart* was governed by values. Weigler and his group set out to communicate social change using the arts as a vehicle (Weigler, 2015, p. 83). Over several months, they worked together to generate stories about reconciliation. He then coached the group members in different staging strategies to transform the stories into short theatre pieces. The design team built a 14,000 square foot labyrinth made from salvaged materials and tree branches and lit by paper lanterns. During the run of the show, audience members in groups of eight entered the labyrinth on twenty-minute intervals to experience the eighty-minute journey (Weigler, 2015, p. 4). Weigler is careful to delineate the difference between the space of a maze and the space of a labyrinth. The purpose of a maze being to “trick you up and trick you into dead ends,” while a labyrinth “has a path, and once you choose to start on the path it will take you where you need to go” (p. 38).

The *From the Heart* team worked to create a series of spaces (as a part of one large space) specifically designed to act as a “kind of unspoken contract” between the performers and the audience members (Weigler, 2015, p. 49). For example, one of the pieces was a story about celebration of life. There was no “audience participation” where audience members were called upon to “do” anything, but the physical shape of the room—where and how the performers and audience members were seated—created the contract of a memorial. Even more explicitly, the “heart” of the labyrinth, where audience members arrived at the end of the journey, was designed to be warm and welcoming, with comfortable furniture, a person serving tea, and books about reconciliation. In this way, the *From the Heart* creation is both a literal space and an imagined space, specifically designed and built with the intention of *Cwe’lelep*, a Lil’wat word which means to “spin around like in a dust storm” (Weigler, 2015, p. 4). By sending people on a journey through unfamiliar and intentionally created spaces, the team aimed to give audience members the “experience of being in that place of dissonance and uncertainty that leads us to be alive with a heightened sense of awareness” (Weigler, 2015, p. 4).

In addition to the audience’s experience, and similarly to Nolan’s experience with *Death of a Chief*, *From the Heart* also created community among its creators and performers. Perhaps the clearest example of the project’s power was the number of people who decided to join the team after being audience members. Throughout the performance run, Weigler invited audience members to return and join the company as performers. Although new cast members were not involved in the creation of the stories, they still found value in participating, with one calling it a “life changing experience” (Weigler, 2015, p. 20). By the end of the performance run, the cast and crew had grown from 30 people to nearly 90. The appetite for participation in this space allowed the space itself to grow and expand. It is interesting to consider how other theatre productions or companies could invite such enriching participation. The unique style of this production allowed performers to step into roles quite easily. This is not always (or even often) possible or desirable in theatre productions. However, the spirit of this example is thought provoking. This research asks how what happens within a created place inspires participation that contributes to the growth/meaning of the place.

2.5.4 How Can Theatre be Used to Create Relationships?

There are numerous examples of theatre practice that builds community (Botelho, 2009; Gallagher and Freeman, 2016; Irwin, 2007; Leslie and Rantisi, 2012; Garson et al., 2023). It would also be possible to show the potential of theatre to create community by choosing from one of the examples where theatre practice unfolded by working against the creation of community (Gallagher, 2014; Levin & Solga, 2009; Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). However, I am drawn to the Debajehmujig (Debaj) Storytellers because the process of building of community is the core of Debaj’s art. The Debaj Storytellers have a methodology directly resonant to this research. As such, it is useful to examine this third example of contemporary, Canadian, socially engaged theatre in slightly greater detail.

The Debaj Storytellers are a professional Ontario-based Anishinabeg theatre company. For over thirty years they have created theatrical work on Wikwemikong Unceded Reserve on Manitoulin Island (Nolan, 2015). Freeman (2016) profiles Debaj’s work and their production of *The Global*

Savages—described by Debaj’s artistic producer Ron Berti as “the 18,000-year animated oral history of the Indigenous peoples of North America aka Turtle Island in 90 minutes or less” (p. 29). This production has been performed across Canada and Europe—and is always done so “beside a fire, under an open sky” (Freeman, 2016, p. 31). Debaj’s mandate includes relationships. They enact this value by intentionally constructing their own community where they live and work, collectively growing and preparing food and sharing landscaping tasks. They then pursue connectivity in the way they engage with others when they tour. Freeman points to the way the Debaj works as creating a metaphoric space in the way it publicly re-imagines the way relations can be. To explain why this is necessary, Freeman uses the work of Brecht and Bauman to point to a societal “ethical paralysis” (2019, 26) that relegate people to a consumer mindset. The metaphorical space of theatre has the potential to cultivate ethically engaged citizens. In Freeman’s (2016) view, Debaj helps create this space by seeing art not as a commodity, but instead as the relationships created through the social encounters the performers have. They engender these relationships by embedding themselves in the communities which they perform in.

Debaj’s work extends outside of the traditional “play”. Canada’s popular tradition of “poetic realism” is a dominant artistic form that does not leave much room for alternative ways to connect and engage with audiences (Freeman, 2016). We are used to going to the theatre to watch a play about a fictional story. Freeman uses Brecht’s concept of denaturalization to argue that Debaj’s art is not restricted to the usual time and space boundaries of “traditional” theatre (2019, pp. 30-33). Before a performance on tour, Debaj artists arrive at least a week early to build relationships. They make time to share conversations and food with the people they are working with. They also spend time volunteering at local organisations. They also take their “performance” outside of the theatre with spontaneous public interactions and organise a “sunrise walk” with community members along a “locally significant route” (Freeman 2016, 29). In this way they are not just presenting new ideas through their art proper, but they are modelling new ways of connecting. Freeman also gives the example of Debaj’s Many Day Talk—a weekend-long discussion without agenda or prescribed form. In Freeman’s view, Debaj’s work shows that the theatre arts “create a space where different values and practices can be shared and experienced and, in doing so, where one can imagine in the first place that such is possible” (2019, p. 33). For Freeman this continues to resonate with Brecht’s hope that theatre moves beyond representation and toward a focus on the essence of social engagements created by theatre.

Further Unpacking of “Community”

As described earlier in this chapter, there has been significant debate within sociology about the meaning, nature, and relevance of “community”, with critiques ranging from “community” as a catch all term, that the concept is based on emotional attachments, that it is rooted in chauvinism and racism, or that it is just a “spray on solution” (Mulligan 2015, pp. 342-343; Fischlin and Nandorfy, 2012). Mulligan cites Delanty’s work speculating that the idea of community is something neither the state or society can offer, but that can never really be realised, and argues that scholars and policy makers need to engage with a nuanced and dynamic understanding of community formation (Mulligan, 2015). Two limits of community development theory are the conceptions of the composition and scale of “communities” themselves. Communities are often

borderless and diverse to a point that it is difficult for them to be quantified or qualified in any sort of neat fashion (Loh & Shear, 2015). Community does not mean uniformity, but rather represents diverse processes of relations (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2012).

Constructing Community

Indigenous knowledge provides a worldview that is a continuation of stories and traditions far before contact, showing the importance of communal wellbeing shaped and represented by the value of community (Settee, 2013; Ermine, 2007). Engagement with these knowledges has vital potential to help re-construct the community bonds that are currently lacking in our society (Settee, 2013). Community development practice must start with the awareness that community is not a “given” and rather that it must be “wilfully constructed” (Mulligan, 2015, p. 353). However, the construction of or engagement with community does not have to start from scratch. Koppers (2019) describes the exercise of creating a network map to identify existing relations and “ready-made” groups and/or partners (p. 67). She references the use of Rohd (Basting & Rose, 2016, p.38), who emphasises the importance of learning existing systems to work within them in a dramaturgical way. The idea of learning and appreciating the environment relates to the concept of biomimicry. Koppers introduces the work of the Biomimicry Institute to inspire community leadership and social organising. The work of Rohd and the Biomimicry Institute prompt questions about how artists can work with and emulate existing social (or biological) structures to create trust and relationship. With these examples in mind, I offer a definition of community-building as ***the establishment of or connection to networks of relationships between people***. Debaj’s practice builds new networks internally in their group, they discover and activate existing networks in the places they visit, and they demonstrate new network models in the larger scale.

Evidence for a New Relationship

Arts and culture can also be used as a way for class structures to be intentionally reinforced—as opposed to democratized—and to affirm existing boundaries (Bourdieu, 1983; Kawashima, 2006). “Community”, too, has ambitious and ambiguous dark sides that can be used to exclude rather than include (Bhabha, 1994; Fine, 2007; Mulligan, 2015). Artistic institutions are inherently designed to exclude people; they are not innocent bystanders but part of the problem creating social segregation (Kawashima, 2006). The current dynamic between arts institutions and audiences is a “monological relationship” (Lindelof, 2015, p. 207). However, it is challenging to take the theatre arts to the broader public (Irwin, 2007). This research asks how the theatre arts can create and/or nurture human relations in a way that establishes or connects to networks. These connections cannot be made unless people see each other as humans.⁷ This returns us to the questions of what and who is art for? One of the undercurrents of this dissertation research is that theatre arts should be for everyone, but in our current contemporary Canadian society, they are not accessible, or desirable, to a large portion of the population. And, even when they are accessible, they are not often put to productive use in creating place or manipulating the productive value of strengthened social relations in space.

⁷ Sadly, some people are seen as human and others are not, so this is not necessarily a mutual challenge (Razack, 2002).

Lindelof (2015) unpacks attending a performance as a social act. She argues that while there has been some attention paid to the social dynamics of place and ritual, there is room for more. She cites Small (1998), who argues that music does not exist, but instead we should discuss “musicking” to argue that we need to think about the audience’s experience as “audienceing” (Lindeloff, 2015, p. 208). It is a process of sociality. Audience experience as process is resonant with the view of place as process. Artistic process can be a type of inoculation or initiation, catalyzing and creating engagement in the community (Kuppers, 2019). When arts initiatives are people-focused on empowerment, they strengthen social development by increasing participation in local activities (Kay, 2000). This resonates with Bourriaud’s (2002) work on relational aesthetics, where works of art are judged by how they create or represent relations between people (Bourriaud, 2002). Or Merleau-Ponty’s belief that aesthetics can be used to increase participation (Bourriaud, 2002). Participation frames community not as a goal, but as a process. In this way community is a medium connecting individuals and society at large (Little, 2016). Citing examples of grassroots theatre companies across Canada that are engaged in community-building work, Little argues that theatre companies have the skills and tools to swiftly and meaningfully respond to the local needs and issues of the communities they work with in a way that offers voice in an alternative path to other more dominant forces such as globalisation (2016, pp. 50-51).

Locally minded theatre companies have the potential to play a role in society that very few organisations or even people are filling. Who or what other organisations actively and meaningfully respond to current issues with the sole goal of bringing diverse people together to engage with each other? Connections between diverse people occur in locations such as faith-based organisations and through non-profit organisations, but these types of groups are not always accessible or appealing to the public (Lobo, 2018). Gathering and working with community associations or service groups has a community building goal in mind, but as Putnam (2000) clearly shows, the time people dedicate to this activity is dramatically shrinking. Lobo describes civic attunement through a “fragile friendship” between an Indigenous woman and Newcomer woman at a community art space, where they spend time with each other painting. Though fragile, this connection is substantial in contrast to the way most citizens are relatively unknown to the people around them (Painter, 2012). Theatre artists (and theatre companies) have the skills and ability to play the role of responders, connectors, creators, and engagers. They have the tools, time and values to do so. Little (2016) argues for “community engaged resident artists” who are supported to achieve a goal or promoting social cohesion (p. ?). In the way they take time to know and connect with local people, Debaj’s artists are community-engaged (albeit short-term) resident artists of the places they visit. They have the ability, capacity, and intention to catalyse the process of community-building.

Rehearsing Empathy

Debaj’s work presents the potential of theatre to build community through social relationships. Goffman (1959) defines performance as an “activity on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (p.15-16). For Debaj, the influence they are seeking is connection between people. Freire (2000) believed all human beings have capacity for critical awareness and dialogue. In this way theatre can catalyze a dialogical encounter that

might lead to interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness and group development (Nessler, 2018). Open dialogue has the potential to cultivate critical consciousness (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014).

It is easy to imagine the cynical view of Debaj's work: "So Debaj shows up, meets some people, does a show, people talk, and then they leave? That's not community!" I do not argue that Debaj's work builds a permanent and totally sustainable community⁸, but rather that the connections they create are initial gestures and greetings in the way Tinius (2018) describes. He believes more work needs to be done beyond the initial hello. However, if relationships through interactions are a form of community-building in the way Studdert (2016) describes, then the initial hello is extremely important. The initial hello is actually a form of humanization. In saying hello, one person is seeing the other person. This connection can be seen as a necessary first step in the community-organising process (Fisher & DeFilippis, 2015).

To conclude this look at Debaj's work, it is helpful to distinguish between grounded and projected communities. For the former place is crucial but for the latter place is not essential (Mulligan, 2015). Though the people connecting at a Debaj show—or any theatre event—might live in the same place, it is useful to see the community being created as a projected one. It is the kind of "third space" that Soja (1996) describes. In this way we can connect this kind of theatre experience to Debord's (1955) concept of "psycho geography", the study of the interplay between the environment and emotions. Harvey (2016) believes this concept has potential to inform the current function of theatre, because of its intent on arousing people to desire and seeing the value of intimacy and unity in community. Participation in arts and culture is a behaviour that is learned and developed (Kawashima, 2006). Kawashima explains these skills are taught by families or educators (2006, p. 65). One could argue the same thing about participation in community. Unless, however, our families or educators do not teach them, or the rest of society teaches oppositional traits. This chapter began with a description of these oppositional traits, including capitalism and individualism. This research positions theatre as having the potential to be an antidote to these binaries.

Theatre has the power to imagine new worlds, but it also can be used as a practical way to rehearse more intimate behaviours that might increase humanization and then lead to trust, connection, and empathy (Harvey, 2016). Debaj's work can therefore be seen as both the initial hello, and the rehearsal of a new behaviour. It is an example of how theatre practice can locate belonging and critical engagement (Vasudevan, 2014). Vasudevan (2014) describes theatre practitioners' work as a form of "cosmopolitan conversation" that opens a local and global space (p. 64). In this way, Debaj's work begins to build and rehearse the relational process of community.

2.5.5. Are There Non-Theatre Examples that Resonate with this Research?

Filmmakers and planners Leonie Sandercock and Giovanni Attili (2014) have attempted to create opportunities for "therapeutic planning" by documenting examples of the challenging relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in northern British Columbia (p.20). In this work, art creates connections between people with opposing viewpoints. Sandercock and

⁸ If that is even realistic/possible to achieve?

Attili spent years researching and filming their documentary, *Finding Our Way*, and then organised community screenings and dialogues that “used the film as a catalyst for difficult conversations in a historically deeply-divided community” (Sandercock & Attili, 2013, p. 61). In their work, they began to “explore the potential for film as a catalyst for social transformation” (Sandercock & Attili, 2013, p. 65). In the second part of their three-part documentary, they profile the Burns Lake Band and the village of Burns Lake. The two communities have had a fractious relationship for decades, which escalated after the village decided to turn off the Band’s access to water during a taxation dispute. This decision and the resulting protests became an Indigenous and human rights issue that included a Supreme Court hearing and national media coverage (Sandercock & Attili, 2014, p. 20). To intervene in a positive way, Sandercock & Attili (2014) began a “therapeutic planning process” to create a “dialogic space”:

for the unspeakable, for talk of fear and loathing as well as of hope and transformation. This involves the design of a safe space in which conflicting parties can meet and speak without fear of being dismissed, attacked, or humiliated—a new space of recognition in which historic injustices are acknowledged, as a necessary prelude to addressing contemporary conflicts. (p. 20)

Sandercock and Attili did their work over several years, beginning with almost one hundred interviews. They determined that there was a lack of awareness in the non-Indigenous community about the effects of colonialism and that there was anger in the Indigenous community about unaddressed and ongoing historical injustices. It was clear that “the past was very much still present, distorting what contemporary goodwill existed and blocking a path forward” (Sandercock & Attili, 2013 p. 23). During the editing process, they spent two and a half years and eight trips back to the community to share footage and collect feedback in both individual and group settings (Sandercock & Attili, 2014, p. 23). At these pre-screenings the two “sides” began to move closer to understanding and knowing each other. This culminated in community sharing sessions of the final cut for diverse audiences, followed by facilitated discussions. In standing together to introduce the film and then again to summarize what they heard in the facilitated discussions, the village’s mayor and the band’s chief both praised the space the film had created for the community to come together:

The Mayor acknowledging that the film told an important story and that the Village had made mistakes that needed to be acknowledged, while the Chief spoke of how, before the film process, he had given up hope in the town, but now his hope and vision of working together was revived. (Sandercock & Attili, 2014, p. 24)

The film clearly affected these two communities. It took years of committed relational work. In reflecting on this project, Sandercock and Attili (2014) write that they initially saw their action-research process divided up between the interviewing process as the “research” and the screenings as the “action.” Upon reflection they saw the entire process as “action” and saw the potential for steps to be taken in this direction. I read this reflection after watching the film—but while I watched, I had this same thought: How could participants be more engaged in the process throughout? This could be an example of the “action” that Sandercock and Attili call for. Instead of solely juxtaposing the ideas of people from the two communities, they could have also

created dialogue from the beginning for their interviews. A strategy for how to do this is discussed in the following example.

2.5.6. Verbatim theatre as a humanizing place

The final example in this section is a profile of a verbatim theatre production. Verbatim theatre is used to describe plays where the script is constructed out of interviews or transcripts (Paget, 1987). It is sometimes referred to as documentary theatre and is acknowledged to be on a spectrum of research-based theatre techniques (Beck et al., 2011). Indigenous oral storytelling traditions are thousands of years old (L.T. Smith, 2012) and could be seen as an early form of verbatim theatre. The academic term “verbatim theatre” was coined by British theatre scholar Derek Paget in a 1987 journal article. Paget did not make any connection to Indigenous storytelling traditions. He argued that the form had only become possible since the 1960s due to the invention of a new piece of technology: the portable tape recorder. This allowed interviewer/playwrights to record interviews with people in each community and then transcribe them verbatim. Paget predicted there was potential for verbatim theatre to be an exciting alternative to traditional media, but that because of the labour-intensive process involved in making a verbatim play, it would not have much longevity (Paget, 1987). However, the form is thriving.

Several artists and scholars have contributed to the discussion of verbatim theatre in recent years (Baker & Inchley, 2020; Brand, Peters, & Dart, 2024; Garson, 2018; Rinne, 2022; Stuart Fisher, 2011; Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim 2023; Vachon & Salvatore, 2023). These discussions relate both to the aesthetics and ethics of verbatim theatre practice, and sometimes the interplay of (and tension between) these two domains (Vachon & Salvatore 2023). Verbatim theatre practice continues to fluctuate and transform (Garson, 2018) and has varying degrees of rules depending on the practitioner (Rinne, 2022). There seems to be consensus it is situated under the broader term of ‘documentary theatre’ – but that to be verbatim theatre the play’s script must be constructed from words spoken by real people (Rinne, 2022). Verbatim theatre can also be seen as a participatory research methodology (Baker & Inchley, 2020) and it has a clear connection to both ethnography and journalism (Rinne, 2022) as well as oral history performance and transitional justice (Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim, 2023). There is an alignment between dramaturgy in verbatim theatre playwrighting and traditional data analysis in research (Brand, Peters, & Dart, 2024). Wake (2018) questions whether verbatim theatre should be defined by the methods or by the context, arguing it is more useful to think of it as a series of practices. Recent use of verbatim theatre has been issue driven, with a particular focus on the representing and facilitating alternative voices in a way that has potential to make an intervention in communities (Garson, 2018). Verbatim theatre plays often use testimony from people who have suffered trauma. Engaging with and re-presenting this material presents challenges to how we think about the ideas of truth and authenticity in theatre (Stuart Fisher, 2011). In most verbatim theatre, live actors are used, and the testimonies in the script are channelled through the actors with the goal of increasing audience listening (Baker & Inchley, 2020). Listening is a key component of verbatim theatre, and it occurs in several ways including between the interviewer and interviewee as well as between the actors and the audience (Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim 2023).

The aesthetics of verbatim theatre vary between practitioners. How the transcripts are used in the creation and presentation of the play is where we start to see important nuances. Most often actors re-present the words of real people by speaking the scripts of the plays. The use of the material is where aesthetic questions begin. Who are the actors? Do they read the words, speak the words from memory? Or repeat them after hearing them on headphones? These questions lead to choices verbatim theatre practitioners must make. Some practitioners prefer to be both the interviewer and the actor; some prefer to use actors to re-present the words. This approach may privilege the words of the interviewer over the interviewed (Bernbaum, 2010), creating an unhelpful power dynamic. Verbatim theatre also allows casting of actors against age, gender and race, allowing anyone to play anyone (Megson, 2018; Vachon & Salvatore, 2023). Practitioners must also choose whether the actors will hear the original recordings or solely interpret the text. The style of headphones verbatim involves actors wearing headphones and repeating what they hear. Practitioners of this style feel this promotes accuracy as a form of responsibility to the original interview subject (Baker & Inchley, 2020) and keeps actors from over thinking (Megson, 2018). The challenge with headphones verbatim is it has the potential to lead to mimicry instead of discovery and interpretation. Another process is to not share the recordings with the actors, and instead view them as co-inquirers. This process allows the actors to work with a scored transcript to discover the original speakers (Vachon & Salvatore, 2023). There are also relatively new aesthetic offshoots including participatory verbatim; where audience members are invited onstage to read transcripts, auto-verbatim; where recordings of everyday conversations are used instead of interviews (Wake, 2018), verbatim theatre musicals (Megson, 2018), weaving together transcripts with music (Bernbaum, Knight and Nolan, 2022) or mash ups of verbatim theatre with fictional material such as mock talent shows (Garson, 2018). These creative opportunities raise new ethical questions worthy of further investigation.

The ethical discussions of verbatim theatre relate both to the play making and play sharing processes. Like any art form there is no one ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to make verbatim theatre, and although practitioners are not required to formally adhere to any ethics they way academics are, they should pay attention to the ethical issues at play (Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim, 2023). In fact, the ethics of verbatim theatre are entangled with the aesthetics and the two are dependent on each other for the work to thrive (Vachon & Salvatore, 2023). Verbatim theatre relies on a connection to community, and so there is a specific need to consider ethical relationship with our communities of interviewees (Garson, 2018) in a way that nurtures a “reciprocity of care” (Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim 2023, p.15). Interviewees can be seen as collaborators or co-researchers, sharing in the process of verbatim theatre creation (Baker & Inchley, 2020). Verbatim theatre also positions audience members as listeners who are responsible, shifting the dynamic of power by centering the voices not traditionally heard. At times the marginalized people we hear from in verbatim theatre have experienced dehumanising treatment, and the opportunity to be heard has the potential to humanize them. This re-positioning creates dialogue as opposed to confrontation in a way that hopefully leads to a collective reflection (Baker & Inchley, 2020). If the creation of a place for dialogue is indeed the goal, it is important practitioners are ethically considerate towards both interviewees and audience members. Specific examples of ethical consideration include consent and transparency (Vachon & Salvatore 2023; Sotelo-Castro & Shapiro-Phim 2023). Interviewees must consent to participate and be clearly informed how their words will be used. Audience members must be aware of the process of verbatim theatre for a place of dialogue to be authentically created. The ethics of journalism can

support this process (Rinne, 2022), but it is also possible to think of verbatim theatre new space created by the overlap of journalism and the theatre, where new ethics are at play (Bernbaum, 2010). Additional research in this space is needed (Wake, 2018).

In my graduate research (Bernbaum, 2010), I profiled three contemporary Canadian verbatim theatre productions: Oonagh Duncan's *Talk Thirty to Me*—a play constructed from original interviews about the experience of turning thirty; Geraldine Pratt's *Nanay: A Testimonial play*—a play about the experience of Pilipino nannies constructed from the transcripts of interviews from a research project; and Andrew Kushnir's *The Middle Place*—a play constructed from original interviews with young people living in a shelter. In thinking about my research about humanization, social capital, place, and theatre, I find it useful to revisit this work. It is a powerful example of the potential of the creation of social capital through the place-making process. In this research, I propose using social capital as a process of humanization.

Kushnir's *The Middle Place* ties together the ideas of humanization social capital, place, and theatre. As a part of my own research, I was fortunate to watch a performance of *The Middle Place* and have an extended conversation with Kushnir after the performance. I found the piece moving because of its extreme simplicity: the actors seemed to be doing very little, but they were vehicles for the words of the young people Kushnir interviewed. The costumes were very simple, and the actors used slight physical changes to show the shifting of one “character”⁹ to the next. There were no props and the set was just a circle taped on the floor. This simplicity allowed me to listen closely to the words, and I was often emotionally affected. In a beautifully written chapter about this piece, Kushnir describes that this impact is because unlike its cousin, film documentary, verbatim theatre uses actors, allowing voice to be transferred in a way that “the audience hears the content and not the speaker” (Kushnir, 2016, p. 96). In Kushnir's writing about the project, he explains that he was contacted by artist-led non-profit Project: Humanity in 2007 to write a play about young people experiencing homelessness, but that he opted to make a verbatim theatre play because the “specificity of these young people's words, experiences, and perspectives would trump any and all poetry I could dream up with on their behalf” (2016, p. 83). *The Middle Place* had an extensive life onstage, both in touring to high school audiences and performing for general audiences in Toronto, Ottawa, and Victoria.

Verbatim theatre's relationship to journalism offers ways for the form to continue to innovate. In my graduate work on verbatim theatre (Bernbaum, 2010), I proposed a technique called “creating dialogue” where the interviewer takes a question from one person in a community (e.g. a person experiencing homelessness) and asks it to another person in the community to whom the first person may not ever have a chance to speak (e.g. a provincial court judge). The interviewer then takes the answer back to the first interviewee and repeats the process, creating a legitimate dialogue between people who live in the same community but may not ever have the chance to converse. I initially proposed this idea because of the way it allowed verbatim theatre makers to break out of the often-monological format of interview transcripts. However, I now see it as a way to connect people in conversation throughout an artistic process, as was lacking in the process of creating the film documentary *Finding Our Way*. Since my academic study of *The Middle Place* and other verbatim plays, I have created three verbatim theatre productions that

⁹ Character is in quotation marks because although verbatim theatre actors are portraying different people—which technically makes them characters—they are also real people who exist in the world.

have incorporated this technique. *Home Is a Beautiful Word* was constructed from over five hundred interviews with people living in Victoria, BC, about the issue of homelessness in Victoria. *Being Here: The Refugee Project* was created with Michael Shamata and constructed out of over two-hundred interviews with refugees and the people who help them across Canada. *Reasonable Doubt* was co-created with Yvette Nolan and Lancelot Knight about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Saskatchewan with a focus on the Gerald Stanley trial and the killing of Colten Boushie. In all three of these plays, the creating dialogue technique provided some of the most impactful material of the play.

These examples illustrate how theatre can humanize people within a place. Specifically, Creswell (2004) has written about people experiencing homelessness as an example of people who are “out of place” (p. 109). He argues that they are essentially dehumanized by society, because instead of people who have homes engaging with the social and political causes of homelessness, people who are homeless are simply seen as “matter out of place” or “the human form of litter” (Creswell, 2004, p. 113). He believes the issue of homelessness cannot be understood without analysing the causes that produce it. It is here that verbatim theatre offers the potential to create a place of very human examination and understanding. Kushnir (2016) believes verbatim theatre is particularly suited to do this. In the case of *The Middle Place*, Kushnir argues the work humanized in multiple ways: it humanized the issue of youth homelessness, it humanized the young people in the eyes of the audience, and it humanized audiences themselves.

While all these aspects are relevant to my research, the final point is the most interesting to unpack. Kushnir writes about the “denoising that can happen within ourselves when we engage with timely and compelling work” (2016, p. 84). He writes that by coming in contact with something alien to them in the theatre, audience members can be brought closer to themselves and their own narratives. In my work I always aim to have audience members hear their own thoughts as well as thoughts different from theirs in the same play. This way both viewpoints are humanized. If you only have one or the other, there is less impact, because people are only hearing either their own or a differing perspective. Kushnir (2016) positions the power of this humanizing experience in the context of today’s overly rushed and overwhelmingly digital communications culture. He believes the general population suffers from a kind of “social vertigo” and theatrical experiences might provide a “therapeutic cocktail that is in short supply: stillness, a singular focus, and something that could be referred to as slow time” (p. 86). Kushnir’s slow time connects directly to Tuan’s (1977) place as pause. The theatre then, has the opportunity to be a place where time slows down, and we singularly focus on humanization.

A Critical Pause: Humanization in Place

As illustrated in the above five examples, theatre has the potential to create a place of humanization. This is an intentional place governed by values. This place cannot be made without the audience’s participation. It is possible to see then that audiences are more than just “bums in seats”—a common consumer-minded phrase Kushnir (2016) critiques as a reduction of potentially engaged citizens to “a fatty body part that wants, above all, to be comfortable” (p. 97). Instead, theatre has the potential to take a step towards rehearsing community by being a “practice and preventative therapy” to engage empathy, instead of a “sedative” (Kushnir, 2016, p. 97). Theatre created with/in community has the potential to open fields of possibility for

people to imagine or believe in a different way of living than their current state (Busby, 2017). The place theatre creates and the people who create it then have a symbiotic relationship. Individuals are only individuals because of their actions in public in relation to the actions of other individuals (Studdert, 2016). Through this interaction, an exchange takes place. The exchange is a human one, guided by our interrelatedness and common humanity, as can be understood with the Indigenous teachings of wâhkôhtowin (Campbell, 2007). This reciprocal exchange humanizes audience members, moving them toward their innate potential to engage in critical awareness and dialogue (Freire, 2000). The participation of the audience members creates the place. In short, theatrical experiences can show us a way that place makes people and people make place. Creswell (2004) writes that place culture trumps national culture. This research aims to show that theatre can be used to create humanizing places that serve to strengthen cities.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This research is focused on learning how to use the theatre arts to create and nurture humanized, engaged, and participatory communities. This type of community is made up of citizens who feel a sense of responsibility for the place they live in and the other people they live with. This literature review has outlined a range of questions connecting this research to the academic study of social capital, the creation of place, and socially engaged theatre. My viewpoint is largely influenced and informed by Indigenous knowledge about time, space and place, and by critical discussion of race, dehumanization and humanization. These areas resonate to form the four key conceptual pieces that set the stage for this dissertation. They are:

1. Indigenous knowledge offers non-colonial ways of conceptualizing how we understand, measure, and value spaces, places, and the interconnected relationship between all things.
2. Social capital can be seen as sociality, or networks of relations between people.
3. Spaces become places when they are endowed with meaning. This meaning is produced through relationships between people, which can only happen in place.
4. The theatre arts have the potential to create places where ‘systematic humanizing’ can occur. These places can be both literal and imaginative.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a deconstruction of the concept of “community.” It included a review of literature related to the socio-economic factors that created the conditions we currently live in. Sources of Indigenous knowledge were explored as potential guides for the work, as was the connection of theatre to the idea of the city. The literature review continued with a discussion of the concept of social capital, including an explanation of the concepts of bridging and bonding, critiques of social capital, and the question of whether social capital is a noun or a verb. For the purposes of this research, I propose thinking of social capital as a verb—something that is continuously happening—the process of ‘communing.’

The second portion of this chapter is a review of literature related to the creation of space. To begin, this section included analysis about the interconnectedness of race, space, and power. I

propose these concepts should not, and in fact cannot, be separated. To support this interconnection, ideas about belonging, dehumanization of Indigenous people, and ghettoization of the poor are explored. I propose that just as there is a systematic dehumanization, there can also be a ‘systematic humanization’—and that this more hopeful process can be supported by the arts.

The third portion of this chapter includes five examples of contemporary Canadian socially engaged theatre. This section begins with a discussion of theatre’s relationship to a city, examining the idea of theatre’s potential to create place within a city. The first example of socially engaged theatre is Yvette Nolan’s work on theatre as medicine. The examples continue with a discussion of how theatre can be used to create literal place with Will Weigler’s labyrinth. The third example is slightly more fulsome, a mini profile of the Debajehmujig (Debaj) Storytellers group. The Debaj example is used to unpack the concept of community and look at ways in which community can be constructed through the rehearsal of connection. The fourth example is the work of Leonie Sandercock and Giovanni Attili, illustrating how space can be made for relationships to grow using film documentary. The final example is the work of Andrew Kushnir and Project: Humanity, introducing the technique of verbatim theatre as a tool for humanizing. Theatre can do this by addressing social issues and involving the public. Following these examples, I offer the idea that verbatim theatre has the potential to create places of humanization, which can serve to strengthen the bonds between people, and which in turn will create safer, healthier, and more inclusive cities.

This chapter ends with the presentation of a conceptual framework for my dissertation. It includes four key areas: Indigenous knowledge as a non-colonial way to conceptualize place, social capital as sociality, place being created through relationships, and theatre as a tool to create humanizing relationships. This research has the potential to answer Putnam’s call for new and more creative ways to conceptualize and cultivate social capital. It is important to view the connections between humanization, social capital, place creation, and theatre as a *creative process*. The following chapters aim to investigate the potential ingredients of this process. To continue this research in a way both respectful and empowering of the creative process, it is crucial to use a methodology that is itself creative. In the following chapter, I will outline how I use the methodologies of exploratory case studies and a/r/tography ways to embark on this research.

Chapter Three: The Medium is the Message: Research Context and Design

This chapter discusses the design of my research, including its context, my positionality, my chosen methodologies, and methods. My methodologies were chosen because they support my central argument and theoretical framework. Exploratory case studies informed my research creation work. I chose a/r/t/ography as the main methodology for my research creation work, because of its ability to create new place and its intention to explore possibility. This chapter includes detailed description of me as the primary research instrument, as well as analysis of how my chosen methodologies and methods connect to the creation of humanizing place. **Figure 3.1** is a creative illustration of how my methodologies, methods and research questions are related.

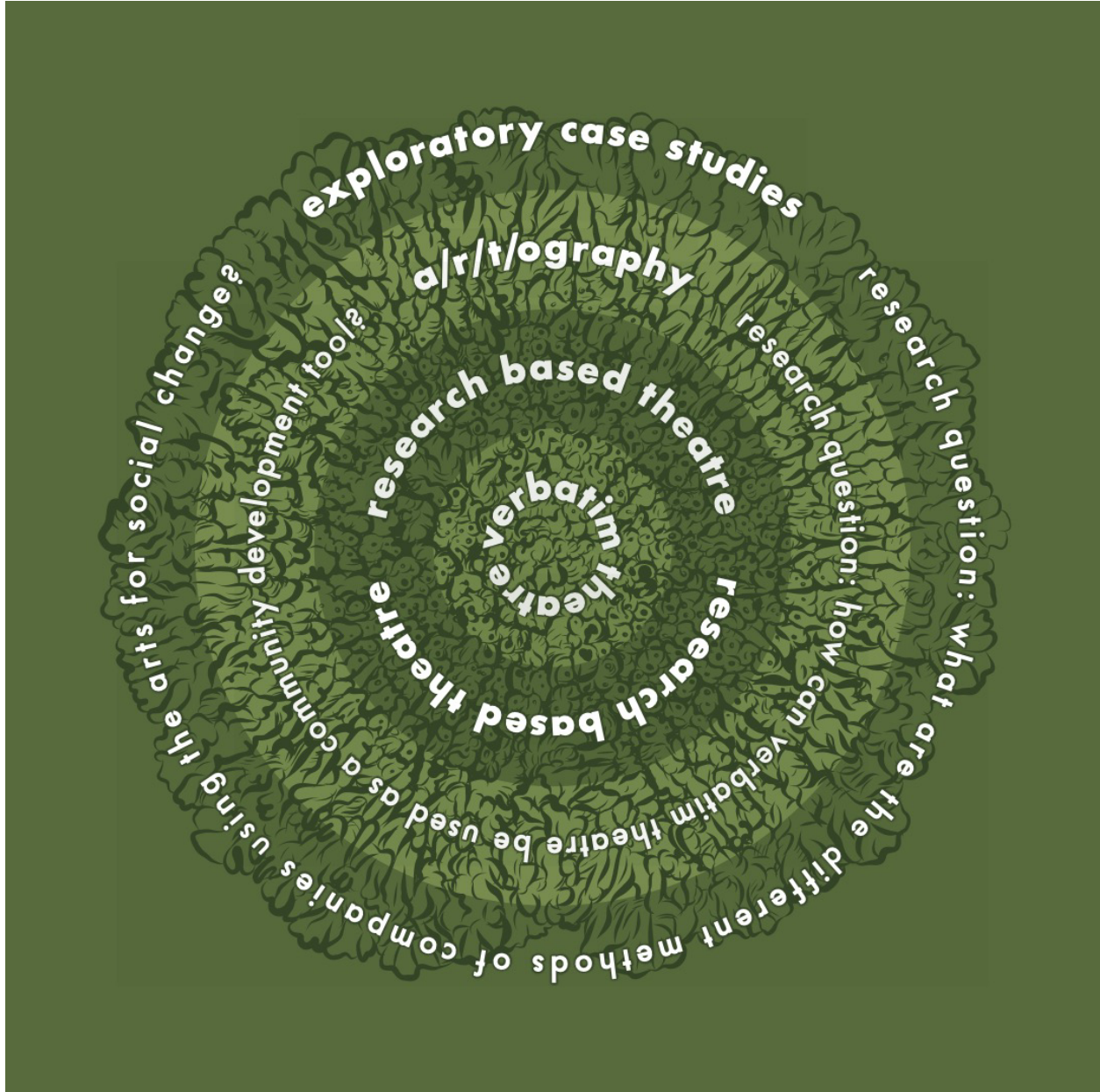


Figure 3.1 Illustration of relationship between methodologies, methods and research questions

3.1. Research Context

3.3.1 Pleasant Hill

The primary area where this research took place was in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood, a core neighbourhood in Saskatoon, the largest city in the province of Saskatchewan. As described in the introduction, the project was a collaboration between The Pleasant Hill Community Association, Sum Theatre, and myself. Pleasant Hill is an inner-city neighbourhood on the west side of Saskatoon. The borders of the community create the shape of a triangle.¹⁰ The construction of St. Paul's Hospital in 1907 marked the beginning of development in Pleasant Hill. The original hospital was developed by two Grey Nuns in response to typhoid outbreaks on the railway line. This facility was the first hospital to serve Saskatoon residents and was originally located on the homestead of Saskatoon's first physician, Dr. John Henry C. Willoughby (Clubb, 1982). In 1913 St. Mary's School was built by the Catholic School board and around that same time a two-room Pleasant Hill School was built by the Saskatoon Public School board (City of Saskatoon, 2002).

Pleasant Hill is currently a community full of vibrant opportunities and very real challenges. In 2021, there were 4820 people living in Pleasant Hill. It is one of the most economically disadvantaged communities in Saskatoon. In 1996 the average family income in Pleasant Hill was \$21,928, the lowest of any community in Saskatoon (City of Saskatoon, 2002). In 2019, the majority of Pleasant Hill residents had an individual income of under \$25,000, with over thirty percent of residents earning less than \$15,000 (City of Saskatoon, 2019). These are well below city averages. It is common for residents to spend a large portion of their incomes on necessities. Statistics Canada indicators of low income combined with high necessity expenditures classify Pleasant Hill as an impoverished neighbourhood. Pleasant Hill also has one of the highest proportions of overall residents who are Indigenous people in Saskatoon (City of Saskatoon, 2002). Inner-city Indigenous residents (such as residents of Pleasant Hill) have been framed in social discourse as lacking skills (Andersen, 2013; Denis, 1997; Newhouse, 2011). This view disregards trauma and violence that has and continues to be endured by Indigenous people in Canada (Fawcett, 2021).

In the Pleasant Hill local area plan completed by the City of Saskatoon in 2002, one resident described a desire to "put the 'Pleasant' back in Pleasant Hill" (City of Saskatoon, 2002, p.7). This plan included resident concerns about racism, poverty, housing, prostitution, and drug use. These concerns are connected to the decline of the core caused by several systematic issues such as globalisation, suburbanisation and social exclusion (Diamantopoulos & Findlay, 2007). Diamantopoulos and Findlay (2007) provide a fulsome account of the history of social enterprise responses in Pleasant Hill.¹¹ Throughout my research, residents who were interviewed referred to

¹⁰ The north border of the community is 22nd Street from Avenue G to Avenue W. The west border is Avenue W from 22nd Street to 17th W. The east border is the railway tracks.

¹¹ This research builds upon many years of work by many individuals and non-profit organisations in Pleasant Hill. Specifically, the following groups directly supported this work: Chokecherry Studios, Columbian Place, CUMFI, OPG, Prairie Harm Reduction, St. Paul's Hospital, STR8UP, St. Mary's Church, St. Mary's School, and Pleasant Hill School.

Pleasant Hill as “the hood”, explaining the area has a reputation for being one of the most disadvantaged and dangerous areas in Saskatoon. Local community leaders have spoken to city council about the challenges they face (Tank, 2019, Aug 12). Some of these community leaders were the original collaborators on the launch of this research project. It is relevant to note that the 2002 local area plan emphasised resident’s desires for park enhancements, an increase in leisure programming, and the strengthening of relationships between community partners.

3.1.2 Context of the Researcher

The methodology of a/r/t/ography (described in detail below) positions me as the primary research instrument in this work. It is important to reflect on my experiences in this context, to show how they have constructed me, including my skills and biases.

In 2010 I completed my Master of Journalism Studies thesis on the relationship between verbatim theatre and journalism. This work was a culmination of my undergraduate degree in journalism, my theatre school training, and my professional work as both a journalist and theatre artist. Several of the findings in my graduate thesis led to the development of my doctoral work. The clearest thread between projects is the use of verbatim theatre as a research-based theatre method. As a component of my master’s research, I created a short verbatim theatre play on immigration. The script was constructed from interviews with immigrants to Canada. I used this script to demonstrate how the techniques and ethics of journalism could inform and strengthen the practice of verbatim theatre. In my analysis, I explored different techniques and ethical questions. That project has led to three different full scale professional verbatim theatre productions, addressing the topics of houselessness¹², refugees, and race relations. In addition to offering me experience with the method of verbatim theatre, I see now that the main conclusion in my master’s thesis was also the first step towards my PhD work. I concluded my thesis with the idea that journalism and verbatim theatre could be thought of as a new space—an overlap of the two domains that had new ethical and creative potential. The idea of socially constructed non-literal space for participation is only now coming into clearer focus for me.

I was fortunate to be accepted into the Inter-disciplinary Studies program for this work. Due to my positive graduate experience looking at verbatim theatre from the standpoint of journalism, I theorized that it would be useful to look at my theatre-related research question through a broader lens. It made sense to me to explore the disciplines of theatre, geography, education, Indigenous studies, sociology, and social work. I was grateful to find and build relationships with faculty from these areas, and their guidance as members of my committee has been invaluable. It is interesting to note, though, that the research creation project (a verbatim theatre play with the Pleasant Hill Community Association) was not my original idea. Initially I had something quite different in mind.

My work with Sum Theatre in Saskatoon has given me appetite for large scale productions. At the outset of this PhD, I thought the best way to address the question of how a theatre might

¹² This project included a kaleidoscopic view of the issue of “houselessness” in Victoria. I did interviews with people who were homeless as well as people who were housed. Within the “homeless” people, I interviewed people with a range of logistical, mental, and spiritual circumstances, including those who would identify as homeless, unhoused and in between housing.

strengthen a city would be to create a city-wide play. My thinking changed in the fall of 2019 when there were multiple homicides in the neighbourhood over a few months. My heart was moved to do something. I was not moved to “save” Pleasant Hill—but I was moved to act because as a citizen of Saskatoon any violence in my city is partly my responsibility. It is my way of practicing the value of reciprocity as relatedness that I have been taught by mentors and elders from whom I have been fortunate to learn. Saskatoon has given me a safe and healthy place to grow up and to raise my son. In a small way, this research project is a way for me to reconcile some of the privilege afforded to me and to give back. In addition to this values-based decision, my understanding of cities also evolved through this work.

Cities have always interested me, but I had never had the chance to study them. Thankfully, my first class on this PhD journey was advanced urban geography, with my supervisor Dr. Ryan Walker. This class was extremely enjoyable and engaging. I was introduced to several new concepts and thinkers. My biggest take-away, though, had direct impact on my research design and my research questions. I realised my initial idea of a “city wide play” was missing what is now a seemingly obvious point: cities are composed of communities. To strengthen a city, community-building work had to be done. In the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood, I saw the opportunity, and heard the invitation to satisfy both my moral, artistic and academic growth. This growth was augmented by my directed readings course with Dr. Verna St. Denis and Dr. Priscilla Settee, to whom I am indebted for enlightening me to both Indigenous knowledge and critical pedagogy. My personal journey through this work as an artist, researcher and student has been equally if not more valuable than any academic outcome.

3.1.3 Standpoint and Reflexivity

As a white male who grew up on the east side of Saskatoon, I have lived with a great deal of privilege my entire life. Additionally, as the founding Artistic Director of Sum Theatre, I must address the power dynamics present as a leader/researcher. The following section unpacks these challenges, turning them into opportunities.

3.1.4 Whiteness

Whiteness, for too long, has been a source of unfair advantage in our world. Thankfully, efforts are now being made within both academia and artistic communities to promote diversity and inclusion. For those of us who are white, these moves toward equality present an opportunity to eliminate our blind spots of privilege by gaining awareness of our dominant positionality. Leslie Margolin (2015) provides a succinct summary of how Peggy McIntosh’s work shifted thinking about racism from oppression to the more user-friendly idea of white privilege. However, in her discussion of McIntosh and white privilege pedagogy, Margolin challenges white people to not “have their cake and eat it too” by simply acknowledging this privilege (p. 4). She calls for action. In both research and life, this means being very clear on our values and how they impact our actions.

Actions speak louder than skin colour. In my recent work on the documentary play *Reasonable Doubt*, I learned from one of my closest collaborators, Algonquin theatre artist Yvette Nolan. Yvette directed the 2020 premiere of *Reasonable Doubt*, and I watched her demonstrate the

Indigenous model of theatre-making that she has often discussed with me. When Yvette demonstrates her version of Indigenous theatre practice, she puts her hands into a pyramid and explains that this is the colonial model of theatre creation: the director is at the top with the power. Then she changes the shape of her hands, tipping the pyramid on its side and rounding its edges. It is now a circle. Where everyone in the room has a say. Everyone is involved (Nolan, personal communication, January 3, 2020). Like her, I now believe in working in a relational, community-driven way.

I continue to focus my values based on conversations with mentors and elders. As a white male working with Indigenous communities (as I did with *Reasonable Doubt*, and again with this research creation project), it is crucial that I connect with Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers to help fill in my blind spots. These connections help me to learn traditional ways of knowing and ensure I can do things in a good way as an ethical ally. Sandra Styres and Dawn Zinga's (2013) work on intercultural research collaborations helps illuminate what it means to try to "bring a good mind" to the work (p. 286). They also write about the value of clearly defined values guiding one's work, such as their 5 Rs: Relationships, Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (p. 303). Throughout this research project, I have met with elder Maria Campbell to ask for her support and guidance. I am grateful for this support as it is a first step in helping me overcome any assumptions I have as an outsider to this community. In addition to my personal relationships, there are opportunities to learn from other scholars about ethically sound ways to engage. Julia Riddell and colleagues (2017) offer practical suggestions for ethical engagement and topics for further learning, such as how to co-design research agreements and consent forms. These pragmatic ideas have served me as action items to start off collaboration in a good way.

As a professional theatre artist, I have the skills and training to work creatively. In his seminal work, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, theatre artist Augusto Boal (1985) unpacks Aristotle's notion that "art imitates nature" by offering a re-interpretation of this famous quote. Boal argues the true meaning is that "art re-creates the creative principle of created things" (p. 1). I am inspired by the potential of re-creation. Much like "re-search," re-creation to me offers an opportunity for a group of people to come together and imagine a better world. I am grateful that over a decade of professional theatre work has prepared me to embark on my research project.

3.1.5. Power

While the research creation project (the creation of a verbatim play with the Pleasant Hill Community) was happening, I was the artistic director of my company and lead researcher on my project. This status gave me potentially conflicting powers. If I was doing research on and with my staff members, they may feel pressured to answer or participate in a certain way because I am their employer. Initially I thought this was a major conflict of interest. However, after some research and reflection, I see that is not the case. It is important to note that while my company (and its staff) are part of the research creation project, they are not the primary aspect of study. That said, they are part of the research. When I explained my situation to our university's human behavioural research ethics specialist, Nick Reymond, he offered a simple solution: I could make sure any research on my staff preserves anonymity. He explained that I could either have my staff fill in anonymous surveys, or (budget permitting) I could employ a research assistant to

conduct interviews with my staff and then transcribe the answers making them anonymous. These are both accessible solutions but were not needed as I did not end up needing to use my staff as sources of data.

Gilmore and Kenny's (2015) work on self-reflexivity while working as a researcher within an organization offers another tool. They argue that one of the challenges of reflexivity is that it is traditionally seen as the responsibility of an individual. Instead, they offer a new, collective approach. Gilmore and Kenny explain a "pair interviewing" technique, where they as researchers interview each other about their respective experiences as ethnographers within organizations. Using semi-structured questions drawn from resources on reflexivity, the two researchers interviewed each other about their experiences. Questions addressed a range of issues from attachment with the organization to moments of emotional tension. They then analyzed the data together, both the audio recordings and the transcripts, pausing as they went to discuss further. This approach deepened their engagement in the reflexivity process, inviting honest reflections about topics such as power and discomfort. They offer four recommendations, including "critical friends" working together in the way they describe and the inclusion of research participants in the reflexivity process (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015, pp. 31–32). It is fitting that Gilmore and Kenny's work brings me back to the values of community. Through radical and consistent inclusion, the work will continue to be strengthened.

3.1.6. Values and Actions

My research actions and philosophies are guided by my values. I was grateful to encounter Wilson's (2008) clear and inviting definitions of terms. I gravitate toward his reframing of terms as questions (pp. 33–34). In asking myself Wilson's questions, I see my epistemology is relational and intuitive. I discover what is real through my relations. My relational, value-driven stance resonates with the methodology of a/r/tography. As described above a/r/tography is guided by relationality. This is one of the many reasons that a/r/tography fits as my methodology: it involves both self and collective inquiry. While I have an intuitive sense of what my methods and tools for analysis are and who my research participants could be—I will develop those *in response* to the desires and concerns of the community I am working with. Starting from my early meetings with elder Maria Campbell, I acknowledge my outsider status and offer my commitment to working in a good way, asking for input from square one on how we could work together. My methodology has helped me create a new collective effort. A/r/tographers La Jevic and Springgay (2008) state that "artists, researchers, and teachers do not simply do art, research, or teach; they live through these embodied experiences and make sense of them in purposeful ways" (p. 72). By embodying a research creation project together, it is my hope that my outsider status with my research community will evolve and we will walk together sincerely and truthfully. My axiology is (and must be) reflexive, as I travel on the journey beside my participants. I attempt to do this by spending time building relationships with the people I work with. I feel I have succeeded at this goal when I travel through the neighbourhoods I work in and can greet people I meet by name.

I have always felt that being an artist (and now artist/researcher) is both a privilege and a responsibility. By working to create a research space of equity and collaboration, I believe I can use my privilege in a responsible way. Of course there are challenges to doing this, namely that

systematic racism and injustice creates a significant divide between those of us with privilege and those without. It is my hope that in some small way the creative process can serve to help bridge this divide.

3.2.1 Methodology One: Exploratory Case Studies

There are arts companies who are actively working to strengthen communities with their work. Before embarking on my own research creation project, it was necessary for me to learn about the methods used by other companies who have had considerable success using the arts to strengthen communities.

I decided to do a brief investigation of two established arts through social change companies, with a specific focus on their artistic practice to learn about critical tools to use in my work. My research question for these short exploratory case studies is: “What are the methods of different theatre companies who use the arts in community development?” Yin (2009) outlines how case studies can help answer how and why questions, and offers structures to successfully execute them. The first portion of my research is two exploratory case studies of theatre companies engaged in this work. Yin (2014) defines an exploratory case study as one whose “purpose is to identify the research questions or procedures to be used in a subsequent research study, which might or might not be a case study” (p. 238). In this way, the information I gathered from the two exploratory case studies would be applied to the research creation project. The two companies I studied are Big hART of Tasmania and Australia, and Forklift Danceworks of Austin, Texas. I chose these companies after researching the work being done across Canada and internationally. I was drawn to Big hART and Forklift because of their commitment to spending time in community before doing work and their responsiveness to community in the work. I had not seen these two qualities, to the degree Big hART and Forklift practice them, in any other examples in Canada. I learned that if you are truly responsive to community, both the art you create and the process of creating it will be more meaningful to all involved.

There are different epistemological views that influence a researcher’s use of case studies. Yazan (2015) outlines three different approaches to case study research. Yazan explains there is a lack of agreed upon protocols for a case study. In an analysis of three prominent case study researchers (Yin, Stake, and Merriam) Yazan outlines six domains of comparative analysis: “Epistemological Commitments, Defining Case and Case Study, Designing Case Study, Gathering Data, Analyzing Data, and Validating Data” (p. 135). Yazan points out Yin’s lack of clear commitment to one epistemological viewpoint—but provides evidence that Yin has a positivist outlook. Yin sees knowledge and reality as discovered. In contrast, Stake and Merriam explain how they see knowledge as constructed—seeing case study researchers as interpreters. Stake points to a multiple layered reality. Yazan aligns with Stake and Merriam seeing knowledge as “socially constructed and emerging from peoples’ [sic] social practices” (2015, p. 138).¹³

The dissonance between Yin’s positivist approach and Stake and Merriam’s constructive approach is also clear in their writing on case study methodologies. While Yin is clear that he

¹³ My personal thoughts about epistemology are that knowledge is created, and often co-created, from experiences in given contexts.

sees a need for set methodological guideposts for case studies, both Stake and Merriam describe case study methodology as holistic, requiring the researcher to take the context of the research into account (Yazan, 2015). This view is much more in line with a/r/tography's essence of research as creation. A/r/tography is my second methodology, and it is detailed in the next section of this chapter. It is imperative the data from my exploratory case studies be interpreted in context. Building upon Yazan's analysis of these authors, I would add that case study research within an a/r/tographic research project needs to be guided by relational thinking. This is possible if the researcher holds the values of empathy and reciprocity toward the research subject. This is in direct contrast to the 'Yinian' view that there is one specific reality to be discovered. Instead, with empathy towards the holistic research context and reciprocity between researchers and subjects there is a great opportunity for knowledge to be constructed that is agreed upon by and beneficial to all involved. In fact, dialogue and co-construction between researcher and research subjects presents an opportunity for knowledge to be co-created and a strategy for validity at the same time. In short, I would agree with Lillie and her colleagues; (2020) view that in any community-based research, the relationship is the project. This showed up in my work through many friendships made with and between participants.

In his view of case studies, Yin would advise a set course for a methodology to be observed, whereas Stake encourages space for the questioning and problematizing. Yazan cautions Stake's more open and vaguer outlook could have the potential to confuse and disorient novice and even experienced researchers. However, Stake's view that there is no clear beginning to data collection is in line with the experience of the artist. As participants in the act of research creation, we are constantly relying on our senses, including intuition, to give us different forms of data. Yazan underestimates the skills of "novice researchers" by claiming Stake's guidelines for data gathering and analysis are insufficient (Yazan, 2015).

Case studies have plenty of potential pitfalls, but they can be mitigated (Avery et al., 2011). The purpose of my exploratory case studies is to learn about the type of work already being done, and the methods used to do this work. They also reveal ways in which theatres and theatre artists can engage with and construct communities. This research is not focused on participatory theatre with the goal of increasing consumption, such as audience participation in improvisation-based productions. Rather, this research aims to learn how these two internationally acclaimed companies do their work and then apply this learning to my a/r/tography research creation project in Saskatoon.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with theatre practitioners from the two companies to understand their values and artistic practice and how they might be applied in this research. All participants gave their consent to participate through University of Saskatchewan approved consent forms. These consent forms are included in as Appendix A. I asked each of the artists from both companies the following questions:

1. How does your work build community?
2. What is your process?
3. What methods do you use?
4. How do you engage with other partners to do your work?

These questions stem from my conceptual framework. These questions are also included in Appendix C – Semi Structured Interview Guide. The work of both these companies provides examples of systematic humanizing in place. These questions are focused on process. They seek to find out how the artists activate the networks between people in communities by endowing place with meaning and creating spaces for humanizing to occur. After transcribing the data from the case study interviews, I organised it in response to key themes that emerged. Within those themes I isolated key concepts in the form of meaningful sub-headings. In Chapter Four I provide detailed discussion of the two case study companies, including the results from the exploratory case study interviews.

3.2.2 Methodology Two: A/r/tography

My second methodology is a/r/tography. A/r/tography is a methodology that combines the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher¹⁴. It was developed by artist and educator Rita Irwin to honour the ongoing role of artistic practice within research (personal communication, April 6, 2020). As a methodology that honours one's contiguous roles in a relational, possibility-focused, and spatially aware way, an a/r/tography approach has proven to be well suited to help me answer my research questions. There are several ways in which a/r/tography supports my work:

A/r/tography Honours Contiguous Roles

A/r/tography's deliberate combination of the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher feels like the academic description of my skill set. For me, theatre (art), journalism (research), and social action (teaching) have always been a part of the same journey, closely related and always overlapping. Now I know the relationship between the three strands of the braid is academically called "a/r/tography". When the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher are combined, it provides the opportunity to "not simply do art, research, or teach but to live through these embodied experiences and make sense of them in purposeful ways" (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008, p. 72). Simply put, an a/r/tographer "develops an aesthetic interaction with the world" (Wiebe, 2008, p. 95). The incorporation of these three contiguous roles into one methodology helps me answer my research questions by bringing the strengths of each field to the work.

I identify with all three roles. I have been a professional theatre artist for fifteen years. Both as a journalist and as an academic, I am engaged in research. I have never thought of myself as a formal "teacher", but as I reflect on my body of work, I see my commitment to social justice issues as a form of critical pedagogy. Teaching and learning are not limited to classrooms; they occur everywhere (Sameshima, 2008). Sameshima (2008) argues that learning occurs in non-traditional, in-between spaces. In this way, teaching can just as easily occur outside at a play in a park as it can inside a classroom. Education can be seen as an increasing broader social understanding as opposed to individual achievement (Irwin et al., 2009). With this goal in mind, I feel confident that I am a committed educator as well as artist and researcher. By blending these roles, a/r/tography offers an interdisciplinary way to help answer my research question.

A/r/tography has a Rhizomatic and Relational Approach

¹⁴ I would prefer the acronym to use the word "student" as it more aptly captures the co-learning values inherent in this work. However, perhaps the acronym with the letter "s" might be problematic for some people?

A/r/tography is a rhizomatic, interconnected, relational process (Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p. xxvii). These are big words to say all things are connected in a web of relations. Over the past four years I am grateful to have received mentorship from Indigenous colleagues, including elder Maria Campbell and knowledge keeper Joseph Naytowhow. One of the things they have emphasized in sharing their ways of understanding is the notion of the vast connectedness of all things. For example, as I described in Chapter One, the Cree worldview of wâhkôhtowin sees all beings (human and more than human), plants, and the earth itself as not only interconnected, but all **related** (Campbell, 2007). I greatly appreciate this outlook and have recently tried to make it a priority in my work and life.

As with the three different yet connected roles above, a/r/tography allows the three forms of thought—knowing (theoria), doing (praxis), and making (poesis)—to overlap, blend, and be “folded together and form rhizomatic ways of understanding the world” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, pp. xxiii–xxiv). The term *rhizome* was borrowed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari from biology, where it refers to a mass of roots within a system. For their purposes, Deleuze and Guattari focus on the “free, expansive movement of grass, constantly connecting random and infinite points” (cited in Lawley, 2005, p. 37). Their metaphor of crabgrass provides an image of a system connecting multitudes of points to each other (Irwin et al., 2008, p. 205). Irwin (2008) offers a map as another metaphor, in that a map has no beginning or ending, only a middle (p. 205). Grahame Sullivan (2008) offers the metaphor of water (pp. 234–235). I remember being a child and playing with my bathroom mirror that folded in on itself creating limitless connected images. The exact metaphor does not matter. What is important is the idea that a/r/tography sees all things as connected and related. By imagining an infinite number of connections, an a/r/tographer can live their inquiry through “rhizomatic searching” (Swanson, 2008, p. 180) or a “rhizome of practices” where identities and concepts are related through complex networks (Irwin, 2008, p. 74). The relatedness of concepts through networks is useful parallel to the use of networks in my theoretical framework.

By seeing through a lens of connectedness, a/r/tography acknowledges the importance of seeing knowledge as relational (Guyas, 2008, p. 25). Traditional research offers questions to be answered, while a/r/tography is a process of inquiry where questions evolve through shifting relations (Irwin et al., 2008, p. 208). This interplay of both internal and external inquiry creates an intentional interconnectedness between the researcher and everyone they are in relation with (Gouzouasis, 2008, p. 229).

The inherent respect for relationships embedded within a/r/tography acknowledges that “relationality permeates our existence” (Irwin, 2008, p. 26). This resonates with my conceptual framework’s use of Indigenous knowledge offering new ways of understanding. Within the Indigenous value system I have described, relationality is always at the forefront. Wilson (2008) makes it clear this means relations with people, the environment, the cosmos, and ideas. The Southern African Indigenous epistemology of *Ubuntu* provides a similar example. *Ubuntu* is roughly translated as a notion of brotherhood and sisterhood where all people are related through a “humble togetherness” or “living in each other’s spirits” in a way that prioritizes the collective over the individual (Swanson, 2008, p. 183). These values of community and inclusion fall directly in line with my axiology and values. Relationality as a priority means I have the

responsibility to be in relationship with my community. This community-focused practise can be called social a/r/tography (Marin-Viadel et al, 2019). A/r/tography's rhizomatic roots prioritize relational thinking, being, and doing. A community of practice is essential to a/r/tography (Irwin, 2008, p. 74). A community of practice can be a curated or existing community (or a mix) comprised of artists and/or non-artists (Irwin, personal communication, April 6, 2020). This value system guides my research by ensuring I connected with, respected, and learn from my community of practice in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood. In Chapters Five and Six I describe the story of how I developed relationships with my community of practice.

A/r/tography Pursues Possibility

A/r/tography is focused on possibility instead of plausibility. Irwin and Springgay (2008) contrast science and art, explaining science's view of research as a tool to reveal or explain the answer to a question. In contrast, artistic practitioner-based research looks at knowledge as being created through new forms of understanding. Instead of *answering* a question, it is about *complicating* a question. Traditional research lends itself to terms of battle. We must "capture" data and "defend" our findings. Instead, living inquiry is interested in movement and change (Nielsen, 2008, p. xv). A/r/tography is about creating circumstances for infinite possibilities, and making the research "dynamic and fluid, and in constant motion" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxiv–xix). This fluidity was particularly useful in answering my research question. It allowed me the freedom to be responsive to my community of practice and draw on other resonant methodologies and methods. For example, a/r/tography in relation to my research resonates with an ethnographic participant observer's immersion in a community (Creswell & Poth, 2018), performative inquiry's use of performance to enact social justice (Pelias, 2008), community-based research's grounding in other ways of knowing (Finlay, 2008), and action research's focus on researching and supporting change (Somekh, 2008).

Possibility also means understanding things in different ways. A/r/tography embodies the imagination's limitless potential (Gouzouasis, 2008, p. 231). This limitlessness enables the potential to see new things, or to "learn to see in the dark" (Wiebe, 2008, p. 100). Bourriaud (2002) argues that "the goal of art is to reduce the mechanical share in us. Its aim is to destroy any *a priori* agreement about what is perceived" (p. 80). Humans have capacity to use our imaginations, but we do not allow the opportunity to do so. The capacity to imagine allows us to perceive the world differently than we have before, and to have newfound empathy with and connection to the pain and joy of others (Nielsen, 2008, p. xv). As a result, art has the potential to activate our imaginations in a way that disrupts, transforms, and unifies (Beare & Belliveau, 2008; Leggo, 2008; Sullivan, 2010). Bickel (2008) argues that arts-based practices can help society better understand itself by "extending knowledge into consciousness," differentiating *knowledge* as something that is consumed and *consciousness* as the state of being awake (p. 91). In short, we have the capacity to imagine another future, and artistic practice helps do this by generating hope (Sameshima, 2008, p. 50). A/r/tography's focus on possibility provides me the flexibility to be responsive and imaginative in my research approach. It also offers the freedom to explore an array of arts-based methods. In Chapter Five I describe the arts based methods I used.

A/r/tography Creates New Spaces

As a theatre artist, I constantly think about the transition of space to place. Of course, this includes the literal space of where performances occur, such as inside the bricks and mortar of a traditional theatre or on the uneven ground of a community park. However, I am more interested in the creation of a non-literal space, the space or place that the art itself creates. This space or place can be re-imagined as a process, or a situation. Instead of thinking of a fixed site or a bricks-and-mortar location, we can look at it as a “relational constitution of social, economic, cultural and political processes” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxi). If we see space as a relational process, we can re-imagine spaces as rhizomatic situations (Irwin, 2008, p. 206). Bickel (2008) uses ritual in her work to create and support the new non-literal space by entering a “collective unconscious” (p. 90). Bickel’s work is an example of how encounters can be curated in a way that creates new space, defined by relationships as opposed to geography (Irwin, 2008, p. 75). This is the type of space a/r/tography can both analyse and help to generate. Seeing created spaces as processes is a direct connection to my theoretical view that the place created by theatre is a process of communing.

Both the process and the outcomes of artistic inquiry create space that can be culturally transformative (O Donoghue, 2008, p. 111). Kind (2008) gives the example of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy, where the classroom studio space (the *atelier*) is “considered at once an idea and a place” (p. 168). At the same time as being an actual room filled with materials, it is also an idea structured by the intentional value-based processes the school has established (Kind, 2008, p. 168). The literal space exists, but the idea that fills the space is one constructed by values and principles. This example shows that conditions of learning can be facilitated or curated, both literally and ideologically in a way that “spaces can be made and teaching and learning can move and breathe” (Kind, 2008, p. 172). This example is similar to Nolan’s (2015) values-based rehearsal room or Weigler’s (2015) participatory labyrinth in the previous chapter. These types of created and creative spaces invite the kind of possibility outlined above. Or, in more poetic words “depth gives impetus to height, dark gives emphasis to light” (Swanson, 2008, p. 179). A/r/tography’s potential to help analyse and create new culturally transformative spaces makes it resonate with and applicable to my research. Through their practice, a/r/tographers create new spaces for relational inquiry to occur. This falls directly in line with my interest in how to disrupt traditional notions of social capital. This happened for me in this project when I began to see the newly created place of the play making process as social capital. In the following sections, I offer brief examples of other a/r/tographic projects to illustrate proven applications of this methodology. Within these examples, I have highlighted methods that are resonant with my research project.

A/r/tography Creates Social Space

A/r/tographic projects create new spaces. In the “City of Richgate” project, Irwin and her collaborators developed two introductory questions: “What artistic products might be created through a community-engaged process examining the Chinese Canadian experience in the City of Richmond, a geographically and culturally hybrid place?” and “What is brought forward from a prior place in immigrant or diasporic culture and how is that culture and memory transformed through identity, place, and community?” (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 208). The collaborators

emphasize a/r/tographic inquiry prioritises the process not the product of inquiry, allowing for questions to “evolve as the shifting relationality within the project informs the direction of the inquiry” (p. 208). In 2004, the project was initially able to recruit six different immigrant families to participate (Irwin et al., 2008; Irwin et al., 2009). Over three years, the group of a/r/tographers used methods, such as long-form interviews, walking interviews sharing and discussion of photographs and memorabilia, original photography, and large group gatherings to gather participants stories and ideas. Reflecting on the different methods, Irwin highlights the walking interviews as being “quite generative” because the participants themselves had control over both the location and duration of the walks. This method gives the participant power to lead the researcher in the creative activity of making a path (Irwin et al., 2009).

Irwin (2008) believes a/r/tography can be used to create new physical, social, and cultural spaces. For example, the collaborators in the Richgate project expressed their original hope that all participants would work alongside them and become a/r/tographers, but that this turned out to be a challenge as some of the participants were more involved than others (Irwin et al., 2008). Over a decade later, Irwin feels that perhaps the participants were more a/r/tographers than she originally gave them credit for, explaining that whether people are continuously part of the creation process they can still have “moments or events” where they are meaningfully part of the process (Irwin, personal communication, April 6, 2020). Interestingly, in the post-project evaluations, it was clear that the participants’ biggest takeaway was meeting each other. The project had provided them an “opportunity for them to actually create community” (Irwin, personal communication, April 6, 2020). In other words, the most valuable part of the project for the participants was the space for people to come together and meet each other.

A/r/tography as Ritual

Bickel’s (2004; 2005; 2008) work with a/r/tography as ritual demonstrates how artistic practice can create space by taking an action and transforming it into a “creative form.” In Bickel’s view, a ritual creates a space, or a “sacred container” that can be either small and enclosed or larger depending on the situation (Bickel, personal communication, April 7, 2020). The container or structure created by ritual has the potential to support a group’s entry into a collective unconscious (Bickel, 2008, p. 90). Bickel has developed four stages of a/r/tography as ritual:

- 1) an intention which grounds and clarifies the purpose of the work to be done within the ritual,
- 2) a chosen and or created sacred space which acts as a container within which to do the work of the ritual,
- 3) an intentional form of witnessing that may or may not include other human beings, and
- 4) some form of closure that allows one to step outside of the ritual process and return to ordinary life. (Bickel, 2008, p. 89)

These stages (intention, sacred space, act of witnessing, and closure) are transferable to a variety of experiences. They allow for examination of existing actions as ritual or the curation of ritual. Imagining ritual as a “container” or “holder” resonates with the idea of creative practice as creative space. In other words, the ritual of the artistic experience creates a space that is held by the art. Bickel also points to the potential of the art to be a portal to unknown space, to help us

“see what we don’t usually see” (Bickel, personal communication, April 7, 2020). In this way, art can simultaneously be both a space and a portal to new space. The process of creating verbatim theatre can be seen as a form of ritual. Through creating meaningful relational encounters, this process creates place.

A/r/t/ography Resonates with Research-Based Theatre

Belliveau uses a methodology he describes as “research-based theatre,” a term that first emerged in the 1950s (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020). It is an “interdisciplinary approach that offers unique opportunities for knowledge generation and knowledge mobilization” (Belliveau & Nichols, 2017, p. 10). Although it is like a/r/t/ography in many ways, there is a research gap in comparing the two methodologies that has slowly begun to be addressed (Lea et al., 2011). Belliveau believes a/r/t/ography and research-based theatre are both still evolving methodologies, creating a certain fluidity between them. Depending on the context, one or the other might be used as the umbrella or the tentacles within that umbrella (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020). He also argues that both a/r/t/ography and research-based theatre could be used as methods or as methodologies. Belliveau sees research-based theatre as an invitation to people outside theatre and a chance for theatre to be used in different ways (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020).

Like a/r/t/ography’s notion of a community of practice, the creation and production of theatre as research (especially collective creation) has the potential to include roles that are connected and overlapping (Lea et al., 2011). Unlike other methods such as interviews or focus groups, theatre creation blurs the lines between participants in a way that creates less division between the researcher and informants (Norris, 2000). One relevant difference between a/r/t/ography and research-based theatre is that while a/r/t/ography may or may not offer a created output, research-based theatre will almost always have an output. Belliveau believes the true goal of theatre is to create something to eventually share with an audience. He likens this to a soccer team. As much as the team might practice, the end goal is to eventually play a game (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020).

There is a spectrum of research-based theatre. The spectrum includes a range of both performance and research techniques including factors such as where/how data are acquired, who the audience is, what the intention is, and how the art is created (Beck et al., 2011). Examples of two ends of the spectrum are “aesthetic performances based on systematic research” and “closed conference performances based on casual inquiry into historical fact” (Beck et al., 2011, p. 694). Belliveau (personal communication, April 6, 2020) points to a power imbalance that can occur if a theatre company is solely mining the data or if a stakeholder is just engaging the theatre company. I tried to work against this by inviting participants to continue to be a part of the play development process. Norris (2000) believes that drama’s potential as a “complete research activity” requires data to be “collected, analysed and presented in a dramatic fashion” (p. 45). He argues the potential of drama as research is fully realized not when one translates data into a play, but when the dramatic activities shape the presentation in the same way as quantitative research uses numerical data through all stages (Norris, 2000, p. 45). This connects to one of the aims of this research project, answering Norris’ (2000) call to use dramatic activities to shape all research activities.

One example of Belliveau's work is the research-based theatre play *Contact!Unload*, which Belliveau and a team of researchers, psychologists, and veterans developed to address Canadian veterans' experiences of returning to civilian life and dealing with trauma (Lea et al., 2018). Belliveau and the other theatre-based researchers worked with an existing veteran's transition program (VTP) where veterans had already been working together with counsellors and psychologists to process their experiences. One of the main therapeutic interventions used in the VTP is "therapeutic enactment," a five-phase process where veterans are asked to re-enact experiences in order to unpack them. This technique was instrumental in creating the play. The play was first performed in May of 2015 and has since been seen by over 1500 audience members across the world (Belliveau & Nicholls, 2017). The reaction to the piece has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the potential of theatre to communicate and connect in a way different than other media. As one participant noted, "A play is more impactful—newspaper articles will tell the facts, but the play will humanize the experience ... with various levels, nuances, and the delivery of the lines. The play shows the journey, rather than the product" (Belliveau & Nicholls, 2017, p. 6). The notion of a humanizing experience is especially relevant for this research.

Research-based theatre is the main method in my research project. Belliveau argues research-based theatre can be used as a methodology or a method. As I have described earlier in this chapter, I see a/r/tography as my main methodology because it encompasses my roles as an artist, researcher, and teacher. Because research-based theatre is a complex method, it is useful for some additional discussion of its definition, values, and potential impact. After this discussion, I return to the concept of the creation of humanizing place, arguing that the method of research-based theatre can be used to create humanizing place.

3.2.3 What is Research Based Theatre (RBT)?

Research-Based Theatre (RBT) as Relational Knowledge

The arts are a legitimate source of knowledge (Settee, 2013). Belliveau and Lea (2016) describe art-making as the heart of their work with research-based theatre (RBT). They believe theatre can and should be both art and research, describing RBT as a range of theatre practices connected to inquiry. They cite the work of Saldana in using theatre to communicate data and point to Norris's call for drama to shape the entire research process. Belliveau and Lea see the potential of RBT to be the 'something more' Norris calls for. To them, RBT is the re-telling of stories we know in a way that shows (as opposed to explains) and generates empathy. They describe RBT as requiring an artist and an audience. The outcome of an applied theatre or RBT project is a play (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). However, unlike traditional commercial theatre, the *process* of creating the play takes on equal importance as the outcome (Kay, 2000; Kupperts, 2019).

If artists and audiences are the main ingredients in RBT, it is crucial to understand their relationship. Bourdieu (1983) insists on relational thinking. The unpacking of relations allows us to problematize structures that exist. For example, Bourdieu identifies the traditional relationship between audience and theatre as an economic one. Theatre can easily be commodified

(Eckersall, 2009). Koppers (2019) uses the work of Illich to propose an alternative: “vernacular art” or art that is opposed to the idea of commodification (p. 21). Rather, vernacular art is a practice governed by values, creating a space of what Turner (2012) called “communitas” —a state of relationship outside normal structures (p.1). This repositioned relationship is an important topic because of the way it reframes the audience as participants in art as opposed to consumers of art.

RBT as “Applied Theatre”

The term “applied theatre” has resonance with RBT. A 1990s definition of applied theatre focused on theatre happening outside of traditional venues, but a more contemporary definition of applied theatre is theatre focused on community (Preston, 2016). I position RBT as a form of applied theatre, meaning theatre about the relationship between artist and audience, focused on community. Prendergast and Saxton (2016) acknowledge that there is no one definition of what applied theatre is, but they offer four major categories of applied theatre: ethics, aesthetics, participation, and assessment (p. 231). Each of these characteristics are useful to briefly discuss in relation to RBT.

Values and Intentions of RBT

Values can be seen as moral or ethical containers within which artistic work occurs (Nolan, 2022, personal communication). Settee (2013) explains that within Indigenous knowledges *how* something is done is as important as “what” is done, and the arts can teach values by the way the values are carried out within a process. It is crucial that RBT is governed by values and ethics that shape and guide the ability of the work with moral structure (Ermine, 2007). The theatre arts have the potential to create spaces of “relational reflexivity” with the public good as a goal (Tinius, 2018). Any contemporary practice has a political dimension, so a values-based framing can be seen as a kind of normative political theory (Howell, 1993). Values is a necessary topic to ensure ethical and moral processes.¹⁵

The intention of RBT is to have a therapeutic benefit for community (Cook and Belliveau 2018). Theatre has the potential to promote understanding and reflection at both the collective and individual levels—the social dynamic has become as important as aesthetics (Gallagher and Freeman 2016). Gallagher (2016) differentiates between empathy and sympathy. Sympathy is an emotion rooted in a feeling directed at an “other”, while empathy adds a curiosity to know and to engage with the other. If done well, theatre can create empathy so affecting it takes energy not to act (Gallagher, 2019, pp. 71-79). To describe this pull, Barone (2008) cites Felshin’s “hybrid cultural practice” as a mix of art, activism and community organizing (p. 488). Intention is a crucial topic because it positions participation and empathy as goals of RBT.

¹⁵ Specific values are not necessary to prescribe or study; however, from my own pre-COVID experience co-creating *Reasonable Doubt* in a traditional commercial theatre context I can suggest kindness, honesty, humility, trust, inclusion, and respect as useful and meaningful values to consider.

How Can We Measure the Impact of RBT?

How do we measure the impact of art? Unlike scientific work, artistic work does not have clearly defined standards of measurement. The arts have the potential to aid in the regeneration of communities, but it is challenging to measure their impacts (Kay, 2000). Neo-liberal hegemony creates a pressure to measure in quantitative ways (Preston, 2016). Theatre has the potential to discover insight in existing and new research (White and Belliveau, 2011). Within the method of RBT, the measurement of impact can be seen as an opportunity. Belliveau and Lea (2016) encourage thinking about evaluation of RBT as guideposts instead of a system of tests. They use the work of Belliveau and Prendergast to suggest 4 guideposts: creating balance, sharing work in academic articles, sharing work in the theatre, and honouring the research context (p. 11).

The current norms of RBT are useful in framing the potential for new ways to envision impact. Current assessment of theatre is bound by the contexts we know, and there needs to be more thinking done on how to measure both the quantitative and qualitative impacts of theatre (Prendergast and Saxton, 2016). The “audit culture” of our current society demands certain measures of success (Gallagher and Freeman, 2016, p. 78). This culture makes it difficult for theatre in general to show the power of its impact. Kay (2000) discusses the importance of both “hard” and “soft” impacts—and the need to show how the two impacts connect. For, example the connection of the feeling of wellbeing (a soft impact) connecting to job status (a hard impact). There are opportunities to think differently about impacts. For example, a global pandemic where a relatively unknown virus is impacting the world offers a potentially powerful metaphor. What if we began to think about the arts as a virus, using an epidemic model based on behaviour and influence (Painter, 2012). Viruses affect people differently based on their age, health, and geographic location. With a virus, we know there will be spread and impact, but we are not exactly sure how or why. If we start to play with this (or similar) concepts in the arts, then instead of attempting to measure the impact of the arts in pre-determined ways we might instead trace and track the different impacts. New possibilities of impact thinking are a worthy topic because it allows RBT evaluation criteria to accurately reflect the context of the project and not being pre-determined by a funder or other authority (Kay, 2000).

3.3 Research-Based Theatre and the Creation of Place

This dissertation focuses on the creation of humanizing place. The method of research-based theatre can measure existing places and create new places (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020). As a theatre artist, Belliveau explains he is always aware of the meaning(s) of the literal physical space that a work is being performed in, offering the example of his production of *Contact!Unload* being performed in an armoury. He also believes that theatre has the potential to create a less literal space, “a space of understanding” (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020). He offers the example of a piece of research-based theatre he worked on called *Alone in the Ring* about people with physical disabilities who work in health care and the challenges they face, such as the public assuming they are patients and not providers of care. He believes that the play created a space for the public to think about (and hopefully understand) something that they did not know about before. One of the attributes of theatre as a communication tool is that data can be presented “not as concrete findings but as openings through which audience

members could co-construct understandings” (Lea et al., 2011, p. 11). These openings are new non-literal spaces, which are shared by audience members in a way that creates a forum or a shared experience. As one audience participant noted after experiencing *Contact!Unload*,

you get to share it with other people at the same time, so it’s not an isolated experience ... you feel connected to a community, new understandings emerge through the play ... and a lot of emotion post-play, because an event took place, a shared experience in the theatre. (Belliveau and Nicholls, 2017, p. 6)

RBT has the potential to create shared places of encounter. Mitchell et al (2006) explain the process of making a play about dementia based on their research. They were looking for alternative ways to disseminate their research findings. For example, a theatre production creates a larger more accessible place for research to be engaged with than a traditional journal. It is possible to tour a play to a variety of different locations (as the authors did). It is unlikely the journal article would have the same uptake at different locations. Without the play the places at the conferences, schools, and public forums do not exist. The opportunity the arts provide then, is to raise the consciousness of a group in a way that creates a place for the group to have agency. The connections that happen after the play is performed happen in the place created by the play. These connections are what Block calls “models of encounter,” in the way they create engagement among citizens (cited in Fischlin and Nandorfy, 2012, p. 5-6). Thinking of RBT as constructed brings awareness to how place is constructed during the process.

The place created by art can allow for more participation by audiences. There is a problematic ambiguity in the arts regarding terms like “outreach” and “inclusion” (Kawashima, 2006). Freire’s work shows that public participation cannot be engendered without public awareness and consciousness raising (Breed & Prentki, 2018). To have the potential to engage and connect people, theatre could engage audiences in the way Boal (1985) encourages: before, during, and after the actual “performance.” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). Boal’s “Theatre of the Opressed” techniques can also be used to rehearse challenging real-life scenarios, with the aim of improving by de-escalating negative reactions (Alvarez, 2020). Prendergast and Saxton (2016) categorize different levels of engagement to illustrate their point. They see the steps to engagement as attraction, engagement, commitment, and then experience. Traditional theatres often start at attraction and then go directly to experience. Applied theatre projects have additional steps of participation built in. This type of active and thorough engagement in process also builds reciprocity and trust. Active participation is a key ingredient of RBT, and a useful topic for discussion by traditional theatres.

3.3.1 Participation Architecture

If participation in a theatre experience creates place, how might this place be used and supported? Theatre makers must pay attention to how their work is being communicated to audiences (Gaskell and Taylor, 2004). Sotelo-Castro (2009) offers the analytical framework of “participation cartography” to draw attention to audience experience in performance works where they are integrally involved in the performance (p.1). Participation cartography looks at the place that is created by and for engagement (Breed and Prentki, 2018). This place can be literal or non-literal, and can include physical, temporal, imagined, or digital spaces. Sotelo-

Castro's (2009) critique of *Running Stitch* centres on the lack of any "sharing mechanism" for audience participants to engage in a discussion and or share reflections. He uses Heddon's work linking sharing and consciousness raising to explain his belief that sharing can enrich our experiences and expand our views (Sotelo-Castro, 2009). This is important in the development of individuals, but also the development of communities.

Mapping participants' experiences is an insightful way to analyse the audience's role in theatre. However, it is not the same thing as creating a sharing mechanism or a support for the audience experience. There is an opportunity then to move from "participation cartography" to what I propose we call a 'participation architecture.' This reframing would encourage the design and creation of intentionally built places of engagement for participants. Like in architecture, plans and designs can be adapted and scaled depending on the use, but fundamentals of the structure remain the same.

3.3.2 Examples of Engagement Structures

There are examples of structures for engagement. Hignorani (2018) explains the three-fold engagement strategy of a recent opera production. The production itself was only one aspect of the engagement. The other two aspects were the creation of networks between the artists, potential audience members and partner organizations, and the sharing of the creative methodology. These networks developed relationships and created stakeholders. The space created by these networks allowed for relationships. Similarly, Myers (2018) describes how relational space can be created through the practice of shared walking. Quite simply by two people taking the time to walk and talk together, understanding and empathy is created that was not there before. Merrill's (2018) work on the digital offer gives a clear example of the creation of participatory space. He argues that by involving the public, there is a re-distribution of roles, and that the internet is the new agora, insisting that contemporary theatre must always ask the question: "What's the digital offer" (Merrill, 2018, p. 194). These examples are important sub-topics for inspiring new forms of participation architecture.

Facilitation of audience dialogue is another example of an engagement structure. Facilitation is a "pedagogy of process" empowering participants by creating a dialogue and shedding light on social relationships (Preston, 2016). By sharing and discussing the art, Nessler (2018) argues that people have the potential to feel more connected to each other. She cites examples of audience members connecting during and after the talkback. The artistic experience has the potential to trigger catharsis because the art is connected to us but outside of us. Nessler shares examples of people discussing elements of the play to share personal feelings. She believes some audience members may not have had a "platform" for discussing these issues before. Nessler is talking about the play—and more specifically the discussion after—as a structure for people to share their experiences. Facilitation is included as a key topic of RBT because of its use as an element of participation architecture.

3.4. Research Creation Project

Using a/r/tography as my methodology and research-based theatre as my principal method, I developed a research creation project. Artistic exploration and creation are the poesis of a/r/tography and as such are the heart of this research project. The research creation project was a collaboration between Sum Theatre and the Pleasant Hill community in Saskatoon. To ensure this was a collaborative, responsive, and ethical process, significant time was spent gathering information through creating a relationship between Sum Theatre and the Pleasant Hill community. In fact, when the interview process was scheduled to begin, the world was surprised by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, I was dismayed by this surprise. It seemed like an unwelcome delay to the work. However, after consulting elder and cultural advisor Maria Campbell, I saw this delay as an opportunity. Maria instructed me to “go lay down tobacco for Grandfather COVID,” as this slowing down of the research process would give me more time to build relationships with people in the Pleasant Hill Community. I did as I was told, and Maria was right. The extra year of time was a gift. The extended relationship building and interview process allowed for stronger relationships with a greater number of community members. After the interview process was complete, we were able to design and execute the research creation project. Details about the research creation project are included in Chapter Five. The initial relationship building and information gathering was designed to take place over three arts-based phases:

3.4.1. Phase 1—Interviews

Working together with Sum Theatre artists as research assistants, I conducted 100 semi-structured interviews (Hay, 2016) posing open ended questions to a diverse cross-section of Pleasant Hill community members. Interviews were conducted in a personal, relational way, with the focus being the participants’ experiences (Brinkmann, 2013). All participants gave their consent to participate through University of Saskatchewan approved consent forms. These consent forms are included as Appendices A and B. Using open ended questions in a more relaxed interview structure has been described as “slow interviewing.” This more conversational method allows interview participants to have more control over both the direction of their interview and freedom to make changes to the transcripts and notes by giving participants access to their data (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). Interview participants included children, youth, elders, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, business leaders, religious leaders, housed residents, teachers, people who work for non-profit organisations, and random sample interceptor interviews in parks and other public spaces in the community.¹⁶ Recruitment of interview subjects was done relationally. I began with interviewing my collaborators on the Pleasant Hill Community Association Executive and they recommended individuals and organisations I should speak with, and areas of the neighbourhood I should post the recruitment notice/spend time in.

¹⁶ I provided and discussed the consent form to all participants. However, I acknowledge my privilege as a tall white male walking around the community. Perhaps this created a power dynamic that was uncomfortable for some participants. I did my best to explain to participants that it was their interview not my interview, and that they could pause or stop the interview at any time. Each interviewee was offered a cash honorarium for their time.

Due to COVID limitations the initial fifteen interviews were conducted over zoom or phone, but the remaining eighty five interviews were conducted in person. The purpose of these interviews was to gather current qualitative data about Pleasant Hill, including the ideas and dreams residents have for their community. Participants were offered the chance to review and amend the transcripts of their interviews before the material was used in the research creation project. This was only possible when people who were interviewed agreed to provide me with contact information to keep in touch with them.

In these interviews, Sum Theatre artists asked open ended questions. Follow-up questions were also asked, depending on what the person shared. The first set of open-ended questions were imaginative and related to the community. They were:

1. Finish the thought: Pleasant Hill is...?
2. Finish the thought: My community is/community is...?¹⁷
3. Finish the thought: Art is...?
4. If there was one thing you would like the rest of Saskatoon to know about Pleasant Hill, what would it be?

After the imaginative questions, the interviews shifted to more focused, specific questions about the community. These questions were:

5. What are examples of art happening in Pleasant Hill right now?
6. What are the biggest challenges facing Pleasant Hill?
7. If money and time were not factors, what three “blue sky” ideas could you imagine that would make your community stronger?

As with the case study questions, these questions stem from my conceptual framework. I am particularly interested in place-based humanization, so this project works with the people of the Pleasant Hill community to understand this process through the lens of their community. These questions are also included in Appendix C – Semi Structured Interview Guide. In Chapters Five and Six I discuss detailed results from the interviews.

3.4.2. Phase 2—Research Creation Project

Working together with my collaborator, Sum Theatre company dramaturge Yvette Nolan, I edited the 100 interviews into a short verbatim theatre play (Padget, 1987), called *Pleasant Hill Talks*, to be shared back to the Pleasant Hill community. Instead of playwrights imagining fictional situations in the Pleasant Hill community, this method allowed Pleasant Hill residents to hear the thoughts and feelings of the people they live in community with. This method of creatively gathering and sharing data answers Norris’s (2000) call for theatre techniques to be used throughout the research process.

¹⁷ It is important to note that question two was asked both as “My community is...?” and “Community is...?”. This subtle difference yielded different responses. In response to the “my” question, people tended to speak about their specific community, as opposed to their definition of community, creating overlap with question one. Respondents’ definitions of community were the more interesting and useful responses.

3.4.3. Phase 3 —Sharing and Moving Forward

I worked closely with Pleasant Hill Community Association and Sum Theatre, as well as our community partners, to organize a community gathering evening on April 4, 2022. We invited both the 100 interview participants and all community members. The event was open to all and a free meal was served, thanks to the generosity of the Saskatoon United Way.

At the event community members experienced the play. Initially the plan was to have community members vote on the “blue sky” ideas arising from the interviews. The thought was that this would be a fair way for community to give direction on what the next steps for the research creation project should be. The thinking was that these voting results would be tallied, and the top choice will be reported back to the community. However, after discussing this idea with elder and cultural advisor Maria Campbell, we changed the process. Instead of the voting process, Maria suggested dividing the community members into four groups, and using the Indigenous method of a talking circle. We arranged one Pleasant Hill Community Association representative and one Sum Theatre team member per circle. The pair worked together to facilitate and take notes.

In Chapters Five and Six, I braid together the description the story of my research journey, the script of Pleasant Hill Talks and academic analysis.

3.4.4. Phase 4—Research Creation Project 2.0

The day after the *Pleasant Hill Talks* event (April 5, 2022) Sum Theatre lead artists met with executive members from the Pleasant Hill Community Association to discuss the event and what they had heard. From this discussion and follow up meetings with additional members of the community association, the research creation project was agreed upon. Sum Theatre created *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0*, which was shared with the Pleasant Hill Community on October 27, 2022. The script of *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0* is included as Appendix D.

3.4.5 Research Questions Table

Table 3.1 Research Questions and Methods table illustrates which research methods were used to answer each of my overarching research questions.

Research Method →	Literature Review/ Document Analysis	Case Study Interviews	Interviews	Research Creation Project	Personal Self - Reflection (Primary Researcher)
Research Question ↓					
What are the methods of different companies using the arts for social change?	X	X	X		

How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?	X	X	X	X	X
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3.5 Analysis

For this project, all interview data were transcribed by an external transcriber using a standardized transcription key. Transcription includes notating the non-verbal communication such as pauses, coughs, and interruptions to transmit meaning (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This level of detail in transcription is always important but especially so when it comes to verbatim theatre where the actors will use the transcripts and the transcription key to re-enact these moments as well as the words. The exploratory case study interviews were also transcribed, though not with the same level of details, as they were not going to be used in a verbatim theatre script. To organize the case study interviews, I reviewed and categorized each interview into bigger groupings and then coded them in relation to the questions as well as other thematic findings. These findings were immediately applied in the research-creation project. The Pleasant Hill community interview data were “coded” in two ways. Initially, I worked with my collaborator Yvette Nolan using our artistic “playwrights’ coding” process to create the verbatim theatre play *Pleasant Hill Talks*. Then, I engaged Rachel Tang, a senior researcher at the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research, to code interview data, assisted by NVIVO qualitative data management and analysis software. This software assists with the process of highlighting key themes to be organised, managed, coded, and sorted.

I wanted to engage an external coder for the second type of coding for multiple reasons. Firstly, I was curious to compare the two types of coding. How would our findings be similar or different? Secondly, I was interested in adding a dimension of triangulation with an additional analyst, to contribute to the trustworthiness of the research. Finally, because playwrights’ coding is a highly creative, experimental, and not traditionally academic form of coding, I wanted to ensure this project (and this community) were served with the same degree of rigour as other research projects of this scale. As I reviewed the literature about qualitative data analysis, I confirmed these reasons for coding were worthwhile and found additional arguments for the data triangulation (Robson, 2011).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative research is a useful way to understand ‘insider’ perspectives (Wray et al., 2007). In this process I was both the primary research instrument and interpreter. It was up to me to find involved patterns and narratives. In reviewing my interviews, the analytical process involved preparing and comparing of transcripts. It is important to point out that analysis is always happening, from the moment of the interview. However, analysis needs to be systematic. Systematic does not mean quantitative counting, rather it is about complexity and nuance. It can also relate to a planned process that contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of a study. This complexity involved recognizing themes in data, breaking down data into units, and then

refining, defining and elaborating upon these units. These data units can be seen as, “codes,” which lead to broader themes and concepts. It is possible to look for concepts in a variety of ways: by following the research question, by comparing interviews, by following stories and/or figures of speech, or comparing directly or indirectly (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This type of analysis can be linked to grounded theory, where concepts emerge from the data as opposed to the literature. Though Rubin and Rubin advocate for a systematic approach, they do acknowledge that the researcher’s and/or analyst’s feel for the data allows them to connect themes in a way that discover and describe.

Analysis is intended to help understand the meaning of data. Within that, coding is a tool to generate concepts (Gough & Scott, 2000). However, there is a chicken and egg scenario at play. Is the appropriate method of coding determined by what is meaningful in the data, or are the meaningful things revealed by the chosen coding method? What comes first? (Gough & Scott, 2000). Triangulation of contrasting or complementary coding offers a chance for the chicken and the egg to tie for first place.

Triangulation

Triangulation is seen to strengthen research and can refer to several different approaches, including the use of multiple researchers, methods, theories, or data sources (Denzin, 1978). Challenges of triangulation include extra time and money; however, this investment of resources creates the potential for seeing the data in new ways by juxtaposing contrasting approaches and questions (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). Although triangulation was not required for my research ethics clearance, it nevertheless strengthens the ethics of my project. I am grateful to have had the resources to triangulate my data in multiple ways.

Triangulation with Multiples Sources

The wide range of interview participants in my research creation project is itself a form of triangulation. By interviewing a diverse range of people who all identify as having connections to the Pleasant Hill community, the data came from multiple perspectives. Diversity of sources strengthens internal validity (Jentoft and Olsen, 2017). There is an assumption that triangulation can lead to “truth”, but its purpose is not to reveal some exact answer but rather to paint a more nuanced picture (Jentoft and Olsen, 2017), in this case multiple pictures of different participant realities. In other words, triangulation is not a still frame of one definitive answer, but rather an evolving kaleidoscopic view of the world in which the research questions and answers live (Jentoft and Olsen, 2017). Triangulation of the different voices within a community then serves to confirm, alter, and augment the stories of those within the community (Whitmore et al., 2019).

Triangulation with Multiple Research Instruments

Engaging multiple researchers in this project creates opportunities for different perspectives. When I began my research journey, I thought there was such a thing as objectivity. However, I now see that because the primary research instruments in qualitative research are human beings, it is important to embrace the inherent subjectivity, as everyone is an independent subject with

positionality (Blair, 2015). It is also important to recognize that the qualitative researcher is often a part of many different stages of the research process.

Guided by the value of reciprocity, researchers and participants can work together towards a shared outcome in a way that builds relationships. However, a consequence of relational closeness is the blurring of boundaries between researcher and participant. In the best kind of way these relationships may influence the objectivity of data because researchers have feelings of care for the participants. Involving multiple researchers in the analysis is one way to increase the verification of data validity. This allows for both the cross checking of themes and for researchers to share the emotional load of the research impact (Wray et al, 2007). To account for my (potential) feelings of care for my participants, I collaborated with Yvette Nolan in the research creation process. As an additional playwright/researcher who did not conduct any of the interviews, Yvette was able to support the process with her dramaturgical perspective.

Triangulation with Different Approaches

Triangulation with different methods of analysis provides further opportunity for patterns to emerge (Sullivan et al., 2020). As described in detail in Chapter Five, the two different methods of coding revealed some similar but also some different patterns. These different patterns serve complementary but contrasting purposes for audiences inside and outside the research process (Gough and Scott, 2000). For example, more granular data allows for detailed comparisons and analysis, especially when it comes to local factors (Sullivan et al., 2020).

This is certainly clear in this project, where the playwrights' coding was perfect for the community presentations and the NVIVO coding was helpful for the written report.

Triangulation as an A/r/tographic Experiment

A creative approach to analysis is in line with my methodology of a/r/tography. Using the analytical methods only in the way they are outlined in literature is limiting because the right tool might not even exist. A combined approach to analysis is more pragmatic and involves taking the time to find a way of coding that responds to the data and serves the project. A bespoke form of analysis brings a thoughtfulness to methodological choices (Blair, 2015). This thoughtfulness opens the door to creativity. As an artist/researcher, I wanted to experiment with different forms of analysis and investigate how they are connected.

Due to its creative nature, no two a/r/tographic projects are the same, and a/r/tography continues to evolve in multiple ways as a methodology rooted in possibility (Lasczik et al., 2022). For example, social a/r/tography adds a community-based approach as a fourth ingredient in addition to art, research, and education (Marin-Viadel et al., 2019). In any a/r/tographic project, writing and art are seen to be interconnected and interdependent (Springgay et al., 2008). We can also look for interplays of art and writing where the aim is to look beyond the borders and instead get tangled up in overlaps and messy layers of meaning (Lasczik et al. 2022). A/r/tography uses the metaphor of the rhizome, and rhizoanalyses embraces the interconnected nature of a/r/tography and applies it to the analysis phase. The analysis is not an end point but rather a part of the web of meanings (Lasczik et al., 2022). With this approach the analysis of this project can also be a creative act, tangled together with the other elements of the artistic creation.

3.6 Summary: Methodology, Methods, and Values

This chapter has included discussion of my research context, values, standpoint, and reflexivity. I have also described my chosen methodologies: exploratory case studies and a/r/tography. I have discussed the use of these methodologies in relation to my research project. I believe both methodologies are qualitative. The exploratory case study interviews were conducted to inform the second stage of the research. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather an opportunity to get practical, relevant tips from international leaders on how to best do community-engaged arts work. Chapter Four includes discussion of the findings of the case study interviews.

A/r/tography is my main methodology. I have described four theoretical arguments for the use of a/r/tography: the way a/r/tography honours contiguous roles, its rhizomatic/relational approach, the way it pursues possibility, and the potential of a/r/tography to create new social space. The four theoretical arguments for a/r/tography are verified by the practical examples explained above. Irwin's (2008) description of evolving questions and the space her project created for social relations provided some relevant guideposts for the early visioning of this research project. Bickel's (2004) stages of ritual offer concrete ways to think about the process of creating place. If a/r/tography equals ritual and ritual creates place and place creates relationships—then the stages of ritual are a useful part of my ongoing work. Additionally, Bickel suggests examining the rituals of a city that are already happening. This idea resonates with Forklift Danceworks and their work with different labour force communities. Finally, Belliveau's articulation of a space of understanding of research-based theatre projects provides clear ways of thinking about how to work with theatre creation as a method. His idea that a/r/tography and research-based theatre can have a fluid relationship creates an opportunity for a flexible and dynamic research creation project. Belliveau believes theatre productions have a "three-act structure" where the performance is the second act, and the space of pre/post engagement are the first and third acts (Belliveau, personal communication, April 6, 2020). This idea is a useful way to conceptualize the non-literal places created by the theatre arts. This connects directly to my theoretical framework, and how Indigenous knowledge can help us rethink place.

I have discussed how I will use a/r/tography as my methodology and research-based theatre as my primary method, but in the fluid way Belliveau (Ibid) describes. As explained in my introduction, I am interested in investigating Norris's (2000) idea that dramatic methods could be used throughout the process and answering the call that "new forms of research-based theatre need to be encouraged and built off each other" (Beck et al., 2011, p. 698). My overarching research question is "How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?" By using a/r/tography as my main methodology, I create the opportunity for new knowledge to be discovered in response to my research question. There is also the possibility to move the methodology forward. Of course, as a/r/tography shows us, this is all connected in one rhizomatic system. Included in this system is the connection of a/r/tography to the method of research-based theatre. I explain what research-based theatre is and how I will use it as my main method, offering insights into its values, intentions, and impacts. I conclude this section by arguing that research-based theatre can create new place, and I articulate an opportunity to create a "participation architecture" to support audience engagement in theatre experiences. I offer some brief examples of what those engagement structures might look like.

The last section of this chapter includes a brief description of the design of the research creation projects: *Pleasant Hill Talks* and *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0*. I explain how I use the method of verbatim theatre, including interviews, play creation and public sharing/discussion, to move the work forward in a good way. A research questions table illustrates which stages of the research process serve to answer which research questions. I explain how data were analyzed, foreshadowing the discussions of Chapters Five and Six, where I provide a detailed description of how both analysis methods organised and analysed the data, including a discussion about the different analysis compare/contrast. To honour the rhizomatic structure of this project this information is braided together in these chapters with the story of the research and the art itself.

In the following chapter I present two companies who use the arts for social change and who both have methodologies that I have not seen in Canada. Both Forklift Danceworks of Austin, Texas, and Big hART of Australia commit to spending significant time in community and then respond to their chosen communities' issues with art. After a description of the work of these two companies and an introduction of some of their artists, I discuss the findings from the exploratory case studies, connect them to the conceptual framework established in chapter two, and summarize how these findings were applied to my research project.

Chapter Four: Tools for Relationship: Case Study Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings from my two exploratory case studies. I chose to use semi-structured interviews as the primary method for the exploratory case studies, as it allowed me the opportunity to have intentionally open-ended conversations with the artists who work with each of these companies.

My focus was on the process of making art and connecting with communities. In both companies, the artist/facilitators are the people responsible for both the art making and the community connection work. At this time, I am not interested in other areas of the companies' work, such as governance, administration, or financial management. The goal of these exploratory case study interviews was to understand how these two companies engaged with communities through the art-making process. By having these process-based conversations, I was able to distill some tangible "take-aways" which I implemented in my own research creation project. It is also notable that some of these take-aways are potentially resonant for traditional (non-research based) theatre practices.

This chapter begins with short descriptions of both Big hART and Forklift Danceworks. I briefly outline some of the history and values of each company and offer some examples of their work. Then, I distill interview findings for each company, organised into key themes (Hay, 2016) under the broad categories of community, process, partners, outcomes, and challenges. For each key theme I isolate some important take-aways relevant to my theoretical and practical work. For each take-away I weave in connections to the artists and scholars I cited in Chapter Two. I conclude this chapter with some discussion comparing the findings from the interviews with artists from both companies and how these conclusions relate to my conceptual framework.

4.1.2 *Big hART*

I chose Big hART because of its international reputation and the longevity of its artistic practice. Their mission is to demonstrate that "It's harder to hurt someone if you know their story." Their work "sheds light on invisible stories, bringing hidden injustice into the mainstream. These stories make it harder to hurt someone—on an individual, community and policy level" (Big hART, n.d.).

For over 25 years, Big hART has been creating dynamic theatre experiences directly connected to communities. Their initial production was inspired by the closure of a paper mill in the industrial town of Burnie, Tasmania. After the success of this experience, Big hART developed a methodology that they have since used in communities across Australia (Big hART, n.d.).

A pertinent example of Big hART's work in the construction of social capital is their project with Sydney's Northcott housing estate. The Northcott housing estate is Australia's single largest public housing area. In 2001, the Northcott facility was home to extremely marginalized people

and was dealing with a variety of challenges (Coggan et al., 2008, p. 4). Big hART began a participatory art program working with residents and other stakeholders, including police and the local health authority. They believed that “art, as a medium, can enable individuals and groups to become more employable, more involved, more confident and more active in contributing to the development of their local communities” (Kay, 2000, pp. 14–24).

From 2001 to 2007, Big hART worked with the Northcott community. The process was extremely powerful. It showed that “a community development model of involving residents in story telling can build social cohesion, resulting in the residents feeling empowered and valued” (Coggan et al., 2008, p. 4) This cohesion increased community participation and overall safety (Coggan et al., 2008). Big hART’s work with the residents of Northcott created social networks and trust. The residents who shared their stories

felt validated and shared this feeling with others. Interest in story-making opportunities snowballed. People began to feel they knew their neighbours and no longer feared them. Differences that once fuelled fear, stigma and discrimination now began to nurture togetherness and a sense of community was enhanced. (Coggan et al., 2008, p. 6)

At the end of the six-year project, the Northcott community was noticeably changed. They experienced a decrease in violent crime and vandalism, a reduction in unit vacancies, an increase in tenant participation and access to support services, and a reduction in the stigma associated with public housing and the Northcott Estate (Coggan et al., 2008, p. 7). Big hART’s work on this project provides an example both of how the arts can help construct social capital and of why the construction of social capital is important. Their work “demonstrated the way the arts can be a powerful catalyst for change” and that “trust is a product of participation in activities that promote cooperation” (Coggan et al., 2008, p. 9).

4.2 Big hART Exploratory Case Study

4.2.1 Big hART Artists

Big hART operates several different programs across Australia. The Big hART interviews were with different groups of artists across the country. I conducted five interviews in total, including a mix of individual and group interviews. Listed below are the artists who were a part of each interview and a brief note about each of them based on how they introduced themselves in the interview. It is helpful to note that Big hART uses the title “producer” to describe an artist/facilitator who works (and most often lives) in a community. The interview groups were:

Scott Rankin and Genevieve Dugard

Big hART founder and creative director Scott Rankin is also a playwright. Genevieve Dugard is Big hART’s Associate Creative director and is also a designer for theatre and events.

Aimee Kepa

Producer Aimee Kepa had been working in Roebourne for almost three years at the time of the interview. Roebourne was the first place she started working with Big hART.

Mark Leahy (Neo learning)

Big hART producer Mark Leahy is a musician and has worked in theatre. He connected to Big hART when he worked as musical director for one of their projects in Roebourne. He then worked as an associate artist leading song writing workshops. Since 2019 he has also been the creative producer of the Neo-learning project, a digital arts platform for Australian primary schools based off the work Big hART does in the Roebourne community.

Rachel Small, Angela Prior and Holly Rankin-Smith (Positive Futures)

Rachel Small is producer for Big hART's Positive Futures program in Tasmania, which she describes as a broad youth program. At the time of the interview, she had been with Big hART for three years. Angela Prior is state manager for Tasmania. At the time of the interview, she had been with Big hART for 6 years. Holly Rankin-Smith is the associate state manager in Tasmania. At the time of the interview, she had worked with Big hART on and off for about ten years.

Nat O'Donnell, Maggie Abraham and Fallon Te Paa (Project O)

Nat O'Donnell is a full-time producer for Big hART in Frankston with Project O after having worked in Roebourne ten years prior to the interview and part time in Victoria. Maggie Abraham is a musician and works for Big hART as a community producer in Frankston with Project O and as an associate artist across Australia after having worked in Tasmania and Melbourne for three years prior to the interview. Fallon Te Paa's background is in traditional Māori performance and martial arts. She works as a community producer for Project O in Frankston. She came into the Project O program by facilitating some Mauraku (traditional Māori martial arts) workshops.

4.2.2 Big hART Domains of Change

All the Big hART artists spoke of their company's "domains of change" in the interviews. This concept comes out of the company's experience trying to measure change and impact in their work. They have found proof that change has little meaning and that funders are overfocused on metrics. To discuss impact, they have chosen to follow the guidance of "realistic evaluation," which asks not "What works? or, 'Does this program work?'" but asks instead, "What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?" (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p. 2). Big hART has borrowed the term "domains of change" from the field of development (Davies et al., 2017, p. 82). As opposed to being seen as a specific indicator which is measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, a domain of change deliberately loosely defined, so the users can have influence (Dart & Davies, 2003). Big hART then sees the domains of change as "places to look" during the work or "signposts along the way" of the journey of the work. Big hART's Domains of Change are:

1. Enhancing health and wellbeing through networks and relationships
2. Building community through creative spaces
3. Developing agency and a sense of efficacy
4. Using participatory arts for an expressive life

5. Constructing productive lives: aspirations and work of value and meaning
6. Strengthening capacities and dispositions for learning
7. (Re)inventing identity through cultural practices (Davies et al., 2017, pp. 82-114)

Big hART's artists make it clear that these domains are interconnected and interrelated. In the interviews it was clear each artist understood the domains of change and felt they were useful values-based signposts to guide the work. Due to their interconnected nature, they are all relevant to my research project. However, numbers one and two are particularly resonant, because of their emphasis on networks and spaces.

4.2.3 Big hART Programs

For over twenty-eight years Big hART has collaborated with fifty-two communities across Australia to co-create dozens of different artistic programs. Big hART uses the key words make, build, and change to describe their work. More specifically, they "Make art, build community and drive change" (Big hART, n.d.). Instead of detailed descriptions of each of Big hART's programs, below are brief overviews of three current programs that the artists interviewed are a part of facilitating. Those programs are: The New Roebourne Project, Neo Learning, and Project O.

The New Roebourne Project

Big hART has been working in New Roebourne since 2011. Programming in New Roebourne includes a series of workshops, performance pieces, and art programs divided into five program streams. They are delivered simultaneously with the goal of building community skills, resilience, and pride. For example, one of the program streams is *Songs of Peace*, which begins as song writing workshops in the community and prisons, and ends in a large outdoor annual concert. (Big hART, n.d.).

Neo Learning

Big hART has been developing the Neo Learning project since 2012. Neo Learning is an online learning platform designed for and accessible to all primary school teachers and students across Australia. The content is created and developed at Big hART's digital lab in Roebourne. The program's goal is to make quality First Nations arts content, resources, and virtual experiences easily available for use in the primary school system (Big hART, n.d.). Leahy says the platform is digital arts education, but because of its roots in the Roebourne community it has an Indigenous perspective.

Project O

Big hART has been offering Project O since 2014. The program was originally piloted in the north-west coast area, a region designated by the federal government as a location with a significant amount of family violence. The program has since been developing in three other regions. (Big hART, n.d.) Big hART describes their belief that long term change is fueled by primary prevention. Primary prevention is the main goal of Project O. The program supports

young women to work towards change in communities traditionally affected by family violence. Project O does this by having the participants engage in workshops and mentoring opportunities. For example, these workshops include *Colourathon*—a twenty-four-hour fundraising marathon led by young women in collaboration with local businesses and community leaders (Big hART, n.d).

4.2.4 Big hART Interview Findings

My conceptual framework is rooted in the Indigenous worldview of *wâhkôhtowin*, taught to me by elder Maria Campbell. *wâhkôhtowin* sees all beings (human and more than human) as related. This relatedness happens in place, which I have explained is space endowed with meaning. In using the arts to rethink social capital, I suggest that social capital can be seen as networks of relations, and that these relations serve to humanize. I believe the theatre arts have a unique potential to create places of systematic humanization. These places are processes. To support my theoretical and practical work it was crucial for me to understand the processes of the two case study companies. In both exploratory case study interviews I used a question set of four basic questions, inspired by my conceptual framework.

These questions led to further discussion including the challenges of the work and how the success of the work is measured. After reviewing the interview transcripts, I began my analysis by categorising the responses into the following groupings:

1. Community
2. Process and Methods
3. Partnerships
4. Measurement of Outcomes
5. Challenges

Within each category I have outlined the major points shared by artists and then isolated key “take away” learnings. I have created sub-headings related to relevant take-away methods.

Community

The first question I asked in each interview was “How does your work build community?”

Big hART founder and creative director Scott Rankin says the work of their company had a practical beginning: it was initially a response to a little town in Tasmania losing its mill and the desire to assist people in changing their social trajectory if they wanted to do so. Rankin objects to the notion of “building community” because it implies that the community is in stasis and that the artists are some sort of environmental architects. Instead, he describes it as “the flow of change,” explaining that change is happening all the time and that there are invitations into the flow.

Rankin questions whether communities, cities or nations really exist, speculating whether they are an “emerging poem” or story that is in flux. If these communities are constructed, then it is possible to influence their dynamics. Big hART’s motto has always been “it’s harder to hurt

someone if you know their story” and Rankin explains that this means “visibility is primary prevention.” He sees the arts as way to “re-include” people into the stories of spaces where they have been excluded. This works against the fact that it is easier to hurt someone if you do not know their story.

The ideas of problem solving and sustainability are problematic for Rankin: instead he advocates for “abundant-ability” (Rankin, personal communication, 2023). He believes lived experiences should be framed as assets rather than deficits. Small says she feels Rankin’s asset-based thinking is very important. Always trying to think of what is there in a community as opposed to what is not there, is a move away from the standard deficit approach often used by service providers. Rankin-Smith agrees, explaining that asset-based thinking also relates to people. Rankin-Smith reflects on Dugard talking about Project O and how when the project started there were girls in the community who had the skills inherent for their success, but it was the *opportunities* that were not there. The girls were there. They had stories to share. According to Rankin, individual stories are one of the last things people have. Individual stories to Rankin also serve as canaries in the coal mine for the health of society. He feels our ways of knowing connect directly to places because knowledge is transferred in places. In this way it is important to think about places of knowing.

As described above, Big hART’s work in different places is guided by their “domains of change.” Rankin-Smith says the best framework to discuss the strategies for the work are these domains of change. Small points directly to the domains of change in connection to community. She describes their Positive Futures as being in a stage of growth. The core program has been for teenage girls and was originally established in response to their region having one of the highest rates of family violence in the country. The program began with Big hART staff doing exploratory theatre workshops. Small feels it is now about skills building. Small asserts the Positive Futures program builds community among the young women participants by creating shared experiences helpful to them. She clarifies that the space of the program allows the participants the opportunity to form different bonds than they otherwise would. Small says that the root of the project is to find positive elements in the community that might not have been found before.

These positive connections can also happen between different communities. Small describes a gathering where girls in communities fifty kilometres apart came together for a round table discussion and realised they were both facing the same issues in their respective communities. This was a big realisation for the girls as they had not thought that other girls were having the same experience as they were. Small says this connection created a new kind of confidence generated by community: “they realized that there was a really strong sense of oh my gosh now we can do something because we recognise this in each other and we’re not alone.”

Big hART’s work supports the flow of change in community in many ways, according to Kepa. Primarily she says it is about facilitating spaces and opportunities for things that already exist in communities and that can be nurtured. Prior describes Big hART’s work as an ecology. She feels that the work creates a healthier society through regenerative practice. Prior describes multiple communities: the physical geographical communities, the communities around the work that is made, and the communities of those making the work. She says the communities around the

work are built with the intent to affect change and that she has seen Big hART participants from years past come back and participate as audience members in current projects. She sees this as an example of community, created through the shared experience of working on similar projects. Similarly, Rankin-Smith says Big hART builds community fundamentally through relationships. Regardless of whether it is a place, a characteristic, or an interest she feels community is solidified in a connection around something. She says the way connection is built is relationally, through authentic relationships with and between participants.

Community can also come from continuity. Leahy gives the example of the Neo Learning lab and how each week a Neo Learning educator will be involved in the lab with the youth participants. He says this continuity of presence in the young people's lives has supported skill building, participation, and intergenerational learning. Leahy believes it is important to foster a sense of pride for the community with the work. He explains this is necessary to make sure the community gets behind the work in order to start changing how the narrative of their community unfolds. Leahy says the Neo Learning program creates community by connecting youth, artists, and elders across the country

Empathy is a relational ingredient for community. O'Donnell says the heart of the arts is its capacity to build community through the creation of empathy in a unique way. She says this empathy has the potential to lead to trust building between people that can break down barriers and lead to dialogue. In this way, voices that are not traditionally heard are given the opportunity to be heard. Abraham agrees, adding that their work creates platforms that act as vehicles for their young people's voices. She says this vehicle does not exist within the educational system in the way it connects the young people directly to their community which builds pride.

The creation of empathy runs throughout Big hART's work with different ages of the population. Te Paa says it is easy to run programs for youth, but what is different for her about Big hART's work is it goes beneath the surface, through the five domains of change, to connect to the broader community with deeper roots. O'Donnell sees the work as a great connector. She gives the example of a recent intergenerational project where the goal had been to build capacity for young people and seniors to see each other. She says this connection work breaks down pre-conceptions that people might have about each other.

There is a great deal of disconnection to work with. Te Paa says she is surprised by the amount of disconnection, not just in the world but within the projects they work on. For example, within a community how do people not know each other? Or, how there is little opportunity to dialogue and ask questions of each other? Te Paa says she is surprised that this does not exist in the educational system. She also expands this thought to the larger disconnections within systems and policy. Te Paa feels there is limited value put on connection and intuition in society as a whole:

No wonder the young people are not feeling confident and feeling like they can take risks and then we get the honour of being surprised by their creativity but I'm not surprised when I see it because I know it's there in everyone... I'm surprised by the environment that's around them yeah. Around us all really.

Community Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Big hART artists' responses relating to community.

Empathy through Viability and Re-Inclusion

The arts as a tool for connection is extremely valuable. As Fallon Te Paa points out, there is an incredible amount of disconnection in our society. Big hART's work facilitates spaces of empathy to work towards connection by working towards what Rankin describes as "visibility" and "re-inclusion." This connects to Winters et al.'s (2009) work about the potential for empathy to be created through a process.

The domains of change

All the artists interviewed referenced Big hART's domains of change. They are clearly understood and respected by the entire team. These domains align and guide Big hART's work in an action-oriented way. There is great value in having the values clearly articulated and understood. This resonates with Nolan's (2015) work on the use of values in the artistic community-building process.

The flow of change

Rankin's unpacking of the concept of "community" is an interesting takeaway. The idea of a "flow of change" resonates with the notion of community being a verb and not a noun. It is constantly in motion, constantly changing. Rankin says the artist is invited into the flow of change, and Prior elaborates that once in the flow the artist's job is to respond. In this way, the root of the value-process of responsivity is in seeing community as constantly changing. Instead of trying to maintain or even build a certain "community"—artists are empowered to use their skills to be a part of the change in ways that support the individuals they serve. The flow of change is in line with Studdert's (2016) view of community as a verb.

Asset based thinking

Several of the artists interviewed spoke about asset-based thinking, and they often attributed this teaching to Rankin. By focusing on what *is* there as opposed to what is *not* there in any given situation, the response can build upon strengths instead of trying to fix or supplement perceived weaknesses. The hope, then, is that those individuals feel supported instead of feeling like they need help. This focus on positive aspects and potentiality is directly in line with Kincheloe's (2008) work with the concept of radical love and Freire's (2000) work on hope.

Places of knowing

If knowledge is transferred in place, Rankin says we need to think about places of knowing. Knowing, especially the kind of knowing achieved through relational work, is a form of social capital. If lots of knowing happens in a place, does the place become invested with that

knowing? Or does the place become activated and/or exercised as a likely or useful place to know? For example, the people in Zimbabwe who visit the traditional “dare” space under the tree have created a social custom linked to that specific place. Over time, they have linked the exchange of ideas to the place of the dare. Perhaps this is a form of compound interest of social capital in place. This line of thought resonates with Chinyowa’s (2012) idea of place as social capital.

Process / Methods

The second and third questions I asked in each interview were: “What is your process?” and “What methods do you use?” I have grouped these responses because the answers were resonant and overlapping.

Responsivity through Relationship

One of the core goals of Big hART is to be responsive to the communities they work in. As a result, there is no one set process they use. In fact, all the artists interviewed spoke to the diversity of ways in which their programs were offered. The priority is always to be responsive. In acknowledging that priority, some commonalities about the Big hART process become clear.

Big hART associate artist Genevieve Dugard points out that their artist “producers” live and work in the communities that they are engaging with for a long period of time, at minimum three years. She describes the art the company produces as the “outer rind” —just ten percent or less of the work done. She says that ninety percent of the work is done quietly on the ground making space for the artistic process to happen. She explains this work involves funding and structuring programs so the space exists. O’Donnell says being part of the community in a genuine, long-term way is crucial for the work to go below the surface. She feels it takes a minimum of three years to build relationships with community. Often the first year is the quiet work of introducing themselves to the community. She explains that a person cannot expect the greater community to be a part of positive change unless that person becomes part of the community. In this sense, relationship also means reciprocity. Dugard says this takes a long time to happen and Big hART spends often expends a lot of time and energy convincing people of the value of the long-term approach.

The space for their work is created by community producers who are in residence in the places they work. These producers hold the responsibility of the company in that community as the leaders of what Dugard describes as “play spaces.” Additional artists are hired to work with small groups of community members. She says that the success of programs really depends on the physical spaces where they occur and making sure that the participants feel comfortable in the space. She adds that they make an effort to hire artists that have the ability to bridge the gaps between different parts of any individual’s community (such as home and school) in order to meet each individuals where they are. Kepa says Big hART’s process is about deep listening and responsivity. She says this happens through relationships and being able to adapt to the situation on the ground. Kepa adds that in Roebourne the work is very intergenerational, and consultation with elders is an important facet of the work.

The Big hART process is, in fact, not to have a specific process. Rankin-Smith says that a “really cool part of Big hART when we’re doing our job well is that we’re not too locked into process.” She says it is more important to be responsive to the communities they work in, to co-design the process for any given project. She says there is a basic structure or model for this responsive process to occur, and that is bringing artists into rural settings that do not or have not traditionally had access to professional art making. The artists then encourage participants in the projects to share their life situations or stories that are important to them. The artists’ job is to facilitate whatever comes from that story telling. Rankin-Smith gives the example of young girls wanting to create an event about mental health and how the artists co-designed the event in a way that challenged and inspired the girls to take on leadership roles.

Dugard explains that Big hART rarely begins a project knowing what will come out of it, and that they don’t even know the medium they will use. She describes the process of deciding what and how is produced as being organic and in the zeitgeist, a mix of what the artists and the community members bring combined with the circumstances of the moment. Dugard gives the example of Project O, explaining the origin was a local politician and friend of Dugard’s who was concerned about the number of young women in the area who were not succeeding and who seemingly had little aspirations to do so. Dugard says that they of course had aspirations, but that there were no opportunities for them, and the Project provided that. However, over the years there are now more employment-related programs and so Project O has grown and changed and continues to do so, to serve the current needs of participants as opposed to becoming just another employment program. She says that this responsivity is a key value of their process.

Big hART is focused on process. Rankin points to the commodification of art as the reason most mainstream artists focus more on content than process. He says Big hART’s process is about eighty percent of the time for any project, and the content is twenty percent. He unpacks “process” to mean more than just being slow at rehearsing. Instead, he says process is where most of the five domains happen. Small says the process is responsive and will change depending on the project, but that how the work is done is guided by Big hART’s values and principles. This means the right kind of artists need to be contracted to do Big hART’s work. Artists who are agile in their work, and who are conscious of their place as being invited into (rather than imposing on) communities.

Relationality and Tension

Big hART’s process builds the capacity of the community to hold new participants. Rankin-Smith says that they intentionally work to connect the participants of the programs to the wider community. She believes relationships with policy and change makers can be influenced by these connections. Rankin says an extension of Big hART’s work is focused on legislation. He believes this work is crucial because it has the potential to have generational impacts.

Kepa says the foundation of any Big hART process or project is the relationships with the people involved. In Roebourne she says returning to the elders to ensure they are on the right path is critical. Dugard uses the phrase “holding in tension” to describe the part of the process where relationships are respected, trust is built, and patience is waiting for the time to be right. She gives the example of a podcasting agency approaching Big hART to do work with Project O, and

how it took three years from the initial approach to when the women started podcasting because they had to make sure the circumstances were right, including having built the relationships with the participants and the participants being in a good place in their growth. For Dugard, “holding in tension” means resisting the temptation to move quickly and to “package and present” work and instead to commit to the “long-term, delicate, detailed work of relationships and process.”

Prior and Small both feel there is tension involved in Big hART’s work. Prior says tension is an important part of the process. Small says she has learned the tension often comes from the layers that exist around any program. It is challenging to see beyond the individual and look at how the entire process connects to the domains of change. Prior says there is also tension between the quality of the art and the process. Rankin-Smith agrees, explaining the best practices in art making are often not the best practices in community work. She says there is a negotiation that needs to happen, and that negotiation happens in a community setting. This means involving participants as co-designers and co-directors of projects even if they might not necessarily have the life experience at age fourteen to make the decisions. It is important for the community participants to feel they are contributing to the process. Even more important than feeling part of the process is for participants to actually have ongoing, meaningful involvement and influence on how the project evolves, including the decisions that are made.

Modesty

Rankin says Big hART believes in keeping a low profile and they do not make a big deal out of their involvement in any community. He gives the example of Big hART’s agency-building Project O as an example. Project O is based in a town on Tasmania’s northwest coast where the population is 5,600 people. There are about one hundred young women from that coast who have gone through the program and gone on to be very successful in a variety of ways across the country. However, Rankin says that they do not try to show off these results.

Dramaturgical Thinking

Big hART is not a theatre company, but Rankin says they “lean dramaturgically” into their work. To him this means they look for stories that don’t seem to have power, or that people are not already interested in or supporting. Rankin explains dramaturgical thinking is part of the eighty percent, that they are dramaturging the hook of the process. Dramaturgy in and/or of process could be seen as a method and an outcome.

Rankin describes the example of work Big hART was doing with Indigenous languages. A large part of the process was an online portal where Indigenous people could learn lost languages. At the time, the minister for Indigenous Affairs and minister for the environment was a man named Peter Garrett. Garrett used to be the frontman for the Australian band Midnight Oil and had written a hit song called Beds Are Burning about the environment. Big hART arranged for Garrett to come to one of their project spaces, where five Indigenous women had learned Beds Are Burning in the dying Indigenous language of Pitjantjatjara. When the women finished, Garrett was weeping and the Big hART team told him that this will never happen again if he did not do something to legislate money for the one hundred and twenty fragile Indigenous languages in the country. A year later Garrett announced a national Indigenous language policy.

Rankin is clear that there were plenty of people working towards that goal for a long period of time, but that the moment where Garrett heard the song was the “dramaturgical hook.”

Sharing

Sharing between Big hART teams is something Rankin says Dugard has facilitated. This sharing is helpful because it means that learnings from different projects are shared and can be built upon. Rankin says Big hART also works to share their work and how they do it with people outside of the company. He is critical of the attitude of scarcity that exists in some arts companies where people are scared to share information because of fear of losing a competitive edge of funding.

Creation of Place

The creation of place starts with the physical space where the work is being done; for example, a school classroom. Small says the Big hART facilitators work hard to make sure that even though the classroom exists in the school, it is a different space physically and emotionally, so the participants feel they can interact differently that they do on school time.

Ritual can be used to create place. Small asks “How do you sit in a really drab grey ugly old room in a school and make that a positive and safe space for young women?” For some time, she tried to physically change the classrooms by putting up art and posters—but this became a logistical challenge due to moving the classrooms around. She explains she has always built ritual into her workshops. An example of this is always having an opening activity to start the workshop. She always likes working in circle. She says the opening activity can be something like going around the circle and asking each participant to share from one to ten how they are feeling. She also tries to get young participants to say their name when they introduce themselves (which she says they hate) because when you introduce yourself you are becoming more confident in yourself. Small also offers silly questions as a ritual way to create place, such as would-you-rather questions like “would you rather have no nose or no eyebrows.” She has done a lot of clown work with younger people as she feels silliness and play “is a kind of equalizer in the space.” She is clear that it is important to gently encourage participation, meaning you do not let people get away with not participating while also not being too harsh or strict. This allows people to slowly come into the space.

Small says the feedback she has received from participants over the years is that the participants always feel there is time for each individual. This is a contrast to the way they are treated in schools. Rankin Smith shares an example from Big hART’s work with the NorthCott housing estate. She says the Big hART workshops changed the dynamic of the NorthCott environment and also produced a play that they shared with the broader community. Prior gives the example of John Pat peace place in Roebourne to illustrate the importance of focusing on the assets of place rather than the deficits of place. She explains that John Pat died in police custody in 1983 and to commemorate his death in a future-focused way the community designed a public sitting space near an amphitheatre where people now sit and use the space. Kepa also describes the John Pat peace place where an inclusive design process took place with community to commemorate a

young man who had died. She says the thinking behind this space was that it was both a memorial and a space to go to think about the future.

The Big hART process involves both facilitating and creating spaces. Kepa explains there are literal examples of created space, such as their digital lab where people can come in and participate. Kepa says an aim of Big hART's spaces is to feel welcome and safe. She says there is a lot of conflict in the Roebourne community and that there are divisive political tensions between different groups. She says the aim is a neutral space but that there is no such thing as a true neutral space—because the politics are always there. She says she is constantly extending invitations and trying to make people feel comfortable in different spaces. Kepa gives the example of Roebourne: a small town of one thousand people where there are two main language groups, the Ngarluma and the Yinjibarndi, who operate independently. One of the Big hART programs brings together women from both communities to sing together. To try and make the space comfortable for both sides she says they try and intentionally balance the room with an equal number of participants from both communities.

Holding Space

“Holding space” was described by Leahy as a key part of the Big hART process. He says one of the biggest learnings he has taken from the work with Big hART is about comfort zones. He explains that working with community, and especially young people, there are often moments where a participant will feel uncomfortable or lack confidence to the point that they retreat into their comfort zone. He says he has seen several examples of participants self-sabotaging—either not showing up or misbehaving or shutting down—exhibiting behaviours that Leahy has learned are indicators that the participant is uncomfortable because they are moving out of their comfort zone. Leahy explains this is where the artist facilitator must “hold space” for the participant. He elaborates, saying you must “build stamina” in that space while holding it.

Within the space being held, Leahy describes “marking a moment” as another method in community-based work. He says he has always appreciated the “little wins” in artistic life. He gives the examples of moments being something obvious such as a local politician coming to make a big speech in a local community and everyone clapping and feeling proud. He says there are also more subtle quiet moments, such as making eye contact with a young person when they have had a breakthrough in an artistic workshop. He says artists must be skilled enough to realise when individuals have had these moments of breakthrough in order to mark the moment in a way that is meaningful to the individual. This could mean eye contact or speaking to them individually or recognizing them in front of the group. It is up to the artist, in the moment, to discern what best serves that individual's moment at that point in their growth.

In this way, both the larger scale productions with big outputs and the smaller, subtler work is important. Leahy says the big productions are important because they give participants a sense of purpose and focus, claiming that young people especially will “sniff out a lack of purpose so quickly.” He explains the little wins and moments will often lead up to that.

Modelling Community

The way the work is done is as important as the work itself. Te Paa says it is important to demonstrate community in the way they facilitate the work. She explains that when they go into a program setting, they are never alone; there is always a community of facilitators. Similar to the ritual Small describes, Te Paa says in workshops she always starts in a circle and uses a traditional Māori type of song. Te Paa says in less than a minute the group is “shedding off the world and doing something together.” She says the role of leading this ritual is organically shared.

Diversity of Methods

There is agreement that the creation of opportunities for young people is important. Kepa says a range of different audio-visual methods have been successful in providing young people the chance to create content that they feel proud of. She says some young people are not comfortable “performing” per se, but are comfortable creating. She highlights the fact that the work is very high quality, and this is important, so the young people feel that sense of pride. The audio visual work is also able to be disseminated across the country, creating further opportunities for connection and impact with people outside of the community.

Future Focus

The Neo Learning project and Big hART’s work overall is “future focused.” To Leahy that means connecting young people to future dreaming. He explains that Indigenous history and culture has often been taught as something in the past. The elders in Roebourne have advised that the mission needs to be to forward and teach both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people about Indigenous culture in way that is relevant to their dreams and aspirations. Leahy says the combination of traditional Indigenous culture and digital learning is itself an example of the potential of interconnectivity.

A Certain Kind of Artist

Big hART’s work requires a certain kind of artist/facilitator. Abraham says it is important to be selective when choosing the artists they work with. She says artists need to be high calibre in their field but also have both the interest and ability to work with young people. She points out that they try to recruit artists who represent the demographics they work with—in the case of Project O young women and gender diverse people—to create the opportunity for role modelling.

Leahy believes it is important for artists in community-based work to let go of their egos. He says a certain amount of ego is important because it drives the work forward with ambition. However, he explains that there needs to be an awareness of ego in relation to one’s role as a facilitator, and a knowledge of when to take a leading role and when to take a supporting role. O’Donnell says artists need to understand that the ownership of the work sits in community. There is a letting go of artist’s control of the work and an understanding that the central focus is the participants. Leahy elaborates that the building of stamina is really the work of the

artist/facilitators. It involves letting one's ego go and being patient and being "kind of confident enough to keep showing up and keep pushing and knowing when to I guess mark a moment." Building this stamina allows the facilitator to know when to push and when to be patient. Te Paa says the artist/facilitator's work is to listen and respond and serve, with excellence, and that art is the tool that allows for that to happen. O'Donnell says the role of art is to be a "great leveller", and to eliminate barriers that exist in the formation of community.

The Invitation

Abraham points out it is important to be invited into a community. However, she says there needs to be awareness that just because one leader in the community invites them in, it does not mean the people of the community invited them. Te Paa says this awareness should translate into an effort to engage people with questions, and then to listen more than talk. She sees the leaders (or whomever invites them) as the "bridge or doorway" but stresses that the real work begins when they start to meet the actual people living in the community.

Process Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Big hART artists' responses relating to processes and methods.

Responsive relationships create a workspace

There are no predetermined or set in stone processes or outcomes. All work is responsive to the people with whom the artists are in relationship, and the given circumstances of the project. The workspace or play space is the platform in which the work happens. To create this space, artists must be comfortable and confident the work will happen, and not be driven by ego or a predisposed notion of what should happen. Just as the entire process is responsive to the needs of community, the methods used must be responsive to the needs of individuals. Big hART's work is to create, and to create in, spaces of relationship. These relational spaces happen over time, through the evolution of trust and because of responsivity. Relational space correlates to Nolan's (2015) rehearsal room and Freeman's (2016) writing about the Debajehmujig (Debaj) Storytellers.

Holding space and marking moments

After the workspace has been created, the artist's work is to hold the space for individuals. Through intuition, relationship and responsivity, artists have the potential to be aware of the growth and progress of their participants, and then mark the moments of growth accordingly. These concepts are reasonably easy to grasp on a small group level, but how might this work be transferred to a larger organisation or process? There is potential for larger systems to investigate how they might hold space and mark moments for their community members. Focusing on the connections between people through art follows the example of Bourriaud's (2002) writing on the social exchange as the true outcome of community-focused artistic practice.

Modelling community

Actions speak louder than words. It is common sense, then, to realise that how leadership happens is crucial to the process. By modelling community in their leadership, Big hART artists offer an example of how power, space, and process can all be shared. Modelling of community is connected to Weigler's (2015) construction of a community of artists.

The use of ritual

To transform the space and set the tone for relational work, the use of simple rituals is effective. Methods such as circle work, sharing a song, or silliness all serve to create a lighter and more democratic space in which the work can take place. This is a direct link to Graveline's (1998) description of the space of the circle and Bickel's (2004; 2005) work on using ritual to create place.

The nuances of invitation

Awareness of where and how the invitation into community came from will only benefit a broad range of relationships. By knowing, unpacking, and respecting the nuances of the invitation, artists can work with broader community in an informed and empathetic way. This correlates to Nanetti and Holguin's (2016) belief that trust is the most important attribute of social capital.

Dramaturgical Thinking

Although Big hART's work spans several artistic mediums, Rankin is a playwright and so he uses the theatrical term, "dramaturgical thinking." However, dramaturgical thinking is about story, and story is a part of all artistic practice. It is useful to think dramaturgically about process. This consideration can be both broad and specific. An example of broad dramaturgical thinking is the framing of the way the story is thought about, such as the "future focused" view Big hART likes to take with respect to culture. It can be as specific as isolating a "dramaturgical hook" or a point of affect within a process such as the moment of the five women signing to the politician. The key point is that by thinking dramaturgically, it is possible to be an active part of writing of the story of the process. This connects to Sandercock and Atilli's (2014) work with therapeutic planning.

Partners

The fourth question I asked in each interview was: "How do you engage with partners to do your work?"

Diversity of Partnerships

All the artists spoke about the benefits of engaging with partners who shared their values. Rankin-Smith says her program tries to engage young people through schools or existing organisations. Abraham says Project O is a way to show the young people they work with different options for careers, expression, and relationships, so they trust in the community around

them and develop that community. The aim according to Rankin-Smith is to work alongside these organisations rather than in competition with them. She gives the example of Project O working for several years with a particular school that had limited arts and leadership programs. Over six years Project O's presence in the school created growth of other in-school programs. As a result, Big hART directed their programs elsewhere. Rankin-Smith also shares another example, a mental health event connected to a local skate competition. This one-time event provided an opportunity for young people to connect with resources they might not usually come into contact with.

Partnerships through relationships

Big hART is actively recruiting partners and potential partners through their relational work. Rankin-Smith explains partner organisations can be recruited and relationships can be built with them regardless of what the project is going to be. Partnerships allow for profile to be lifted in the community and it is easy to identify the partners and networks within the broader community that resonate with the type of work. This is a subtle but significant difference to how most theatre companies engage with partner organisations.

Relational work also applied to sponsors and funders. Kepa sees good relations with partners as a form of advocacy, in the way that it allows Big hART to invite these partners to come along on the journey of seeing the community differently. She says these relationships also help with the implicit power dynamics that exist in funding relationships, hopefully allowing for dialogue about how funding models can be less restrictive in ways that set communities up for success and not failure.

Partner Mapping

It is useful to track partnerships to leverage their full potential. Kepa says that lateral partners (other than funders and sponsors) are also very important. She explains that it is helpful to map out which different groups exist to be able to see both the connections that are already there and the potential for new ones. She says this is helpful for both the short term and the long term, as the work with lateral partners has the potential to lead to build capacity if the partners are able to take on some parts of the work.

Partners Takeaways:

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Big hART artists' responses relating to partners in the work.

Potential Partner Mapping

Mapping partners and especially mapping potential partners is a useful tool. By mapping potential partners that already exist in a community, an organisation can see possibilities for collaboration with a diversity of partners who may not have come to mind at first pass. This idea is resonant with the concept of activating existing community networks, and it follows Lefevre's (1991) writing about space as a set of relations.

Partnership first

Reaching out to partners without a specific project in mind is not the norm. Usually the project idea comes first. By building relationships with potential partners, not only are the lines of communication open when a need arises, but the dialogue in the relationship may create and reveal possibilities that were not already apparent. This shares the spirit of the Debaj Storytellers (Freeman, 2016) and their investment in relationship before anything else.

Funders and sponsors as partners

Reframing funders and sponsors as partners brings the value of reciprocity into play. Reciprocity is about balance and understanding, not simply an equal or fair transaction. The more each partner knows and understands about each other and the work they do, the more potential there is for the relationship (and then, ultimately, the work) to become deeper and more meaningful. This correlates to Carolan and Hale's (2016) work on rethinking community connections above and below ground.

Outcomes

I did not have a main question about outcomes. However, it came up enough in the discussions that it merits a thematic category of its own.

Culture as a right and an essential service

Big hART's work is grounded in thinking of culture as a right and an essential service. To illustrate culture as an essential service and as a human right (Battiste et al, 2005). Rankin shares the example of teen suicide in Australia. He says hundreds of young people commit suicide every year, and this number reflects only those deaths that are reported as suicide. He adds there are also a great number of attempted suicides. Each of these losses of human life has a cost to society. Rankin believes if the cultural work of bringing hidden stories into the mainstream was a more supported and available service, the losses and cost to society could be mitigated.

The question of measurement

The issue of "measurement" is somewhat contentious. Rankin is wary of how impact and measurement are often discussed. He feels that the roots of many of the ways that impacts are conceptualised are war-based. He feels the way society evaluates, and measures impacts been inherited from this kind of violent and colonial thinking. Rankin believes qualitative measurements give soul to quantitative measurements and quantitative measurements bring the cash to qualitative measurements. Dugard says a lot of their relational work with funders is "talking back" to make sure the measurement of impacts suit Big hART's processes as opposed to the other way around. She sees this as a process of educating funders and partners on different kinds of measurements and impacts. Rankin points out that Big hART's budgets are significant and are all project-based. He feels they would not be the kind of company they were if they had

secure core funding, because they would have to spend time and energy on meeting the core funding requirements.

As a measure of their success, Prior shares statistics about the amount of participation in Big hART projects. In 2021 alone they have had over 10,000 audience members observing national work, over 17,000 participants in communities across the country with over 10,000 audience members watching that work. There have been 867 workshops and forty-seven national events, and over 23,000 online participants. Prior says it is important to note that across such a broad scale, each project still “has its own processes that are responding to each participant and each community.”

Several of the artists talked about the need to measure outcomes in ways that correlate to the specific work being done and those individuals involved. Abraham wonders how outcomes could be more tailored to the artistic work that is happening. She gives the example of working with young people on a graphic score, illustrating music. She said because she gave them the space to work and engage with the project in whatever way they liked, she witnessed a whole new way to interpret music. This space is the platform. Abraham says it is important to constantly question what success and achievement looks like in any given setting. For example, with music, what if there was no way to do anything wrong. Then what would success be? And how might you measure it?

The artists also talked about measuring participant willingness as a barometer of success. Te Paa says a simple measure of success is whether a participant comes back to the next workshop. She also says outcome measurement can be an ongoing process of self-evaluation within the facilitation team: taking the time to compare what is happening to what they planned, and making sure they are tailoring it to the needs of the group. Te Paa adds they have recently started to measure the willingness of participants. She explains they take note of how much each youth participates in the first week. For example, in the first week of the program, perhaps a youth is not willing to share who they are, but by the fifth week they are reading their work out loud. That is a measure of progress. O'Donnell describes this as “incremental individual growth.” She says these need to be celebrated and marked internally, but that if they are not connecting this growth to the wider community then the project is not really working.

Outcomes Takeaways:

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Big hART artists' responses relating to outcomes.

Bespoke Measurements

Measurement of outcomes specifically tailored to the work resonates with the responsivity of the work itself. Why should outcomes and measurement tools be fixed when the work itself is fluid? This presents an interesting opportunity: if responsivity is a priority, how might the degree of responsivity be measured as outcome? The use of an organisation's values as measurements of outcomes is also a worthwhile takeaway. Values are traditionally guideposts for the works but are not often employed as measures. Using them as measures completes the circle of the work

with intention. Additionally, measurement of participation and/or willingness is a useful way to mark the growth of individual experiences. There is potential here for larger organisations to use these types of measures for their participants. This is resonant with both Nolan (2015) and Weigler's (2015) work on creating their own value-driven communities.

Internal Reflection

The idea of ongoing internal reflection and evaluation is useful. How might a more traditional theatre do this? Sadly, I have heard of professional theatre artists (who are leading organisations) say you cannot evaluate art because it is art. This is a missed opportunity for constant reflection, revision, and growth. This relates to Studdert's (2016) view that individuals are only individuals through their connections with others. Only through reflection on our interactions can we evaluate and grow.

Challenges

I did not have a main question about challenges. However, it came up enough in the discussions that it merits a thematic category of its own.

Connection between macro and micro

There is an inherent challenge connecting the large and ambitious values of Big hART's work and the grassroots workshops happening in communities. Leahy says he has been thinking a lot about how the five domains of change and the macro-level work of Big hART interplays with the work at the individual level. He has analyzed his own work and feels that sometimes it is difficult to keep the macro level work in mind due to time and budget constraints. Specifically, he has been thinking about this interplay because he has to on-board some new team members and he recognizes that sometimes people new to Big hART struggle with the fact it is a multi-issue not-for-profit with the goal of being responsive, so trajectories can change at any time. He says a potential solution is bringing the domains of change framework into weekly or bi-weekly check ins, regularly evaluating how the work is or is not meeting the goals set out in the domains. He feels that this kind of evaluation could improve the quality of the work across the five domains and also prevent burnout.

Dissonance with Funding Models

Funding models are set up in certain ways. Prior says Big hART's responsive process is intuitive and is opposite to the way the economy of arts institutions is set up. She explains that funders require the first step in a project to be the outlining what the deliverables are going to be, and then you must follow that path. Instead, she feels Big hART is in a "flow of change" model where they are constantly responding and making decisions based on the given circumstances of the moment.

Challenges Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Big hART artists' responses relating to challenges:

Relationships with Funders

As described above, it is valuable to cultivate relationships with funders and sponsors. Hopefully one of the outcomes of these relationships would be for funders and sponsors to be exposed to the work over a long period of time in a way that allowed them to understand the need to re-design the architecture of funding models, putting more emphasis on relationships and process, and less on outputs. This resonates with Jacob's (1992) view of a web of relationships and Campbell's (2007) teaching of all beings as related.

Dialogues between macro and micro

Like the outcomes takeaway about internal reflection, the connection between the macro values "five domains of change" and the micro daily work on the ground is a valuable takeaway. It is great to have well-articulated and ambitious values at the macro level, but if they are not actually being achieved at the micro-level then the work is not happening in the way it was proposed. Weekly or bi-weekly check-ins between the micro and the macro have the potential to help any organization understand where they are at. Instead of looking at this type of check-in like a test where the work is or is not passing or failing, the check-ins could be seen as an interplay between the macro and the micro. If these check-ins are seen as a dialogue between the macro and the micro, this process has potential to be productive in multiple ways. It can serve to constantly invite feedback from artists and facilitators, it can continue to inspire the work, and can serve to generate new ideas. This is supported by both Settee's (2013) and Ermine's (2004) writings on how Indigenous knowledge offers guidelines for community practice.

4.3 Forklift Danceworks Exploratory Case Study

4.3.1 Forklift Danceworks

Forklift Danceworks' mission is to "activate communities through a collaborative creative process" (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). They envision a "world where art, movement and creativity are at the core of everyone's daily life" and their work "demonstrates its core belief that all people are inherently creative" (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.).

Artistic director Allison Orr founded Forklift Danceworks in 2001. They have created and presented innovative and collaborative performance projects with over 20 different communities, including sanitation workers, warehouse employees, and retired Negro (sic) League Baseball players (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). Orr said that in this work she has "recognized the opportunity to use their community collaborations to disrupt and spark change in their respective communities" (quoted in Pinsky, 2018, p. 38).

For performances, Forklift uses “long-term artistic and ethnographic research within a community, enabling us as artists to understand the collaborating community’s history, challenges, and assets while building trusting relationships and observing movement material” (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). Orr explains that the creative process creates bonds between the people working together because:

there is vulnerability. I think when people make something together they have to be vulnerable, to take risks, to try something outside of their normal interactions in a particular context. It creates a sense of closeness, a sense that ‘we have been through this together,’ and people open up their hearts to each other. (quoted in Pinsky, 2018, p. 42)

Forklift’s goal is to “create opportunities for more informed civic dialogue, deeper understanding of the jobs essential to urban life, and greater connection between citizens and across communities” (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). In this way, Orr and her team are working to construct bonding social capital. Orr believes the following:

we have to find a way to be able to listen to each other. I think art is the way for people who do not think they have anything in common to find some kind of a connection. That is why I get excited about making this kind of work, because I see people in the audience, again, who are not necessarily with each other in any other place, and at least in that moment they are sitting next to each other and experiencing something together. (quoted in Pinsky, 2018, p. 44)

Often presented in large-scale, site-specific settings, Forklift’s free performances consistently play to capacity, with audiences of 500 to 6,000 people (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). The site-specific nature of Forklift’s work allows experiences to be tied to a sense of place for the audience participants. Orr describes the power of this connection in observing the performances’ effects on audiences:

I saw that when I was working on my performance with the campus employees. It was a whole different audience who showed up, particularly other campus employees who had come to see their fellow employees perform. In the audience I saw the possibility for connection between students and campus employees who had never shared a space this way. (Pinsky, 2018, p. 41)

Forklift’s methodology of directly involving members of the public in both the creation and performance of their work will inform this research.

4.3.2 Forklift Artists

I conducted four semi-structured interviews with five of Forklift Dancework’s core artists. One interview was a group of two. Listed below are the artists who were a part of each interview and a brief note about each of them based on how they introduced themselves in the interview. The interview groups were:

Allison Orr

Allison Orr is the founder and Artistic Director of Forklift Danceworks. She is trained as a dancer, choreographer and anthropologist, and has created dances with a wide range of workers, students, adults and children.

Krissie Marty and Gretchen LaMotte

Krissie Marty is Forklift's Associate Artistic Director and Community Collaborations Director. She is trained as a choreographer and dance-maker, and most recently co-Directed the My Park My Pool My City project with Allison Orr. Gretchen LaMotte is Forklift's Choreographer and Program Manager. She met Allison Orr in 2016 while she was a student and began working with her on various projects. She joined the company in 2018 and takes care of a lot of the administrative work, as well as supporting the choreography.

Clara Pinsky

Clara Pinsky is Forklift's On the Job Project Manager. She met Allison Orr when she was a student in 2015, and began working with Forklift shortly after. She has collaborated on several productions with Forklift, and is also active as a research assistant at the Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation and a graduate student in Urban Strategy.

Fabiola Ochoa Torralba

Fabiola Torralba has been in relationship with Forklift since 2015 when she met Allison Orr through a Dance USA mentorship program. Since then, she has collaborated with them through contract work as a choreographer on specific projects, including Nadamos Dove Springs and Givens Swims. She is an independent artist.

4.3.3 Forklift Programs

For over twenty years Forklift Danceworks has been “activating communities through creative collaboration” (Forklift Danceworks, n.d.). Instead of detailed descriptions of each of Forklift's programs, below are brief outlines of three recent programs of which the artists interviewed were a part of facilitating. These programs are: The Trees of Govalle and My Park, My Pool, My City.

Trees of Govalle

Building on the success of their Trash Dance project with City of Austin Sanitation workers, Forklift created the Trees of Govalle in 2015. Trees of Govalle featured urban forestry workers and trees in Govalle Park. Over 2,000 people attended the premiere production.

My Park, My Pool, My City

Once again building on their success with other urban departments, Forklift created My Park, My Pool, My City, a multi-year collaboration with the City of Austin's parks and recreation department. The project ran from 2017 to 2019 and focused on a different community pool and its community members each year. The project created three large scale pool dances: Bartholomew Swims, Nadamos Dove Springs, and Givens Swims. Over 2,000 people participated in each of the performances, which ran for two weekends each.

4.3.4. Forklift Interview Findings

As with the Big hART interviews, in the Forklift interviews I used the same question set of four basic questions inspired by my conceptual framework. These questions led to further discussion including the challenges of the work and how the success of the work is measured. After reviewing the interview transcripts, I divided the answers into the same five categories:

1. Connection to Community
2. Process and Methods
3. Partnerships
4. Measurement of Outcomes
5. Challenges

Within each category I have outlined the major points shared by the Forklift artists and then isolated key take-away learnings.

Community

The first question I asked in each interview was “How does your work build community?”

In response to my question about how their work strengthens community, Forklift’s artists all spoke about the fact community was at the centre of the work. Founder and artistic director Allison Orr explained that community is always the beginning of a project. She described her background in social work and anthropology, and her training as a dancer as combining to motivate her to cross boundaries and work with those different from her in a way that was inclusive and broadened what dance can be and who can dance. Forklift associate artist Fabiola Torrabla says inclusivity is the first thing that comes to mind when she thinks of how Forklift’s work connects to community. She explains how dance is only traditionally available to certain people, and by inviting people not traditionally allowed to dance into the dance world, community is being built. For this inclusion to happen, Orr says you sometimes must trick people into making the art and eliminate all barriers to participation. Throughout her work, Orr says there must be a responsibility to the community. The art created must reflect what community members want said.

Many of Forklifts early projects focused on collaborations with specific labour settings, such as a sanitation department, a forestry department, or a culinary department. For Orr, the initial seed of Forklift’s work was the investigation of “expert movement.” Marty describes the inspiration of Forklift’s work as physical labour, and the physical action of work and labour. For Forklift this has included hauling trash, fighting fires, playing baseball, cleaning a swimming pool and many other forms of labour. Marty explains that for Forklift the physical labour is the vocabulary of their choreography. They use vocabulary of labour to reframe the movements of seemingly everyday work, to bring attention and empathy to it. Torrabla describes this approach as focusing on people’s work, labour, and “embodied realities.” Associate artist Clara Pinsky feels there is value in outsider artists like Forklift coming into a community; she explains that because the groups work together on a daily basis, they have the potential to “sort of forget to see each

other.” The outsider’s novice mind allows them to ask questions, facilitating a process where people see each other for the first time.

Forklift’s work has evolved to include not only labour communities, but also place-based communities. Forklift’s work in communities can be connected to social capital using the concept of place attachment. Pinsky explains that in a Forklift show people have “emotional, meaningful, memorable experiences in specific places”, which serves to bond them both to each other and to the place where the experience occurs. For associate artist Gretchen LaMotte, the connection to community within Forklift’s work is inherent. She cites Wesleyan University Press scholar Suzanna Tamminen who has described the power of bringing attention and intention to unacknowledged relationships. To LaMotte, the Forklift performances bring the general public’s attention to these relationships in a way that help people recognize, understand, and eventually honour the interconnectivity of communal life. LaMotte sees the city as one community that Forklift has the chance to bring together with its performances by revealing the connections that are already there.

To illustrate the moment she understood the power of acknowledging unacknowledged relationships, LaMotte gives the example of her first Forklift project, working as a student with her university’s water and sewer department. She says that when she toured the water treatment plant as part of the job shadowing component for the show, she was struck by how the workers there could tell when students were away on vacation because of the amount of wastewater, and yet she had been totally oblivious to these workers and their lives. LaMotte explains this was meaningful to her because she realised her actions had an impact on their lives. By revealing the connection between herself and the water treatment workers, the Forklift project created some understanding and empathy. LaMotte feels there is huge potential in this reaction, both on a civic scale for local issues and international scale for issues like climate change.

Forklift’s relational work begins at the individual level. According to Marty, relationships are built through building trust and that trust can be exponentially grown as one person connects to another and another, resulting in a “network of relationships on tap and then I think that builds community.” She believes the initial network of trust and connection is built upon by the shared experience of making a play, explaining that participants bond by collaborating on artistic problem solving. To Marty there are a few different layers of community connections at play in any Forklift project: the connections between community of people making the play, those between community of people watching the play, the connections forming through the empathy of embodied experience, and the activation of the connections that already exist between people.

Forklift’s approach to community is different from traditional theatre with consumer models. Orr feels the traditional models have caused many artists to be trained backwards, as if they have to be some sort of a “solo genius” who has brilliant ideas and then has to go and make art on their own, and then figure out a way to market it explaining that “too often our focus is on how to get audience—like what do I want to make and then how do I sell it.” Instead Orr offers an alternative view of artists as collaborative problem solvers who go into communities and ask the questions “What needs to be made? ... Who do I want to make it with me? Who do I want to serve? Who do I want to see it? Who do I want to participate? Help me make it better?” Orr says

it starts with asking ourselves what is a problem we want to address and who is the best suited to help us solve it.

Art as a tool for problem solving is a contrast to art solely for entertainment, because there is a goal or focus of the work beyond the experience of the art itself. Orr believes artists are needed in a variety of different areas of society because of their strengths, such as the abilities to tell nuanced stories and get to the heart of problems. She contrasts this to sitting in the room with a PowerPoint. Orr uses Forklift's work with the aquatics department as an example. The forestry department asked Forklift to do something with the forestry department. After the Trees of Govalle project with the forestry department, they were asked to do something with pools. What aquatics was lacking was a "human-centered understanding" of the problems the aquatics was facing. The public was hearing statistics and seeing pools close. They did not understand what was happening and as a result they were mad. These pools were largely in East Austin in racialized communities, which were predominately Black because of the city of Austin Master plan in 1928 that segregated the city. The lack of communication about why the pools were in bad shape and closing created distrust and ill feelings between community members and the city staff.

Orr said the aquatics project performances needed to balance information and emotion so people could walk away feeling informed. She felt before the My Park My Pool My City project, most people in the city did not know that Austin has one of the largest aquatics systems in the country or that most of the pools are over thirty years old and ailing. What Orr felt was missing was a way for the citizens of Austin to hear directly from the aquatics staff themselves, in a way that would give them something they could comprehend and then talk about with their neighbours. Before problems in a city can be worked on, everyone needs to be on the same page, so that there is a shared understanding of what the problem itself is:

...how do we speak each other's languages to at least get on the same page? Because what city staff know is one thing, what city counsel leadership—what city counsel members know is another thing. What a neighbourhood leader knows, what a young person, what an elder knows is another thing. So how do we get—give people an experience where they can really hear each other without getting defensive or feeling like they're in this defensive, protective, pissed-off place. So we had to go way back. We weren't even ready to start solving. We needed to first understand the problem.

Pinsky sees the broader community work as being more ambitious but also more exciting. As it is easier in her opinion to work with people who are already connected in a workplace, but more challenging and rewarding to bring people together that might otherwise not have the opportunity. She offers a metaphor to the neural networks of the brain, and how community networks can atrophy just like neural networks. Forklift's work to activate is then activating the networks that are already there. Like neural networks, the community connections need to be built up. Pinsky believes "the more those connections are practiced the interactions have practice, the stronger they become so the more people like have excuses to interact the stronger the connections and the like pathways of firing become and the more efficient they become." To Pinsky it is more accurate to talk about practicing or exercising community, instead of building community.

Community Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Forklift artists' responses relating to community:

Artists as Problem Solvers

The view of artists as creative and collaborative problem solvers resonates with the a/r/tography idea of artists being about to make people see differently. In Orr's view, artists have a role to play in solving societal problems. They also have a responsibility to serve community by looking for problems that need to be addressed, and by building relationships with the people in community they might collaborate with to understand the problems better. The ever-present responsibility to the community and their needs can be an anchor for the theatre creation, guiding both the content and the process of the work. This relates to Sandercock and Atilli's (2014) work using art to intervene in a community conflict.

Community as Participants (Not Consumers)

Forklift sees the community as participants in its work. Orr's list of questions on how to approach the work is worth repeating: "What needs to be made? ... Who do I want to make it with me? Who do I want to serve? Who do I want to see it? Who do I want to participate? Help me make it better?" In all six of these questions the service to and collaboration with the community is at the forefront. This is such a sharp contrast to the traditional theatre model where work is programmed and then theatre marketing departments try to sell the work to the community and get "bums in seats." By seeing community members as participants and collaborators, theatres can ensure relevant content is being addressed in their work. They can also include the community in the process, building a larger audience of participants in the work. This is supported by Brokenleg's (1998) writing on relationality as a behavioural trait.

Activating Unacknowledged Relationships

Forklift's goal of acknowledging unacknowledged relationship resonates with many of the metaphors offered in earlier chapters. The underground interconnected root systems between trees are often unacknowledged. A connection between a university student living in residence and a university sanitation worker is an unacknowledged root system. Once the connections are revealed they can be understood and appreciated. The metaphor of communities as neural networks that can atrophy is useful in thinking about activating, exercising, or practicing communities. This resonates with Studdert's (2016) idea of community as a verb. The idea of many layers of community is useful in thinking about what and how different communities might be activated. This has a direct connection to the world view of *wâhkôhtowin* (Campbell, 2007). If all beings are related, the job of the art is to illuminate and activate those relations.

Process/Methods

The second and third questions I asked in each interview were: “What is your process? What methods do you use?” I have grouped these responses because the answers were resonant and overlapping.

Relational Interventions

The Forklift artists spoke about their process as being related to relationships and research. Torrabla sees the Forklift process as being question-driven and theory-driven. She explains this means there is always a guiding question. The result is a process that is part production/performance making and part ethnographic research, where folks learn along the way how to do cultural work. She believes that during the work artists must learn how to be with people locally. Orr says the goal of the Forklift process is to tell the story of a given community in the best way possible. She says this comes out of long term relationships and collaboration that is a process of building trust.

From Forklift’s early projects, Orr explains the process has always tried to meet the goal of telling the story of the community in the best way by asking what Forklift can do for the community. Marty explains that she thinks there are three questions to ask to guide the process of working with new communities: “What is going on with you? What do you need? What do you want people to know?” She says these questions give a sense of people’s vision and direction. Marty feels it is important for Forklift to contemplate and understand their value to the community. Once they know this the project can take direction.

The Forklift process does not come out of nowhere. Orr sees it as an intervention because it is the beginning or middle of something as opposed to the end. She explains that during the intervention Forklift artists try to bring resources, attention, love, listening, and opportunities to the communities they are working with.

The Greater Community

The process of working with the broader community is more challenging than working with a specific workforce because there is not what Pinsky describes as a “captive audience.” The artists must seek out community members and sometimes that process is inhibited by logistics such as a pool not being open before a certain date. Essentially though Pinsky believes the process is the same, you must show up, spend time, bring snacks, and reach out. Both Marty and LaMotte agree that it is a different process when you are working with a broader community than a workplace. However, Marty explains it still begins and ends with people. For the aquatics project with members of the greater community, they asked who uses the pool and who is connected to the pool.

In the aquatics project, Forklift heard the public wanted to know why their pools were underfunded, and the aquatics staff wanted the public to know they were doing their best with limited resources. From the Givens community they hear the Black community felt their voices

were not being heard. Forklift adopted the goals of helping the public understand what is going on with the pools and encouraging the city to be accountable to local Black leadership.

Embedding to build relationships

A core value of the Forklift process is relationship building. Embedding and relationship building is both a process and a method for their work. They do this by embedding themselves in a participant observation way, shadowing the jobs of people they are working with for several hours a day to understand the culture and values of the workplace and ultimately to decrease awkwardness in the relationship. Orr highlights that she and her team always get permission to be in the space, and do all the safety training and protocols to be in the spaces that they are in.

LaMotte elaborates on the embedding process, explaining that working alongside people in a community can mean sharing in any experience including staff meetings, social gatherings, and events in the community. One of the most successful methods in the process of working alongside is sharing food. LaMotte says they would always try to bring food if there was an opportunity to do so, because the sharing of a meal instantly created an informal interview. Torrabla describes a variation of this method as “making friends with the regulars”. She believes it is important to be aware of who is around and to try to connect with them.

With the aquatics project Forklift added extra layers of relationship building due to the short turnaround time between relationship building and performance creation. These layers were to hire a community engagement coordinator and to pay neighborhood residents to act as an advisory committee for the process. These neighbours helped accelerate the process by directing the Forklift artists toward who they should talk to and in what order. Orr describes how the community advisors also acted as ambassadors for the work, giving the artists local credibility by accompanying them to neighbourhood events. She explains the job shadow and neighbourhood immersion as very different environments. Job shadow is much easier because all the people are already there, and the artists just “get in the truck”. However, the neighbourhood scenario is more challenging because you have to go find the people. This is where the neighbourhood advisors really come in handy, and those relationships connect to other relationships, creating a web of contacts. The importance of this relationship building is highlighted by a new position created and funded specifically for the aquatics project: community engagement coordinator. Myriam, a local person who already knew the community, was hired as a team member who was not directly occupied with the show proper, who could focus on tracking and following the relationships.

For Forklift, the embedding and relationship building process utilizes several other methods including active belonging, reaching, hanging out, being pleasant and helpful, being with, interviewing, listening, block walking and embodiment. While these methods are all interrelated and many may seem similar, there are important nuances within each method.

Active Belonging and Reaching

For Pinsky a fundamental method within Forklift's process is the practice of "active belonging." This means committing to be present in a setting by deciding you belong there. Pinsky differentiates this from entitlement by explaining this does not mean that you own or control the space that you are not a part of, but rather eliminates the notion that we are separate from others. She explains that you "go into this pool, this community pool, that you've never been to before and feel awkward and like not know what to do and like not feel like you belong ... Or tiptoe around people because you're like you know, am I an interloper?" Instead, you bring your full self to the situation. She provides the example of Orr's work in the Trash Dance documentary, where you see Orr "being like Hi, I'm Allison. You know like just really kind of reaching for people. And reaching to make connections." Pinsky says this notion of reaching to make connections was immensely important to her in her first project with Forklift. This means reaching for people in both formal and informal ways. Orr describes an important community leader who was very skeptical of Forklift's presence and intentions. She explained how they obtained his trust through credibility with common contacts, advising you need to "use your warmest connection. You gotta utilize the people who are close to you to then invite people who they're close with."

Hanging Out/Being Pleasant and Helpful/Being With

An important method mentioned by several Forklift artists was "hanging out without an agenda." To Marty this means being present and patient, and taking the time to see what comes up from the people you are hanging out with, as opposed to asking questions related to the project or show. Pinsky credits Orr with teaching her that another important method in community-based work is being pleasant and helpful, meaning that you are a positive presence to interact with. This connects to showing up and bringing food. More directed or specific interviewing comes later when artists have a sense of what they need to ask for the show. To Pinsky, the actual making of the dances that occurs in the final few weeks of the process is the least important stage of the work. It is still meaningful but is less so than the relationships building that comes before. Pinsky feels that in everyday life the average person is quite lazy and unintentional with their interactions and so bringing awareness and intention to our interactions is important and beneficial.

Torrabla believes the method of "hanging out" is a key part of the Forklift process. She describes "being with" as a specific kind of hanging out. She differentiates "being with" as having absolutely no agenda towards gaining anything from those you are with, but instead being rooted in service. She shares the example of being asked to go represent Forklift at a community barbeque in the Givens neighbourhood, which is primarily African American. Explaining that she found it uncomfortable to be there as an outsider, let alone promote the show, she chose to look instead for opportunities to share her labour to build trust. She and the other Forklift staff set up a volleyball net that needed to be set up. That was an opportunity to help and "be with" in a way that had nothing to do with the show.

It is important also to problematize the method's active belonging, hanging out, and being pleasant. Within these methods is the assumption that the outsiders are welcome in a community.

The warm and good-natured cheer of outsiders can present a challenge. Initially even Torrabla was suspicious of the positivity and excitement presented by the Forklift artists because she was unsure “what all the smiles meant”. She says after spending time with Forklift artists she later realised that “this like love and excitement and is a kind of nurturing, a kind of a way to make people feel not only included but also held.” The positivity acts as a container to hold and take care of those involved in the experience. Over her experiences with Forklift, Torrabla has found the love and acceptance of the lead artists to be genuine, acting not only as a container for the experience but as a net to catch people when they fall. She has been impressed that even when there are differences of opinion, clashes or conflicts, the love stays constant. She says this experience has softened her in some way, especially because the lead Forklift artists are white, and she is Mexican American.

Interviewing/Iterative Interviewing

Interviewing is both a formal and an informal method. Orr describes it as a “deep” or “reflective” listening that is achieved through open-ended questions and authentic curiosity. She adds that it is key to “embrace our role as novices. We come in to learn, not tell. We come in to listen and learn. We like to say show up and shut up.” Pinsky expands on this, explaining iterative interviewing as a key method. She says this is connected to the notion of the novice mind, and how it is important to keep asking questions from the place of not knowing, as opposed to the usual habit people have of pretending that they sort of already know what is going on.

Regular Forklift interview questions include: “What do you love? What’s something you find hard? What’s an issue you would like the general public to know about?” Formal and informal interviews are necessary because Orr has discovered working in the “field” that you often get the best material from a person when they are in the natural environment. She has often used the cab of a truck as a sound studio. Orr says the informal interviews often produce rich material, that “bits of that audio will then end up in the show depending upon it’s a way of us gathering research but also it’s a way that performers, collaborators really literally tell their story on their terms.” The Forklift artists use the interviews both as research for their shows and to gather content for the shows. Audio clips are frequently incorporated into the soundscapes of the shows.

Listening and Authentic Curiosity

Several artists also mentioned listening as a method. LaMotte says that the act of listening might be implied in the process of relationship building or interviewing, but that it is important to highlight the *kind* of listening Marty describes this in relation to hanging out, which is listening without an agenda. LaMotte says acknowledgement of assumptions and being open to changing one’s mind is key to the kind of listening to which they aspire.

Deep listening is a kind of listening where artists try to listen in an embodied way. LaMotte explains that this means picking up on physical signals, as well as taking time for pauses. She credits learning from Orr the power of the pause and how often people will go deeper if you just give them the space to do so. Marty adds the method of authentic curiosity and how even when people go on about their jobs in a way that may not be interesting, you must nurture your authentic curiosity because you never know what might be revealed.

Marty gives the example in the aquatics projects about asking several times about how the pumps work, and that through her authentic curiosity the maintenance staff explained the function of the pump in a way she had never thought of, as the heart of a pool. She describes how this curiosity led to a new understanding that she had never before imagined: “I never would have thought the pump is the heart of the pool right? Every time you get in a pool you’re not thinking about the pump. Right? Like you wouldn’t be getting in that pool without that pump. So, it wouldn’t be a pool it would be a bathtub. A static, stagnant, stinky water.”

Block walking

Block walking is going door to door in a neighbourhood to try and connect with people who live in the area who might not otherwise connect to the work. Torrabla explains “block walking” as another method that is useful in community, because it opens up the possibility of connecting with people who live in the community but are not yet connected to the public spaces or mutual contacts of the project.

Embodiment

Like the embodied listening described above, embodiment is a kind of full body empathy, where a person is connected to the humanity of another person through the five senses. Orr describes a kind of kinesthetic witnessing, where one is present and aware in their own body because they are experiencing what others are doing. When job shadowing, Marty says she uses the method of embodiment by trying to take part in the physical actions as much as possible to learn and understand on an embodied level. LaMotte believes the embodied work is quite radical because our culture tends to pull us out of our bodies.

The method of embodiment is used in the creation of the performances as well as the research. The Forklift artists use the embodied movements they have witnessed to create the choreography for the performers in the show. Often the community members are the ones performing the movements, so they are already familiar with the basic movements. By watching the (seemingly every day) movements in performance, it is the hope that audience members—through the actors—also have an embodied experience.

Elaborate Tech

A final method for the creation of Forklift productions is the use of elaborate technical elements. Orr explains it is an intentional choice to use elaborate music and lighting in the shows. She explains that just because the performers are not professional artists does not mean that they should not be treated with the same technical elements as professionals. She says that the goal is to create awe and wonder so that the art can be “as awesome as the communities’ skills, stories, and movement.”

Process Takeaways:

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Forklift artists' responses relating to process and methods:

Problematizing Belonging

Problematizing the method of active belonging is useful in making sure an outsider's presence in a community is welcome and their intentions are understood. It is worthwhile to remember that communities are multi-faceted, diverse and nuanced, and that even though one person or group has extended an invite into community, other folks may not be aware of that invitation and/or feel similar. This is an example of Razack's (2015) work on the importance of unequal social relations in space.

Hanging Out/Being With

The method of hanging out/being with, without agenda, is a thought-provoking concept. Most research methods have a goal or agenda. Hanging out/being with allows for relationships to be the priority, and for a given community to be more respected because they are given space to be who they are. This space allows for potential thoughts and ideas to come from community that are outside of the agenda or structure of the artist/researcher. This has resonance to the notion of the relationship as the project. It also directly relates to the re-positioning of the public and/or community members as participants as opposed to consumers. Instead of only approaching members of the public when you want something from them (eg. to sell them a ticket), there is an opportunity for relationships to be built in line with the value of reciprocity and this opportunity is connected to Malpas's (2018) view that we become humans in place and Tuan's (1977) idea of place as pause.

Iterative Interviewing/Listening

The method of iterative interviewing/listening is a reminder that through meaningful relationships, interviewing can happen in an ongoing way. This allows for potentially deeper and more meaningful interviews. This method is useful for community-based work of any kind, and could also be applied to the relationship building of hanging out for members of an organisation hoping to connect with the greater community. This is a version of Jentoft and Olsen's (2019) slow interviewing.

Embodiment

The method of embodiment has resonance with Kushnir's (2016) humanizing the actors and the audience. There is the potential for an embodied connection between creator, performer, and audience.

Elaborate Tech

The use of elaborate tech is inspiring. Why should community members not be as supported as professionals? There is no good answer, but the short answer is cost. To mitigate the budgetary restraint, projects could plan from the outset to offset this cost. The idea of supporting community-based art with professional resources honours Zukin's (1995) idea that culture is connected in public spaces.

Partnerships

The fourth question I asked in each interview was: "How do you engage with partners to do your work?"

Orbiting Partners

In the place-based projects, community engagement can happen in an ongoing way, not only through the community meetings and the community coordinator but through every interaction at the pool. Forklift staff were trained on how to talk about the project and how to listen about the project to perceive interest from community members. Marty describes this method as the "choose your own adventure" conversation, where instead of simply telling people about the project they actively try and get to know the person with an ear to how they might fit into the project.

Pinsky believes partners are important because it means more people are involved and invested in the problem that is being solved. Marty talks about "orbiting partners" and how one partnership can lead to others. Because the connections are there and they just need to be discovered, thinking of the partners in different orbits is useful, as it provides an image to investigate where and how different people are connected. Community meetings were another method used to get the word out about the project.

Intentional Diversity

Race dynamics were at play in the Givens Pool project as most Forklift's core artists are white. To account for that Forklift hired a Black community engagement coordinator and a Black community member. Marty explains that one of the learnings for her about working with the Black community is that Black space needs to be protected. She says this learning applies to any community they work with, in the way that she must respect and honour the space and the people.

Structured Autonomy

Advance thought must be put into structuring partnerships to allow for partners to have power and autonomy to create their own work. LaMotte explains that if this happens then the work of partners is hopefully not framed or controlled by the main artists from Forklift. LaMotte highlights that no matter how much they listen, they still curate the information, which is a form

of power. These more autonomous, structured partnerships also allow resources to flow back into communities that may not otherwise have resources.

Partnership take-aways:

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Forklift artists' responses relating to partners:

Understanding Partner Orbits

Orbiting partners is a useful concept to realise and make use of the many different connections within any community. It recognizes that in any situation relationships may lead to other relationships. This is an example of Putnam's (2000) theory that community networks have value and Massey's (1997) view of place as a network of relations.

Pursue Diversity

Intentional diversity is a critical notion when working with any community. The people from the community must be directly involved in the work, and the artists in the company must reflect the diversity of the community. Since the start of the *Givins Swims* project, Forklift has made an effort to engage more racialized artists in leadership roles. This is one small potential strategy to pursue belonging as inclusion (Sriskandarajah, 2019) and counter the spatial racism Razack (2016) describes.

Structuring Autonomy

Structured autonomy for partners allows for power to be shared and disseminated. Artists have the potential to be blind to the power of authorship and curation they hold. By setting up platforms for structured autonomy artistic leadership offers some of the power of creative decision making to others. This relates to the idea of participation architecture, which I propose as an evolution of Sotelo-Castro's (2009; 2018) participation cartography.

Measurement/Outcomes

I did not have a main question about outcomes. However, it came up enough in the discussions that it merits a thematic category of its own.

Relationships

Forklift's work is relational, and Orr believes success is measured by relationships. Both during and at the end of a project she asks, "Are the relationships stronger now than they were before?" Orr believes the quality of relationships can be measured by repeat participation and commitment to participate. If people "keep showing up," it indicates high quality. A Givens community member described Forklift as "the glue". The strong relationships Forklift has had with community members has now evolved into hiring some of the key community members as staff. Don Anderson, one of the main community collaborators in the Trash Project, is now on

staff and assisted with the Aquatics Project. After George Floyd's murder, some of the Forklift Team members advocated for a reunion of the Givens cast. Orr says she has realised that "a lot of our role as artists in doing community-based work is just to give people a reason to get together. Give people a reason to be in the same room that might not normally get to be and to see what happens when they do that."

Additionally, Forklift often hears that the relationship dynamics are strengthened by the work. In the Givens Community, Orr shares that a 'working group' made up of cast members from the Givens show has been created. This working group did not exist before the show happened. This is one example of the show itself being a step to something more. It is important to note during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Givens working group worked with local health authorities to organise vaccine clinics for the community in the Givens neighbourhood. It is impossible to prove whether this clinic might have somehow been organised if the show had not happened. However, it is obvious that the working group came directly from the show.

Immeasurable Outcomes

Several of the Forklift artists spoke about outcomes that are difficult to measure. These are largely related to how people feel about the work. LaMotte says outcomes begin with the pride the participants have in the work. She says they ask themselves if people feel good about the work and did the work give members of the community what they need. Orr says there are the multiple immeasurable outcomes, such as the way people's minds may have changed. With the aquatics project Marty points to researcher Lynn Osgoode's image of ripples in the water. The relational effects of the work span outwards from the community of the show to the general community. LaMotte explains that to study audience outcomes Forklift has done surveys asking audiences what they know now that they did not before, and what (if any) actions might come from their experience.

Marty remembers a story of personal impact with the aquatics project. A city accountant came to see the show. He was moved by the need for maintenance funding that was illustrated, and after the show he went back to his office and said, "Oh my god okay let's just charge a dollar more at the pools where we charge and put that money directly toward maintenance". This individual impact was similar to another win for the pools budget. In 2018, between Forklift's second and third pool shows, the public voted for the largest bond allocation ever for aquatics budgets. There is no way to prove this was a result of the 2017 and 2018 Forklift shows, but the aquatics staff described it as a "perfect storm" because so many members of the public, as well as politicians, had participated in the Forklift shows, giving them a new awareness and appreciation of the need for maintenance funding.

Community defined outcomes

Often outcomes and how they are measured are defined by funders, or the project leaders. In contrast, Pinsky believes measurement must be defined by the community, but she acknowledges this is a challenge because at the start of a process the community has little to no idea about what it is to come. In this way, a discussion of measurements and expectations before the relationship building and bonding has even begun is a bit like putting the cart before the horse. However, if

these conversations do not happen then there is no community-defined target for the work. Pinsky says there might be potential to retroactively work in frameworks of measurement based on the communities needs and desires.

Outcomes Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Forklift artists' responses relating to outcomes:

Strengthening of Relationships

The strengthening of relationships is an important goal and an outcome that is difficult to measure. There is an opportunity for further thought and investigation of how to measure or conceptualise this outcome. This is resonant with Creswell's (2004) writing about place being constructed out of involvement, belonging, and value.

Formation/Activation of Networks

The Givens Park working group is a tangible outcome and clear example of the exercising or practicing of community. These community leaders were already in the community and already cared about the community, but their experience with the play activated the neural network of community so that when the pandemic hit, a community response fired through the network. As with the earlier take away about networks, this relates to both Putnam's (2000) and Jacob's (1993) belief that networks have value.

Anecdotal Evidence

The stories about the individual accountant and increased bond vote are reminders that anecdotal evidence is useful to prove outcomes. Efforts must be made throughout community-based projects to gather and archive these stories, as they powerfully illustrate potential impacts in a way other metrics do not. This connects to Big hART's Rankin's (year) notion of dramaturgical thinking, and Sandercock and Attili's (2014) work on intervening to help write a new story.

Community-Defined Outcomes

The thinking about definition of outcomes by community is an opportunity for further investigation. Definition of outcomes is another form of power. To share this power, all stakeholders must be involved and engaged in the process of defining the ideal outcomes. How might community be engaged early in the process to set some of the goals and measures? This falls in line with Wilson's (2008) writing on using diversity as a source of empowerment.

Challenges

I did not have a main question about challenges. However, it came up enough in the discussions that it merits a thematic category of its own.

Place Tending vs Place Making

LaMotte cites Lisa Bird's unpacking of the term place making, and how she reorients the work as "place tending or place keeping." The key differentiation being is the place is already there, and that artists coming to work in and with the place must respect that. They can bring resources and energy to the place, but they are not making the place.

Privilege

Reflecting on her own experience and privilege, Orr explains using what she has in a good way is about creating a platform for others: "How do you tell the story that reflects what the community, the collaborating community, wants shared and who do you need there to tell that?" The origin of the pool shows related to their connections with other departments, and the aquatics director asked them to do pools next. Orr asks, "How do we expand our ideas of what art and artists can do and the context of issues around education, transportation, history, all the things...health, all that?" It comes back to direction from the community regarding who the show is for. Orr was surprised when one of the communities for the pool show wanted outsiders there to see their community. In this case people from outside the community were important to its collaborators, so Forklift supported it.

Race and Power

Race and power dynamics are always present. Torrabla believes Forklift and artists doing similar community-based work have to be aware of the dynamics of race and power. She feels the tensions around these dynamics need to be recognized and the ethical questions considered. She reflects on her own experience when she first worked with Forklift. As a person of colour and an immigrant she looked around and saw a predominately white company doing work in Austin, which she felt was becoming a whiter city. Additionally, several of the Forklift associate artists were recruited through academic settings in other cities, so not only were the artists white but they were not local and they were privileged—with both their educational status and their freedom to work and move across the country. She describes a moment in the first project she worked on where she realised that everyone who works at Forklift, including herself, is a potential gentrifier. Everyone doing this work is potentially impacting or displacing local people.

After a while Torrabla realised that the structure of involving artists from the outside has more to do with capacity than extraction, and that she believes Forklift is taking steps to connect with local organisations and people. Torrabla said she was grateful to work with Brown people, Spanish speakers, and community health care workers in the Nadamos Dove Springs project because it was a rare opportunity to work with these types of people in the usual white world of dance. She said she had serious hesitations when Orr asked her to do work in the Givens project, because she is not Black and not local. She had a long conversation with Orr about her concerns and does not remember the exact "resolve" but says it made her feel ok about going forward.

Fatigue/Perfection

Community-based art requires community members to offer their time. Torrabla raised the challenge of respecting people's time during the rehearsal process of the Givens project. She believes there cannot be a one-size-fits-all heteronormative approach to how people's time is respected, and that there needs to be case by case acknowledgement of what time means for each individual. Fatigue is an issue and Orr feels there needs to be balance, and that the process needs to be a healthy one for both community and artists. This means letting go of the idea of perfection and accepting that there is no perfect show. She cites teaching from the Urban Bush Women offered to her through her mentors, who unpack perfectionism as a racist patriarchal concept.

Compensation

Community member participants are not always compensated for their time and a challenge Pinsky identifies is paying community members for their time. This challenge is not present when Forklift works with groups of workers in a specific labour setting as the workers are on the job and being paid by their employers. When it comes to working in the community with a group of citizens however, Pinsky feels this is a key element that needs more attention because of the logistical questions and challenges it presents, such as: "Who should be paid? How much should people be paid? In what way should they be paid?"

Pinsky feels there should be more thought into both the ethics of payment and the logistics of how participation and payment is evaluated, valued and administered. For example, the type of payment also needs to be problematized. Pinsky references an organisation she has worked with in San Francisco that uses gift cards to compensate homeless participants, who "are like fuck you. Like don't give us gift cards we want cash." Paying in gift cards might be a requirement of a funding agency for tracking purposes, but Pinsky points out that it is patronizing to only give people money that can be spent in certain ways. Additionally, the idea of payment sets up a transactional moment that potentially contrasts with the priority of relationship.

The solution to the payment question in the aquatics project was to pay participants per rehearsal and per performance, to encourage participation and compensate people for their time.

Challenges Takeaways

The following concepts are useful to distill from the Forklift artists' responses relating to challenges:

Community-ing in Place

The concept of "place-tending" or "place-keeping" is key in preventing artists from believing they have a false ownership over the people and places they work in. Perhaps there is an even more accurate term to capture the collaboration that is hopefully taking place. Combining Forklift's goal of activating communities, Pinsky's metaphor of the community as a neural

network connects to Studdert's (2016) view of communities as a verb, or the process of "communing," and how we become human in place (Malpas, 2018).

Race, Power, Privilege and Positionality

The acknowledgement of one's privilege and a commitment to using it for good is an admirable goal. It is hopeful to think that all artists working in community have this focus, but perhaps not necessarily so. To ensure there is a responsibility to community, there is an opportunity for mechanisms of accountability to be created.

Torrabla's call to attention about race and power is in line with Razack's (2015) notion of space as racialized and race as spatialized. The first step in unpacking issues of race and power is naming them. Artists must be aware of their positionality and of the diversity of the community. Then, they must take tangible steps to honour, reflect, and engage with the diversity of the populations they work with. This involves unlearning deeply embedded ideas of inferiority and superiority. This unlearning is connected to Razack's (2002; 2015) work on anti-racism and Sriskandarajah's (2019) writing on racialized space.

Fatigue / Perfection

The idea of perfection needs to be let go. Even in non-community-based arts, the notion of perfection is problematic. There is opportunity here to reframe the success of a project based on the measures discussed above. This would help with making sure those involved are healthy and respected. This is indirectly related to Nolan's (2015) teaching that theatre is medicine. Perhaps if we view theatre as something that serves and nurtures us, it could relieve us of some of the pressure to "get it right."

Compensation

The administration of compensation presents an opportunity for improvement. How can community members' time and efforts be adequately honoured? Additionally, the gift card vs. cash discussion is worth pursuing. How might a system be set up that satisfies funders and auditors' requirements while at the same time not being paternalistic to community members? This is supported by Davis's (1974) notion that walls can be turned sideways into bridges. Instead of difference keeping us from relational reciprocity, how might we find ways to be closer together?

4.4 Summary

4.4.1 Comparison of Findings

Although the work of Big hART and Forklift are obviously different, there are many relevant resonances in the case study interview findings. In the discussion above, I have provided some commentary on how the takeaway findings connect to my applied work. I have also explicitly named some of the artists and theorists from earlier in this dissertation as a way to continue to

thread my conceptual framework through this document. It is useful to highlight five main resonances between the work of Big hART and Forklift, and to connect each one to my central argument and conceptual framework.

Visibility, Re-Inclusion and Acknowledging Unacknowledged Relationships

Artists from both companies believe their work helps make the existing connections within community become visible. They are both trying to expose the root systems of the forest. Forklift describes this as acknowledging unacknowledged relationships. Big hART sees it as being a part of the flow of change. These are noticeably different from “building” community. The concepts of visibility, re-inclusion, and acknowledging unacknowledged relationships are all very similar. The root of all these ideas is that all people in community are already connected and the work is less about making the connections, but rather making people aware of these connections. From this awareness comes empathy and from this empathy comes the potential for action. This is a direct connection to my argument that verbatim theatre can help us see we are already connected.

Responsive Relationship with Community

A common theme in both findings was the notion of responsivity. This means the work responds to what is happening in community, as opposed to being pre-determined. This idea leads to community members being part of the process of the work. The work becomes a dialogue, and community members are participants instead of consumers. The consumer model of traditional theatre totally disregards this potential. By seeing theatre as a participatory art, we arrange the art and the audience in a circle, with the goal of connecting. This relates to my interpretation of social capital as a relational process that is happening in place. Verbatim theatre is particularly well suited to invite participation because the process itself is a platform for people to share in conversations with people in their community that might not otherwise happen.

Partnership First and Partner Orbits

Findings from the partnership category can be distilled to the basic but powerful idea that partnership can come first, and the details can come later. The notion of mapping potential partners and their orbits resonates with the view of making existing connections visible. Both companies work relationally. Working relationally means the relationship, and the time spent to strengthen it, comes first. This is a relevant takeaway for community development—arts groups and beyond. One artist succinctly quoted artist Jade Lillie’s (2020) idea that “the relationship is the project.” This connects to my use of Indigenous knowledge to re-think place and relationships. By seeing connections extend to partners and figuring out the details later, we expand our view of the “root systems” of our relational forest beyond the people with whom we are currently in relationship.

Bespoke Measurements

The issue of measurement was identified as an opportunity for growth by artists from both companies. They spoke about pre-determined measures from funders both limiting and controlling the scale and direction of the work. Big hART has done work to advocate to their

funding partners for bespoke or “custom made” measurements. This is a useful concept to carry forward, as it opens up the potential for measurements to serve the work being done, as opposed to the opposite. The ideal of creating bespoke measurements is resonant with my learning from Indigenous knowledge about how to re-imagine place and relations. It is also connected with the part of my central argument that place is created. If we are creating place, then why would we not create new ways to measure the new places?

Connection of Theory to Practice

It was evident that artists from both companies are clear on their values and how their work is value driven. Even with this clarity, they identified the challenge of keeping the work on track and on value. This creates a useful opportunity for both companies and this research project- how might a process be developed so that the agreed upon values are constantly present as guideposts to the everyday practice? There is potential resonance here for this process to connect with the idea of bespoke measurements, in a manner that allows measurements to help along the way instead of being a target evaluated after the fact. The connection of theory to practice also links to the part of my argument about community as communing. It is not enough to be thinking and writing about the idea of community; one must ,actively and consistently, be *doing* it.

4.4.2 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the findings of my two exploratory case studies: interviews with artists from Big hART and Forklift Danceworks. It began with introducing the work of Big hART, including their concept of the domains of change and brief introductions of their artists and some of their programs, the New Roebourne Project, Neo Learning, and Project O. The Big hART interview findings were divided into five main categories: community, process/methods, partners, outcomes, and challenges. The first category, community, included responses about the domains of change, the flow of change, asset-based thinking, and places of knowing. The second category, process/methods, included responses about responsivity through relationship, relationality and tension, modesty, dramaturgical thinking, sharing, creation of place, holding space, modelling community, diversity of methods, future focus, certain kinds of artists, and the invitations. I highlighted a few takeaways from the process/methods findings, including responsive relationships creating a workspace, holding space, and marking moments, the modelling of community, the use of ritual, the nuances of invitation, and dramaturgical thinking.

The third category, partners, included findings about diversity of partnerships, partnerships through relationships, and partner mapping. I highlighted a few takeaways from the partners section including potential partner mapping, the partnership first approach, and viewing funders and sponsors as partners. The fourth category, outcomes, included findings such as culture as a right and essential service, and the question of measurement. I highlighted a few takeaways from the outcomes section, including bespoke measurements and internal reflection. The fifth and final category, challenges, included findings relating to the connection between micro and macro, and dissonance with funding models. I highlighted a few takeaways from the challenges section including relationships with funders and dialogues between micro and macro. Along the way I have woven in mentions of artists and theorists from earlier in this thesis to connect their thinking to these findings.

The second half of the chapter gave a brief introduction of the work of Forklift Danceworks, including their artists and a few of their programs: the Trees of Govalle and My Park, My Pool, My City. Like the Big hART findings, the Forklift interview findings were divided into five main categories: community, process/methods, partners, outcomes and challenges. The first category, community, included responses about artists as problem solvers, community members as participants (not consumers), and activating unacknowledged relationships. The second category, process/methods included responses about methods such as relational interventions, involving the greater community, embedding to build relationships, active belonging and reaching, hanging out, iterative interviewing, listening and authentic curiosity, block walking, embodiment, and elaborate tech. I highlighted a few take-aways from the process/methods findings, including the need to problematize belonging, being with, listening, embodiment and elaborate tech.

The third category, partners, included findings about orbiting partners, intentional diversity, and structured autonomy. I highlighted a few takeaways from the partners section including understanding partner orbits, the need to pursue diversity, and structuring autonomy. The fourth category, outcomes, included findings about relationships, immeasurable outcomes, and community defined outcomes. I highlighted a few takeaways from the outcomes section, including the strengthening of relationships, formation or activation of networks, anecdotal evidence, and community defined outcomes. The fifth and final category, challenges, included findings relating to place tending, privilege, race and power, fatigue, and compensation. I highlighted a few takeaways from the challenges section including community-ing in place, the importance of positionality, fatigue, and compensation. As with the Big hART takeaways, I have made connections between my literature review and the Forklift take-aways in order weave these two sources together.

This chapter concluded with a summary of resonant findings from both exploratory case studies. It is useful to carry forward the methods offered by both groups of artists. However, it is especially important to see how the main takeaways from my case study interviews connect to my conceptual framework and central argument. To illustrate this, I have offered thoughts about how Big hART and Forklift have similar perspectives on how to create visibility, opportunities for re-inclusion, and the acknowledgement of unacknowledged relationships. I discussed the common view of community members as participants (not consumers) and the relational connection. Finally, I described how both companies also have resonant beliefs on how bespoke measurements could be created and the importance of connecting theory to practice. In summary, the work of Big hART and Forklift illustrates the humanizing power of art when it creates places for the potential of relationships to be explored and more fully realized. In the following chapter I will carry forward some of these learnings as a part of my discussion of my research creation project with the Pleasant Hill Community.

Chapter Five: A Place of Relations: Play, Journey, Analysis

5.1 The Braid

This chapter is written in a braid honouring each of my roles (artist, researcher, teacher/learner): the **play** is my work as an artist, my personal **journey** is my work as teacher/student, and the **analysis** of the project represents research. Of course, being strands of a braid they are interwoven and overlapping. This interconnectedness is also a part of a/r/tography. A/r/tography has a rhizomatic approach. It views all things as relational, like the nêhiyaw (Cree) worldview of *wâhkôhtowin*, which teaches us that we are not just connected to each other and all things but *related* to each other and all things. This means that the traditional linear chapter structure, where one-point leads to the next, is insufficient. A/r/tography creates new places as it pursues possibility. In both the empirical research and the writing of this project, my aim is to create a place where new ideas can emerge.

What does this look like in practice? This chapter is braided together, where the related strands of art, learning and research resonate with each other. The art is scenes from the **play** *Pleasant Hill Talks*, wherein interviews from multiple interviewers with one hundred community members have been transcribed and edited into a play. All the text of the play is edited from the interviews. The learning is my own **journey** as the primary research instrument in this process. The **analysis** includes the synthesis and contextualization of the interview data¹⁸ including short quotations from the interviews indicated by single quotation marks. Instead of traditional “conclusions” at the end of the chapter, I offer points of connection to artists and theorists from my literature review and learnings from my case studies. This chapter supports my central argument that verbatim theatre has the potential to create a place where systematic humanization can occur by showing how the making and sharing of the play humanized the issues in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood, the participants in the process, and me.

5.1.1 Play: *Pleasant Hill Talks: THE DRUM*

BLANK: I have a brother who has a drum group and they go around singing anywhere and everywhere. And when people hear our songs being like heard and being sung in a backyard they kind of open up our gate and they're like hey, that was really beautiful and why and that's when the conversation starts.

MEATLOAF: The other day it was uh the parade of Indigenous people with their drums uh I found it like art to me.

MOULDY: I love the pow-wows. Everybody's kinda walking around and they seem free. Nobody's you have to sit here and you have to sit here don't move. It's a time of freedom

¹⁸ The **play** *Pleasant Hill Talks* was edited by myself and Yvette Nolan. The **journey** strand is composed of my own personal reflections, the **analysis** strand includes coding done by Rachel Tang, who at the time of analysis was a senior researcher at the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research.

BLANK: a lot of people haven't heard the sound of a drum it can be very powerful like in a powwow if you were ever to stand beside a drum you would literally feel it in your bones cause of how powerful the drum is.

SUNNY: Uh and another one is uhm one day we we heard the drum.

BLANK: It's physical like you can literally feel the ground shake as they hit the drum and as they sing the songs.

SUNNY: The drum beat coming down a street and I was like do you hear that and then we look out the window and there's a group of people coming you know doing a walk you know.

BLANK: And in that sense it kind of you kind of like you start bobbing your head to it and all of a sudden you start dancing and all a sudden you start smiling and you're just on cloud nine.

SUNNY: Uhm the drum to me is expression of you know love, freedom, happiness you know it gives gratitude to you know being able to you know thank a higher power out there that is looking out for each person here.

BLANK: And you're just like wow this is great I haven't felt this is in forever. And uhm I uh that's what I connect with with art it's it's us it's our culture and everything about it.

SUNNY: The drum beat coming down a street and I was like do you hear that and then we look out the window and there's a group of people coming you know doing a walk you know. Uhm it could be murdered women walk, uhm a walk for children, a walk for cancer you know so you know that's to me that's an expression of art coming together with the music with the heart beat of the drum because you know it represents you know the heart beat of our people.

JUNIOR: Well there's also a talking circle and sharing circle that happens in Pleasant Hill when uh every what every Thursday?

LITTLE MAMA: Every Thursday I'm pretty sure there's-

JUNIOR: Every Thursday and they they uh they play native music like they drum everything. They sing native music.

LITTLE MAMA: And they welcome the kids to learn.

JUNIOR: I consider that art because they're they're getting the community to know about our culture.

JAYLIN: It's spiritual also.

JUNIOR: Yeah it's spiritual stuff they have sharing circles they they uhm s- they get together and teach you how to drum how to uhm sing native songs everything.

LITTLE MAMA: Yeah and then they allow children to if from that programming to where they are they allow the children to get the kids to take forms home for their parents to sign them up to go learn how to do drumming or learn how to do the singing and-

JUNIOR: Learn beading.

LITTLE MAMA: Yeah. We learn it all I learn it all-

JUNIOR: Everything.

LUCY: When there is music in the community it stands out to me very much so so you know the buskers who play their guitars uhm or the people who sing as they walk down the street or you know sometimes there is like outdoor music where people in the community can come and uh you know participate in a drumming circle

DEVON: sometimes we hear drumming from the the park uh Pleasant Hill Park there uhm or just beside Pleasant Hill School

WIENER: Pleasant hill behind the school uh there was always uh a bunch of guys with their families get together they go up on the hill and they do native singing and drumming. And I go up when they're there I'm on my balcony. I'm listening. And then there was another group came by and it had to be girl like girls like probably between ten and fifteen years old maybe? And with a there's a couple of but their parents and they were singing Indian songs and they- and they're then their parents and who was there but drumming and and and I didn't understand a friggen word they were saying but it was good. It was good.

ASENI: I think about three years now uh there's they were still going two years ago they used to have a drum group that drew attention to the people uh and uh and in uh Pleasant Hill school. There's there's there's a big place back there they have a they have a little hill there where their drummers used to uh sing out their songs and uh people would get involved in there. That's that's the thing that is missing

WIENER: Sometimes if I'm having a bad day and they're out singing all the adults drumming when they come I'll just give me peace of mind if I had a bad day. It it's just just calming just if I had a bad day that that'd straighten me right out. Yup!

ASENI: Uh because uh a lot of a lot of our our our people uh the songs the songs themselves the bring bring in the the heart beat of the drum brings all the people in there. And they can hear it from miles away and they just all a sudden there's a whole bunch of people in the park listening to these songs and I know they get uh they're they're happy when they're in there but uh when the when the drum stops and it has to stop one some days so they they you can see that they're uh wondering what can we do next, what can we do.

TOEHMAK: I go sing more or less for uhm my own personal enjoyment you know and uh I don't really go for anybody but if anybody shows up you know then that's okay. And uh you know I'll teach them because that's my duty. And uh I don't sing for reaction I just I sing for you know just

to let out emotion from my own self you know and I don't know if that's like selfish to say but like you know that's just what I do it for and you know it brings the people together and I know that's my role as a human is to be out there to sing and bring healing.

TOEHMAK: . And uh to teach the next generation because they need that they need that you know they need that healing you know because the we all feel the intergenerational affects from residential school you know assimilation you know the process of the last 500 years we all feel it together collectively. You know that you know that good old rumble in your tummy you can't let go away it's it's the 500 years of abuse on our people. You know? That's that's just it but that's why I sing is because I want to change the perception and I want to change you know you know I wanna bring beauty

GUS: this one this one day when we were singing. Uhm there's me and uh few of my buddies we were all singing singing at the hill there right? And then about seven this one guy comes up to us and he starts telling us like to uh thankful to hear the drums right? And to hear the round dancing and everything there's all good. And uh then he goes away right for a while and then uh he comes back couple minutes later and he tells us that he lives at one of those apartments not far and then heh heh he gave me and uh he gave me and my buddy a it was jackfish right? He wanted he gifted that fish to us.

TOEHMAK: Oh they're they're they're very grateful because like for the moment there you know everyone can be happy and you know and uh actually not have to worry about you know uhm some sort of like you know some tragic event happening you know or like some door getting kicked down you know cause everybody's listening to music. You know like you know everybody knows and this is our way you know it's in it's written in our mitochondrial DNA. You know it as soon as we hit that drum boom it's respect you know it's on a mitochondrial level and a metaphysical level. So, that's like it's biology to our people like you know it's soothing. So uh like you know that's you know it brings like that's what it brings to them and everyone's always grateful.

5.1.2 Journey: AKA Origins

I have worked for the past decade trying to make theatre that matters. Tragically, in the summer of 2019 there were five reported murders in Pleasant Hill. According to those in the community there were six. I was deeply saddened by this statistic. Who were these people who died? From the other side of the river and my very safe and sheltered life, I wondered about who these people were, and what I might be able to do to educate myself and perhaps support this community. At the time, I was working with my friend and collaborator Lancelot Knight on a talk show project at AKA Gallery, a small community gallery led by an arts collective. The format of the show was that I would interview guests from around the city, and Lance would listen and respond by composing a song spontaneously in the middle of the interview. Then after the talk show a visual artist would respond visually.

Lance and I decided we could devote an episode of the talk show to Pleasant Hill. I reached out to Jennifer Altenberg, then the president of the Pleasant Hill Community Association. Jennifer

agreed to be interviewed, along with another leader in the community. They called themselves “the matriarchs of Pleasant Hill.” As part of the interview, we asked each guest to bring an object—something they could talk about. Jennifer brought a red LED candle. She told me since the first murder that summer she has left a candle on her doorstep, indicating her house as a safe place. Lance started singing a song about the men sleeping and needing to wake up. But he could not make it through the song. He broke down crying. He hugged Jennifer. I sat and cried. The audience breathed it all in.

My heart was moved. I felt the need to do something to support Jennifer and this community. A community in my city was so clearly hurting. I questioned what it means to live in a city. Who and what are we responsible for?

I want to make art to help people move further down the path of engaging with their world. I called Jennifer a few weeks after the talk show interview to thank her for her leadership and generous sharing. I offered my skills to bring this community together so we can learn together about how to create a space where community can thrive through art. She took the idea back to the Pleasant Hill Community Association and they unanimously invited us to work together with them. We decided that we would apply for funding from SKarts, our provincial arts funder, and I told her I would also like to weave this work into my PhD research. I sincerely hoped this project will allow me to further grow my artistic practice from making art for people to making art with people. Art that truly matters. Art that would somehow impact Pleasant Hill in a good way.

5.1.3 Analysis: Introduction

My reworked research question is “What is the potential of verbatim theatre to be used as a community development process?” To investigate this question, residents of the area and people who work there were interviewed one-on-one or in groups to share their stories with the aim of making a verbatim theatre play. Within this exchange of narratives, the audience comes to learn what it is like to live and work in Pleasant Hill from those who are on the ground there, daily. Broader topics covered in these interviews were examples of art in the area, what art means to its people, and how the lives of community members can be improved, with art specifically, and without.

Values

Pleasant Hill is a place some people choose to live because of their values. For example, some professionals in the area mentioned that they are in Pleasant Hill or enjoy it because of a natural alignment with their profession. Social justice, access, ‘within arms’ reach’ of assistance, community engagement, irradicating ‘us versus them’ mentalities, building bridges between citizens and police, and providing resources were all expressed as motivators behind the work being done by these professionals. For local residents, believing in oneself, remaining positive or focusing on the positive, justice, opportunity, community (friendly and neighbourly interactions), respect, traditions, elders, giving back, welcoming, asking for help, relating from the heart, and truth and reconciliation were all important values.

Context/COVID

It is important to note that qualitative research such as this is bound in time and space. The findings in Chapters Five and Six reflect perspectives of people in Pleasant Hill and beyond collected between January 2021 and April 2022. The fact that COVID was rampant during or at the beginning of data collection does impact some responses in terms of perceptions of accessibility and availability of programming or venues that may have otherwise been more frequented. With the prospect of COVID restrictions being a thing of the past or something communities can move past, some feel a theatre company with more audience engagement would be perfect, satisfying needs missed (e.g., hand shaking, hugging). Because art and community both had a lot to do with being able to gather and bring people together, COVID did infiltrate the lens in which some of these questions were answered. For professionals, say those in spiritual care or community outreach, the influence was about getting back to work for those in need, hoping or sensing that COVID is coming to an end. COVID's influence also had bearing on how connected one can be or feel with one's community. The importance of community, and not having deep connection, is profound in Pleasant Hill. In defining community, one community member noted that especially since COVID it had become difficult to immerse herself in community.

COVID is a barrier to experiencing community and experiencing art as it is. Events like pow-wows and dances could not be held due to COVID. Drumming circles and buskers were thought to happen less. Perceptions of the types or amount of art happening in Pleasant Hill are partly skewed based on fewer artists being around in general, when artistry in this community was already perceived as 'hidden' by many people in the area.

COVID also amplifies socioeconomic difficulties local residents face if they are unable to work—or work as many hours—as they did prior to COVID. In this way, the pandemic exacerbates social issues that were already disproportionate in this community. This is also why some described their community as being 'in trouble', as COVID intensified problems that already existed. Kids recognized COVID as a challenge for Pleasant Hill. Blue sky ideas also included getting rid of COVID. However, as the COVID challenges became exacerbated, in a similar way, so did the supports. Examples of this are health care professionals in the community giving out food, booster shots, and educators going to homes to distribute food and learning packages.

It is important to remember that all viewpoints serve as unique lenses and vantage points from which to think about art, the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood, and the relationship between the two. Professionals are speaking to these concepts as professionals, some of whom have played quite integral roles in the development and ongoing care of Pleasant Hill either through politics, law enforcement, education, health care, or service delivery. Further, residents represent people of all ages, and various ethnic backgrounds.

5.1.4 Play: THE WEAVE

ANDRE: Pleasant Hill is for me a funny little shaped slice of land between the railway tracks, 22nd Street, 20th Street with a surprisingly quiet residential area of tiny houses and potholed streets and uh highly varied group of neighbours.

MAMA: Pleasant Hill Pleasant Hill is Pleasant Hill. It is just Pleasant Hill. The hood. Everybody knows it has a hood.

REESE: Yeah that's a that is a big question wow you can go a lot of places with that. Uhm...any maybe because maybe because I'm a pessimist in some ways my the first thing in my head was Pleasant Hill is dying

TRACEY: it's a community that is challenged with many determinants of health whether it be income security, food security, a bit of a food desert not much available for for food here.

MARS: Pleasant Hill is beauty, it's diverse, it's vibrant. Pleasant Hill is full of joy it's also full of uh intense pain and suffering. Uhm Pleasant Hill is a place where people feel safe and not safe it's a place of uh polarities. Pleasant Hill uh is full of history. Full of you know uh untapped potential.

TRACEY: a community that's challenged with recreational positive recreational opportunities.

SMOKER: Pleasant Hill is a it's Pleasant and and it is a hill you can you can go on.

HIPPAPOTOMUS: Pleasant Hill is not a not a boring place to live. Heh! There's action even at nights you don't even need T.V. Heh heh! Just look out your window you'll see lot of action yeah there's actually been lots quite quite a bit going on in the neighbourhood.

TRACEY: a community that experiences racism and structural racism

JEREMY. Pleasant Hill is oh I guess it's home. I've lived here all my life. Uhm it's pretty okay there's some ups and downs to it. Mostly downs in my opinion but there's a lot to say about that. Yes.

TRACEY: it's a community where some people struggle maybe disproportionate compared to other communities with substance use and mental health related challenges.

ANDRE: Pleasant Hill is inhabited by real, warm, loving, caring, but maybe frightened human beings. This is the heartbeat of of the city in a way you know if there's sickness here that then the city can't survive this is this is kind of like you you can't hide the problems of our society here. They're all laid out and it's just human being trying to struggle

5.1.5 Journey: Initial Relationships

Pleasant Hill Clean Up Days

The Pleasant Hill Community Association organizes two “Community Clean Up Days” each year (spring and fall). The community association divides their neighborhood into sections and assigns volunteers to pick up garbage. In October of 2020 I attended my first clean-up day with my then four-year old son, Judah. It was important to me to participate in the clean-up for several reasons. I wanted to get to know the community, I wanted to support the community, and I wanted my son to be connected to Pleasant Hill. He was fascinated to learn about how to properly pick up and dispose of a used needle. Although I was asked to introduce the project in the opening circle of the event, my intention was to be there in service, to practice the methodology that Forklift Danceworks refers to as “Being With.” Before anything is asked of the community, it is important to spend time with the community. My son and I have attended five different Pleasant Hill clean ups since the project began. We benefitted from the value of reciprocity, as we have served by picking up garbage and have learned about circumstances in our own city that are a vastly different from our home community. The initial seeds of empathy are planted by seeing and experiencing situations different than our own. This journey begins with being with people in different situations than us.

Initial Interviews

The first twelve or so interviews were conducted over ZOOM due to the University of Saskatchewan’s COVID regulations. The ZOOM format added some formality to the interview process. However, people still shared their ideas and thoughts and feelings. For the first twelve or so interviews we spoke with those directly involved in the community association—the “low hanging fruit” so to speak. These were and are the people who know about the project and are willing to talk freely and openly about their community. They are an important group of stakeholders, but not by any means are they the only group. At the beginning of the research period when we were limited to ZOOM by COVID, and so this seemed to be the most practical place to start.

Interview Questions

One challenge in the early interviews was the last question from the semi-structured interview guide: “How could a theatre company work with the Pleasant Hill community?” Understandably, people being interviewed often defaulted to ideas related to the theatre, such as “you could make a play.” However, we wanted our participants to dream bigger and think outside the activities of a traditional theatre. So those of us doing interviews decided to revamp the question leaving out the mention of a theatre company. The new question was “What are three blue sky ideas that could benefit the Pleasant Hill community if time or money were not a barrier?” When I was doing interviews, I would also often give some examples, prompting with big ideas like “some folks say we should build a zip line from the hospital to the school” or small ideas like “some folks said a pop-up grocery store.” It was my hope that these ideas would activate the imaginations of the interview participants. The generation of the semi-structured interview guide

was informed by the case studies and by some of the learning with Forklift Danceworks. We borrowed their useful question: What would you like the rest of the city to know about your community?

Interceptor Interviews

In the fall of 2021, the COVID conditions were still challenging in Saskatoon, but the University approved in-person interviews for the project. This, combined with the unusually nice weather, made me think it would be a good idea to have some random sample community interviews with residents of Pleasant Hill. In past verbatim plays I have called these “streeter” or “door knocker” interviews, because I have just approached people on the street or in parks or knocked on their doors. This kind of random sampling is important because it provides access to the ideas and thoughts of people who may not answer a poster or be associated with an organisation or association. Of course there is a significant amount of rejection that takes place with these interviews, but to my pleasant surprise there was a great deal of willingness to talk from the people I “intercepted.” I remember one group interview in particular, four people walking along who were so kind and intelligent with their observations. One of the people was a woman nine months pregnant, expecting any day. We had to sit down for the interview on a small concrete platform outside the loading dock of St. Paul’s Hospital. I was so touched by the optimism of these people. Yes, they talked about some of the common themes related to poverty in the community, but they mostly wanted to emphasize the positive community aspects of where they lived—how people know each other and look out for each other, from the local shopkeeper who gives away freezies to anyone who needs them on a hot day to the fact that people know each other’s pets so if your dog or cat runs away you will get a message on Facebook. These comments made me think of my own neighbourhood and how few people I know on my block.

5.1.6 Analysis: Pleasant Hill is...

Known locally as ‘the hood’, Pleasant Hill was described in a multitude of ways reinforcing that it is so many different things to people. It was discussed in both positive and negative terms relatively equally. Often, it seemed folks could not fully describe Pleasant Hill without touching on both the darker and lighter sides of this area. This is because it seems to be a place that is what you make of it, while also being a place where the ‘truth of everyday life’ is lived. This connects to Creswell’s (2004) definition of place as space infused with meaning and Razack’s (2015) interest in the way places are used in everyday life.

Pleasant Hill is often misunderstood by outsiders, while for many living there, it is ‘home’. Pleasant Hill was described literally as a ‘pleasant place with hills you can go on’. It is an area evolving with potential, a community made up of interesting citizens, a big part of Saskatoon, within the heart of Saskatoon, and a ‘long list’ of things, both good and bad; it is ‘*a place of polarities*’. This characteristic of a community full of opposites may be sensed in **Figure 5.1**, which displays the most frequently occurring words that were categorized as responses to “Pleasant Hill is...”. It is ‘rough around the edges’. It is more than a name and ‘so many things really’. It is the people. It is informed by history, and it is both ‘evolving’ and ‘unchanging’. It is ‘for Sunday brunch’. It is ‘the heart of Treaty Six territory’. It is a place everybody knows, that has its ups and downs. It is transient, yet, there is a rootedness to it. Most commonly, in more

neutral or mixed terms, it was described as one's home or neighbourhood.

Pleasant Hill is also described as 'cooked', and 'the show on 20th', and a place where you do not need television to be entertained or 'not a boring place to live'. There are a variety of all kinds of people here, but mostly poor. It is a series of communities. It is 'firing'. Pleasant Hill was a place one person described as 'my life' or 'where I work'. It is a place where, 'if you treat them with respect they respond with respect' and that once or if that respect is there, it is not such a scary place to be. Both residents and professionals referred to a calling of sorts to live there, as the character of Pleasant Hill aligned with their personal faith or value systems.

As mentioned, it is hard to describe a place where so much happens, a place considered a microcosm of society, without including descriptors of both negative and positive connotation. In several instances, community members and professionals denoted Pleasant Hill as a complex combination of tough and hopeful elements.

At times, the mere descriptions of Pleasant Hill give insight into the conditions people are living with or areas where help is needed. It is a place that is difficult to describe separate from its needs and challenges faced by the people living there. Within the more negative descriptions, Pleasant Hill was described as a corrupted community, a place of social and economic challenges, a place where people struggle, where 'bad stuff happens', 'sad', 'going downhill', 'drugs and alcohol abuse in the area', 'a poor community in need of TLC', 'dark', 'dying', 'a rough place to live in', 'neglected', 'violent', 'somewhere you don't want to be at night', 'ghetto', the centre of poverty and racism, 'run down', 'scary', 'low income', 'a community built around tragedy', a place where 'houses are condemned', misunderstood, 'stressed' and an 'evil area'. Homelessness, crime, abuse of systems, inequity, poverty, and gang culture have created a situation that seems disparate and part and parcel of a community that needs help, and where in some cases, even the parks are literally home.

Professionals tended to speak of Pleasant Hill as vibrant, having potential or growing and being an up-and-coming neighbourhood, a collision of cultures and social constructs, a place of connection, a place where you're comfortable to stop and talk to people, and a place of character. Unique to professionals were descriptions of Pleasant Hill as 'disparate', and a place of 'needle exchange'.

Residents tended to speak of Pleasant Hill in very positive terms, stating it is a wonderful place to live or somewhere they love to live. Other descriptors included active, awesome, gives freedom, wise, fun, special place, powerful, healing, great, homey, cozy, a good spot, a place where one has built relationships, where we can all be together, strong, colourful, cool and family or family-oriented and friendly/small-town. Residents of Pleasant Hill also recognized the communities' hardships, past and present. They described Pleasant Hill in ways professionals did not, including calling it 'the hood' and describing it as a poor community in need of TLC, corrupted, a place of drug and alcohol abuse, dark, a rough place to live in, 'bad stuff happens here', and a community built around tragedy. It is the ghetto, low income, run down, sad, evil, and dying.

Both groups spoke of it as a place of community and opportunity, and characterized it as diverse

and beautiful. As well, both groups described it as a place of struggle and of social and economic challenges. In both groups' views, Pleasant Hill is misunderstood, and neglected, with homelessness as a central problem.

Conversely, as for positive wording, Pleasant Hill was most frequently described as family-oriented, diverse, a strong community or community-minded, and beautiful. It's a place where relationships are built, vibrant, 'great', 'fun', 'cool', 'powerful', 'a wonderful place to live', 'awesome', 'spirited', a 'good spot for me', 'homey', 'cozy', 'a place of connection', 'open', 'colorful', 'full of wisdom and knowledge', the 'fabric of our community of Saskatoon', and a place with friendly or small-town vibes where people are comfortable to stop and talk with each other.

Pleasant Hill holds a special place in people's hearts, and it has a lot of character. It is community to some individuals; it is where they sing or round dance. It is family, and it equals opportunity. It is the setting in which some have made their journey to freedom. And it is 'a place everybody knows'. It is 'a nice place but unfortunately there's some people that wreck it'.



Figure 5.1. Top 75 Words coded to 'Pleasant Hill is...'

Note. Stop words (words excluded from the query as they were deemed not meaningful to the data and/or answering the research questions) included: 'okay' 'feel' 'since' 'kinda' 'place' 'live' 'area' 'much' 'getting' 'knows' 'cause' 'whether' 'still' 'always' 'years'.

5.1.7 Play: THE REALITY

JONATHON: The good is is a lot better than what people might think.

ANDRE: Here lives are more exposed. You see people in different going about different parts of their lives sort of in a more exposed way.

ANDREW: There's a lot more than what meets the eye. I think you have to look inside to see just more you have to look inside to see more than the surface you know. It may look like the hood. It may look like a low income place but it isn't it's it's uhm it may struggle but there are still strong individuals here that are still artists that are still people who aspire with dreams here.

BLANK: We struggle but we struggle together. I feel like that's a really really big thing. And we have a lot to give in this community.

JONATHON: I've never seen a community look after each other the way that it does this community looks after each other there's a lot of great organizations out there that that reach out and it's a tight knit community. The bad is in my opinion uh way worse than what the city of Saskatoon knows and maybe even cares to know. Yeah. Uhm both me and my partner have gone on mission projects to third world countries and we've lived in third world countries for weeks at a time, a month at a time, and uh I can honestly say there are areas of Pleasant Hill that I would say are worse.

DEANE: There's a real disconnect or division uhm that keeps other people other communities uhm separate or disconnected from this story here. And so the story that's projected on Pleasant Hill is that we're to be feared or ignored or maybe at best pity like people feel bad for us and want to come do charity here.

JONATHON: Well I mean it goes a lot goes through I mean it's mixed emotions and I'm not saying we shouldn't outreach and help third world countries of course that's not what I'm saying at all but I am saying that uh sometimes maybe we should clean our own backyard up.

DEANE: I am seemed to be fear or pity or ignored so there's this kinda shame or worthlessness or my voice doesn't matter what's the point of even trying that is settled in.

SUNNY: You never know that you're gonna join a gang but you wanna be accepted. A lot of youth are looking for people to look up to you know. You know it's what what's it's what sustains person a person to really want to achieve a higher learning you know. To expect more from themselves. To to have these goals put in place and to actually execute them you know. To live with their plans and to you know plan to live a good life cause that's all peop- a person really wants. To have a person stuck here on the streets and you know to watch them you know deteriorate you know it's sad. All you wanna see is your neighbour you know succeed in life. And that's what we want here in Pleasant Hill community.

DEANE: There's a story of of pain here but I also think that the story that is less known is the story of of hope that is here.

5.1.8 Journey: Interview Nodes

To continue to try to get a representative sample of interviewees, I looked at a map of Pleasant Hill and identified several different “nodes” of community within the neighbourhood. This is inspired by Massey’s (1997) spatial theory, where nodes join to form networks. Then I discussed these groupings with members of the Pleasant Hill Community Association. There were several options to choose from, ranging from big institutions like St. Paul’s Hospital, prominent organisations like Prairie Harm Reduction, and places of worship like the local churches and a mosque. Other nodes I thought useful to explore were the local seniors’ residence, the Fire Creek gas station, the two elementary schools, and new Round Prairie Elders Lodge. It is useful to reflect on how easy (or not) it was to connect with each of these nodes, because it relates in some way to the ability of the nodes to be connected to the greater community. Some organisations have community service people, others do not. It prompts thinking about connectivity and networks. Perhaps our job in the project was just to somehow open the pathways between and among the different nodes within the community. And also, how do we convince them it is of value if they do not want to be involved? This opportunity for connecting the nodes resonates with Hamdi’s (2004) work on development as interdependence, and Forklift’s method of understanding partner orbits.

Columbian Place

Columbian Place is a seniors’ residence located in Pleasant Hill next to St. Mary’s School. Bernice Daratha is the secretary of the Pleasant Hill Community Association, and she lives in Columbian Place. Bernice is an active volunteer and organiser with both the Community Association, her local church, and her seniors’ complex. To connect with the seniors of Columbian Place, I asked for Bernice’s help. This is an example of Forklift’s method of Understanding Partner Orbits. I knew Bernice through the Community Association but due to the time spent building a relationship with her, I found out she was an organiser within her housing community. Bernice generously agreed to help me organise a group interview at Columbian Place. She put up posters and I brought donuts. This is an example of the Forklift method of sharing food. Food is a magnet for gathering. On the day of the interview, only one person came down at the appointed time. Bernice took it upon herself to knock on doors, and to text and call as many people in the building as she could. Thanks to her efforts, people participated in a lively group interview that day. Bernice’s support allowed me access to the people in her community. Bernice is an example of what I call an “informal community ambassador”; an extension of the method of understanding partner orbits is connecting with informal community ambassadors. These are people, like Bernice, who have connections to multiple other people within a community, and who can help facilitate the growth of the project’s web. This is a direct connection to Smith’s (2012) writing about the importance of connecting to networks of community ambassadors.

Informal Community Ambassadors and Activating Networks

Informal community ambassadors are sometimes volunteers, like Bernice, or paid staff members, like Tracy Muggli, then Executive Director of St. Paul's Hospital, Jason Mecredi, then Executive Director at Prairie Harm Reduction (PHR), Danielle Hoffart, then Community Coordinator at St. Mary's Elementary School, and the Faith Leaders at St. Mary's Parish. St. Paul's Hospital is the largest employer in Pleasant Hill and Tracy connected me with ten different staff members at St. Paul's who work closely with the Pleasant Hill Community. Prairie Harm Reduction is a non-profit organisation that operates Saskatchewan's first safe injection site in Pleasant Hill. Jason connected me to a group of PHR clients whose voices may not be heard in the traditional media or in planning processes. Sum Theatre artistic associate Mackenzie Dawson spent a day interviewing six people at PHR. As community coordinator at St. Mary's School, Danielle Hoffart has an intimate knowledge of the families in her school and the issues they encounter. Danielle organised a group interview with ten grade five students. The students, as most children are, were playful and frank with their answers. The faith leadership at St. Mary's Parish organised a group of five staff and volunteers of their church, including the custodian who has watched the community change over the past decade. Sometimes friendships evolve with informal community ambassadors, like happened with Bernice. Other times, the informal community ambassadors who lead these nodes of community can be cold-called to begin a relationship. In this case, four phone calls led to twenty different interviews. Qualitatively, these connections with these nodes of community allowed for a range of perspectives to feed into the play. Additionally, this was an example of Forklift's method of Activating Networks. These groups are already communities, but the participation in the process gave them a reason to come together. Further proof of this activation is a group of St. Paul's staff who were interviewed attending the Pleasant Hill talks event together. They were already connected, but this exercise invited their participation.

Mary and Sunny Interview

In late September of 2021, I interviewed 'Mary' and 'Sunny', two ex-gang members on the doorstep of their apartment in Pleasant Hill. I had known Mary from a previous project, so I had connected with her for the interview via text. I had never met Sunny, her new partner, before. When I arrived at their apartment building, I texted Mary and Sunny came out to get me. He was a large muscular Indigenous man with several large tattoos. He told me Mary was waiting for me inside and he invited me in. Even though I knew Mary previously, even though I had worked with this community for several years, even though I have studied with anti-racist scholars, I was afraid to go into that building. I was unpleasantly surprised by my own fear. It was rooted in racism and privilege. I was uncomfortable because I was heading into an apartment in Pleasant Hill—in the city I lived in, in the middle of the day. I almost made up an excuse to stay outside but thought better of it. Inside the apartment I visited with Mary and Sunny while Sunny held his baby and his toddler played on the couch. Then I took turns interviewing each of them on the front step of the apartment, while the other one of them watched the children. Because I had met Mary before, I knew some of her story, and she continued to share openly with me. Sunny's interview left me speechless. He generously shared his childhood trauma of watching his mother die on their kitchen floor, here in the Pleasant Hill. I will never forget that story. And I almost did not have the opportunity to hear it because of my own fear. This resonates with Forklift's

challenge of Race, Power, Privilege and Positionality. If we do not actively work against these factors in society—starting with working on them within ourselves—our daily lives will continue to be shaped by them.

Hanging Out at Chokecherry

In the early days of the project, I heard many people mention Chokecherry Studios, a youth-founded and community-led art space in Pleasant Hill. I believed it was essential to have youth voices from Pleasant Hill involved in this project, so I reached out to Chokecherry's Executive Director Andrea Cessna for a meeting. I did not hear back from her for several months, and when we met for coffee she explained she had taken that amount of time to "check me out" through various sources. She shared that Chokecherry is regularly approached by potential "collaborators" who in fact do not want to collaborate but only want to "partner" with Chokecherry to check a box for diversity in their program or organisation. I was grateful the people Andrea talked to when checking me out had assured her this was not me or Sum Theatre. We ended up having a great conversation about many ways that Chokecherry Youth and Staff might be involved in the project. We agreed though, that before any of these things could happen, I would need to spend some time at Chokecherry, as it would be unusual for a tall white adult male to be there, and people would have to get used to my presence. This continues to resonate with the challenge of Race, Power, Privilege and Positionality. How can we break down these barriers? The secret ingredient is time. Andrea invited me to attend weekly drop-in art sessions on three consecutive weeks to spend time with the youth. This resonates with Forklift's method of Hanging Out. Sum Theatre Artistic Associate Krystle Pederson (who is Indigenous and an experienced youth facilitator) spent the three sessions making art with the youth and staff. Krystle arranged food each time and we sat with youth and had casual conversations with lots of awkward pauses as we sketched, painted, and ate together. One of the main challenges with the method of hanging out is that it feels like no concrete "progress" is being made with the project. And this is exactly the point. We answered questions about the project if it came up, but we were there to build relationships. After these three weeks of sessions we knew some of the youth by name, and many more by face. By the time we proposed interviews, several youth were keen to participate. This enthusiasm and engagement continued as the project grew.

Community Members as Participants in Theatre (as Opposed to Consumers of Theatre)

The interview process is an example of Big hART's method of treating the community as participants and not consumers. A consumer approach would be to put on a fictional play for the community. You would still have the benefit of a gathering. However, in that approach, audience members will either like or dislike the play they consume. By interviewing community members and using their words for the play, we created participants from the beginning. Now the invite is not just to come see a play, but rather, to come *back* and continue your participation in the work, by seeing how your words are used in the play. Continued community participation moves the story forward. This is also an example of Forklift's methodology of "Community-ing in place" or Studdert's (2016) "communing". Community is a verb, not a noun. It is something that has to continually happen, not something that just is. With this view, both the process of making a verbatim play (the interviews) and the production itself (the sharing) are opportunities for community-ing in place. This idea resonates with the academic literature presented in Chapter

Two, such as the limitations and dangers of capitalism offered by Giroux (2020), importance of dialogue and co-creation presented by Freire (2000). The central argument of this work is that verbatim theatre has the potential to create humanized and engaged communities.

5.1.9 Analysis: Community Is...

When asked to think about what community is more generally (across five interviews), folks mentioned that community is multifaceted. Community offers a sense of belonging, whether through spirituality, family, culture, or profession. Community is keeping one's language and celebrating beliefs. It is acceptance, and a group of people united together for justice. Community is peace, love, and human connection. It can be seen in children laughing and playing in the streets.

My Community is...

When the more general question of 'My Community is...' was asked more broadly, it seems as though most people answered this with the frame of mind that 'community' in this instance, referred to Pleasant Hill. It makes sense then that the answers greatly parallel those that were found in responses to 'Pleasant Hill is...'. Both residents and professionals referred to their community most often as diversified, and outright named it Pleasant Hill. Others had a hard time describing their community or finding the words to capture a place that is so many things. 'My community' was labelled by both residents and professionals as 'bright and dark'. Residents also described their community as 'amusing', new for them, where they live, 20th street, lots of people being there, 'filled with gangsters and civilians', fluctuating, First Nations, here, nebulous, noisy, quiet, 'reduced to this small senior's residence', spread out, the kids in school, the riverbank, the west side, and a place where you become street smart. Coded material here that was more singular to professionals and included descriptions of their community as a 'range of humanity', 'Spanish community', St. Mary's (where they work), and 'this part of the world'. **Figure 5.2**, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as responses to "Community is...".

Within the realm of less pleasant or harder-to-hear responses, both residents and professionals described their community as poor, struggling, needing support, a place that should be safe, tired, jobless, or like another country (like their home country where struggles are similar). These responses resonate with Paton's (2013) writing about elective fixing, and the limited agency people can have due to socio-economic circumstances. Professionals described their community as feeling under-supported at the broader level, lost and scrambling. Categories of descriptions of my community that were more specific to residents included broken, having drug addicts, abused, destitute, not having the resources left to think they deserve better or to fight for better, having gang members, in need of the opportunity to make decisions, in trouble because of COVID, injured, not working hard enough for homeless people, just surviving, lacking strong connections, and marginalized. Respondents further described community as a place where negative trials and tribulations are normalized, neglected, a place where people blame their upbringing, sad, scary, shady, unpredictable, and violent. The most frequently coded categories across groups were that 'My Community' has homeless people, is poor, struggling, broken, has drug addicts, needs support, should be safe, and is tired.

Many of the interview subjects spoke about their community as a place of potential. The potential they described does not quite solely represent positive or negative features of the community, but rather the hopeful understanding that the community could get to a better place. Both residents and professionals described their community as an evolving place that they want to see more united. One professional (who does not live in Pleasant Hill themselves) did view the Pleasant Hill community as an ‘artist community’; a creative community that has a wide range of people that could be viewed as a collective group of artists (KP4, Beckham). And residents named their community as having potential, as a First Nations community that would thrive if there was more art, a place they want to have safe, an ethereal reality, a place that has the potential to be great, a place that if properly done people would get along and respect each other, a place where there is potential in kids and youth, and a place that is trying its best.

As for more positive descriptions of what ‘My Community is...’ professionals mentioned that it is a place where one establishes connections, it is a larger concept than geography, it is where ‘my friends and colleagues live and work’, my community is providing services or serves human needs, it is real, respectful, rich in heart and spirit, and it is found in the laughter and the people. Those who both live and work in Pleasant Hill described ‘my community’ as churches and familiar surroundings. Residents tended to describe my community as home or an extension of home, worth helping and helpful, a place where you can be yourself, a good place to live, multi-national, my neighbours, safe, active, passivist, feminine, adopted family of friends, amazing, brave, bringing life to others as they bring life to me, close to everything, cool, creative, the dancing, a deeper level of belonging, different colors of houses, diverse, down to earth, energetic, everyone I know, family-oriented, friendly, full of culture, fun, getting better, a stronger sense of identity, intentional purposeful curiosity, known best for the community, LGBTQ, love, loyal, made of nice people, my people here, sanctuary, not racist, Optimist Park, people coming together, powerful, prosperity, proud, respect built upon hardship, a place of socializing, surprising hope, united, welcoming and a place where one can live freely. Across both groups and being coded most frequently were community as a place where people contribute to the interest of the community, my family, resilient, everything, and my street people.

Looking amongst these various descriptions, the people of Pleasant Hill seem to share a relational depth with one another; recognizing Pleasant Hill and their community as a place where they can be themselves; it is not just where they live, it is a home. It is family. And this is a place where people are helpful towards one another, but it is also a community that still needs more help beyond what folks can give to each other. Some descriptions tend to personalize or give personality to this community, as if it is a person; they describe it as ‘strong’, ‘active’, ‘creative’, ‘resilient’, ‘energetic’ and ‘down to earth’, ‘loyal’ and ‘respectful’, while at the same time, it is also ‘tired’, ‘abused’, ‘dying’, ‘just surviving’, ‘lost’, ‘scrambling’, and ‘injured’. Respect seems to live within the community, it is a relationship of full respect and support that is yet to develop between the community and those outside of it. And although there is much awareness and honesty about the bad that happens, there are no judgements about the people themselves.

One could say that Pleasant Hill, understood both as a single entity and as a community made up

5.1.10 Play: THE CHALLENGES

GUS: Uhm the biggest challenges? Uhm uh oh man there's a lot of them.

BABEZZ: Addiction, poverty, and judgement. That's exactly the worst three problems here.

SALLY: Alcoholism, and drugs and gangs

SALLY: Well the first one that came to mind was attitudes.

SAMANTHA: Slum lords uhh...hunger and loss of identity.

PRISCILLA: Community. They need more support.

GUS: It's hard when you're so- when you're being judged by your past. That's hard. Many of these systems in place they don't want us to advance you know move forward

PRISCILLA: There there there isn't anything out there for anybody. Like you can be walking on the street here in Pleasant Hill and then all of a sudden you're walking by and then you see someone just sitting there and rolled up in a blanket. Well where where's the help to help these people? The community has got to get more into helping these people but we're scared to do it because we don't know what the outcomes gonna be. Is the person gonna turn around and stab us? Because we're trying to help?

TOEHMAK: I just think lack of coordination of resources.

MARIE: what I see our community needs like ah a lot more resources.

HAWKSLEY: the history of racism uh has really greatly shaped this neighbourhood and it's greatly shaped the the second one which is the poverty which has greatly shaped the third which is health. If you could only solve one magically poverty or racism which would be more important to solve and honestly I think it would be the racism because you could solve the poverty by dumping a bunch of money in here I suppose you could solve it temporarily but if the race issue is still there there's still always gonna be that that struggle that that uhm exclusion you know things like that. Whereas if you could fix the racism issue and just get people working together better everybody would want to work to make this community a better place right?

REESE: Uh I think community involvement and engagement is a huge one because I feel like people have been fighting for so long. They come on board and they try to fight to improve things like boarded up houses or slum issues and they just get to dead ends uhm cause city hall isn't interested and invested in fixing up our community so uhm these you know people just get tired of banging their head against the wall and they just kinda give up.

MARIE: Pleasant Hill is a nice community to live in but we need a lot more people around to watch what's going on. We need a lot of things to be happening to keep children off the street and they need they need uh a place for them to go but to be in supervised.

MAMA: Uhm my community is uhm I dunno how to describe it. Because there's a lot of there's a lot of people that live in this community. There's like uhm there's a lot uhm gang members. Yeah. There's a lot of uhm shootings at night. There's a lot of police and ambulances. Hard drugs.

MARIE: what I found is that sometimes the children are just let loose. They're going all over the place you know quit supervision and if they maybe if there was something going on that was important for them.

MAMA: I've been in the hood all my life so I know what to expect but they don't bother me and I don't bother them. I don't want the gang life. I've two kids and two sons. They're involved in gang life.

5.1.11 Journey: Sharing

The 100 interviews were transcribed. Yvette Nolan and I read through every interview and edited them into a verbatim theatre play. We rehearsed the forty-five-minute play with four professional actors¹⁹ and prepared it to be shared at the Pleasant Hill talks Community Gathering held on April 4, 2022, at St. Mary's Elementary School gymnasium.

Pleasant Hill Talks

The Pleasant Hill Talks event was a public presentation attended by over 200 community members including grassroots community members who were interviewed for the project, local youth, elders and seniors, and civic leaders such as city councilors, school board officials and the Chief of Police. Local drummers from the community welcomed the participants. Youth from Pleasant Hill's Chokecherry Studios hung art on the walls which they had created in response to reading the interview findings. Local knowledge keeper David Fineday offered a blessing. The actors read the play and I shared the key findings of the research. We grouped the blue-sky ideas into four themes: service provision (people wanted more shelters and washrooms), youth programming (people wanted more activities after school and on weekends for youth), a new community space (people wanted a new recreation space in the community—a skating rink was brought up several times), and pride (people wanted to communicate their pride to the rest of Saskatoon). Following the presentation facilitators from Sum Theatre and the Pleasant Hill Community Association led group discussions. In the group discussions community members responded to what they had heard. There was a desire expressed for more community gatherings and for there to be more planning about a new recreation space for the community. Following the discussion circles, The United Way sponsored a community meal. The highlight of the evening was the closing performance of original spoken word pieces and raps by youth from Chokecherry Studios. Elders, seniors and other community members moved to the beat of the young local rappers, some of whom were performing publicly for the first time.

¹⁹ The actors in the *Pleasant Hill Talks* reading were: Lisa Bayliss, Christopher Krug-Iron, Andrew Taylor and Krystle Pederson. We chose to have the actors read the script and not hear the original recordings to promote discovery and avoid mimicry.

The best thing about the Pleasant Hill talks event was that it felt like a Pleasant Hill event, as opposed to an event organised by me with the support of Sum Theatre. Although we were curating the event, the voices and faces of the event were the people of Pleasant Hill. This was only possible because of the relationships formed through the process of the project. This connects directly to the time Forklift and Big hART spend cultivating relationships with community members. It also supports my conceptual framework by illustrating that relationships are how space is created.

The event began with the drum. We hired Delano and Wayne from the Okhicitawak Patrol Group (OPG) drummer to drum outside St. Mary's Gym before the event and to begin the event with a song. The presence of this group and their drumming was important for several reasons. Drumming was mentioned several times in the interviews, and Yvette and I began the play with an entire scene about the drum. OPG members and their drummers have been a community leadership presence in Pleasant Hill for several years (James, 2019). Many people arrived at the event saying they did not know exactly where to enter the building, but they followed the drum.

Local knowledge keeper David Fineday had been leading a "Smudge On" program in the community for several months, where community members can come and smudge and sit in circle in a local park on a weekly basis. The community association had asked David to offer a prayer at the beginning of their meetings and events. Maria Campbell is the elder and cultural advisor on this project, but when I consulted her she said David should do the opening blessing as he is the person in his community who has been doing that. David opened the event in a good way and after the event Maria spoke with him and he shared with her that doing the opening prayer gave him strength.

Both drumming and smudging are of course traditional Indigenous rituals that have been practised on this land since time immemorial. Indigenous ceremony has long used rituals at Indigenous-led gatherings. This way of being is resonant with Big hART's recognition that ritual is an important method for creating space. In fact, when I was planning the agenda of the event, I consulted Maria Campbell and received some important feedback about the proposed schedule. I initially had the meal being served before the play, but Maria objected, explaining that theatre in this case was a form of ceremony. Food, she said, always comes after ceremony. She explained that when people are a little bit hungry, they are more focused. When they have eaten a big meal they relax and are less focused. She also pointed out that, logistically, people might have the food and then leave. This teaching is directly in line with Nolan's (2015) conceptualisation of theatre as medicine.

This feeling of Pleasant Hill was especially apparent with the presence of the youth. Through relationships built over the past year we were able to create bonds of trust and friendship with the youth and leaders at Pleasant Hill's Chokecherry Studios. Chokecherry youth were present at *Pleasant Hill Talks* in multiple ways. In addition to youth participating in the interview process, for weeks leading up to the event, the youth worked to illustrate the 100 blue sky ideas and they displayed them for people to see while they were walking into the event. These ideas ranged from large dreams (a fifty foot Tipi) to achievable goals (more activities for young people). The youth then stayed to participate in the event, including four performers who shared their spoken word and rap performances as the finale of the evening. This was an example of Big hART's

method of visibility through re-inclusion—the youth were actively included in process and sharing of the event. They were seen as contributing members of the community because they had contributed.

The presence of children at the event was also important. I had visited the classrooms of grade five to grade eight students at both Pleasant Hill and St. Mary's schools to invite them to the event. I had also done interviews with a class at St. Mary's. A memorable moment was one of the grade five boys who participated in the interviews, smiling from ear to ear after hearing his words in the play. He introduced me to his mother and was clearly proud of his involvement. I expressed my thanks to him and his mother. This moment is an example of Big hART's method of Holding Space and Marking Moments, which also connects directly to Tuan's (1977) idea that place can be pause. The play created a new place and the moment of the grade five boy hearing his words was witnessed and marked by him, me, and his mother. A failure of the evening was the lack of activities for younger children. They took over a table with sticky notes and pens intended for feedback and thoughts, transforming it into an impromptu craft table. It would be a good idea in future to have crafts or similar activities for children.

After the play, and before dinner, we held discussion circles co-facilitated by a Sum Theatre artist and a member from the Pleasant Hill Community Association. We had enough people for four large circles. In the circles we asked two questions: What did you hear? And what do you think should happen next? Sum Theatre Company dramaturge Yvette Nolan had a challenging dynamic in her circle, a large group of white Seniors kept referring to "those people" who were the problems. These racist comments were perceived by the young Indigenous couple who were also in the circle. This is an example of Srisandarajah's (2019) argument that space is racialized, and race is spatialized. The seniors racist comments altered the place of the discussion circle. Yvette reported back on this aspect and Bernice from Columbian place, where many of the seniors live, expressed her disappointment and desire for change.

After the discussion groups, people ate and then heard the finale performance from the Chokecherry Youth. It was powerful to stand at the back of the room and see some of these youth—who had never performed before—expressing themselves through art and being celebrated by their community. Elders, seniors, and community members bounced their heads to the beat.

As people mingled after the meal, connections were activated, and new ones made. The two police officers were keen to introduce me to the artist named "Hook" who makes statues out of natural materials around the neighbourhood. A young Indigenous mother pushing a stroller asked me what the community association was and how she might get involved; I introduced her to Adam, the president of the Pleasant Hill Community Association. At the very least people came together and had a meal. One of the common comments in the circles was "we just need more events like this." But would people have gathered without the play? Art offers a meaningful reason to gather. After years of being told to stay apart because of COVID fears, we need reasons to come together that are accessible to all. The science of COVID offers us a potential new way to look at the impact of art: as a virus with the potential to infect people. At the most, people left that evening moved by the art that made them infected – to the point they may pass on their infection to others.

Rap is the New Drum

After the Pleasant Hill talks event, I drove elder and cultural advisor Campbell home. We talked about the evening, about the different performances and the discussions. She said the verbatim text was interesting, but that the youth rapping moved her. Literally. She and others were physically moving to the beat. She told me that rap music should be part of the project because it gets inside of us, into our bodies, it makes us move and makes us feel, not just think. She compared the beat of rap to the beat of the drum, and advised us to pursue a “rap opera” integrating the rap and the verbatim material, because she said “rap is the new drum.”²⁰ This new evolution is an example of a/r/tography’s pursuit of possibility. It also supports the argument that theatre can create spaces of humanization, as the youth involved in the theatre were humanized in the audience’s eyes, and the audience was also humanized as they moved to lyrics and the beat of the youth’s performances in what Kushnir (2106) would call a leap of empathy.

5.1.12 Analysis: The One Thing to Know About Pleasant Hill

When asked this question, responses differed from previous questions like Pleasant Hill is... or My Community is... in that a lot more was said that was strictly positive or to make Pleasant Hill more understood. Answers mostly came from a place of encouraging a better understanding or trying to convert what is felt as a misunderstood and uninformed view of Pleasant Hill into a more accurate and truer picture of what Pleasant Hill is. Other responses pointed to the unconventional way in which Pleasant Hill presents itself. Some comments were notably about tragedy and the difficult situations residents have found themselves in or are now trying to get out of, and a distinct category was also created to identify particular responses that convey the relationship between Pleasant Hill and the city of Saskatoon and its distinct place within this city at large. The kids group mentioned that the one thing to know about Pleasant Hill is it is ‘cold’ and ‘fun’, there are ‘kind people here’, ‘everyone knows each other’, you ‘go there and play’, it is ‘smelly’, ‘big’, a ‘good thing’, and to not run people over. **Figure 5.3**, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as responses to “The one thing to know about Pleasant Hill...”

Positive Aspects

Both residents and professionals answered that Pleasant Hill is a caring community, and the people here have lived experience. Everybody is helping or needs help. It is not a community to be forgotten or looked down upon. The people here need a break. It is a happy and bright community, with intelligent people and it is not scary. There are lots of resources emerging and the people here are ready to step up.

Only professionals also mentioned that there is beauty in the chaos, and that it is cultural and ethnic. Events and activities are happening and the community uses those, there is generosity, and it is a grassroots community. Professionals want people to know Pleasant Hill’s heart, and the people of Pleasant Hill, who are respectful and some of the most ‘beautiful, kindest, joyful,

²⁰ I did not interpret Maria’s offer as any disrespect for the drum, or as saying rap replaces the drum. Rather, I understood she was offering that rap has a similar potential as the drum: to bring people together and to move them.

resilient, strong and authentic' people. As well, those who identify as both a resident and professional mentioned the community is working hard and wanted people to know about examples hard work such as the 'ten by ten art project' where people in the community created and sold art.

Residents want others to know that Pleasant Hill is an enjoyable place to be, and it has what you need close by. It's safe, open, and beautiful. It has character and is the heart-beat of the city. It is resilience. It is community. It is flexible. And it is a nice place—if you have respect. The people of Pleasant Hill simply want others to know it is pleasant. There is good life here, and 'this is the place'.

By performing a crosstab on this set of coded material, data analyst Rachel Tang was also able to discern that some things people wanted others to know about Pleasant Hill were the same for those who have only been in the community for 0 to 5 years, to those who have been in the community their whole life. These common items to be found between these two groups representing drastically different amounts of time spent in the community were: everybody is helping or needs help, there are intelligent people here, people are there to help each other, and the people have lived experience. It should be noted that this query and its results by the demographic attribute of length of time spent in the community only represents about 70% of the documents; in 18 out of 59 documents it could not be accurately discerned what an individual's length of time in years was spent in the community or what the average was if it was a group interview. Still, this type of query based on the data available gives some indication of opinions and things people want others to know about Pleasant Hill that hold over time.

Negative Aspects

One participant, both a community resident and working professional, mentioned that money does not always help. Money comes and goes quickly, and so it may be more about investments for the community that help people remain self-sufficient and be sustainable over time. Residents mentioned that one thing to know about Pleasant Hill is to be careful and to learn what compassion is. They said that Pleasant Hill is stigmatized. They also mentioned to be aware of houseless people, that the community needs housing, and advised people from outside the neighbourhood to not give out your money. Other descriptors included that people are called 'grub-dirty birds', 'it's rank', the 'roughest people around' and that there is 'tension', and 'a lot of death'.

Tragedy

By far, the main thing residents and professionals want those outside of Pleasant Hill to know is 'it's not the people, it's the conditions'. Residents went on to say it could be friendly, it needs acceptance, understanding and empathy. They said 'you need to walk there with purpose' (and be street savvy). There are addictions and needles, the area is 'crying out for help', outsiders 'don't know what we've been through', it's a hard place to live but not a lost cause, there is potential in the people, and people survive on free food.

Unconventional Way in Which it Presents Itself

The main and most frequent response for this question was that it has a bad reputation but there are good people here. Further, residents and professionals both agreed that people should know not to judge a book by its cover, that it is no different than anywhere else, and to give it a chance. Residents went on to add not to be scared, and that just because a person is a drug addict, does not mean they are not working.

Within Saskatoon

How one perceives Pleasant Hill could largely depend on one's attitude and disposition going into the neighbourhood. Residents and professionals both stated that, it is what you make of it. It's a mix. One resident noted it is 'different from the suburbs'. Within Saskatoon it is in 'an old area, on a hill'. Professionals noted it is a community that does not have the resources it needs, it is an important part of our city, it has a reputation that it is where all the problems are, that it is dangerous, it is a microcosm for what goes on in a society, it is primarily Indigenous populations, and it is the strongest Indigenous ethnic culture within the city.

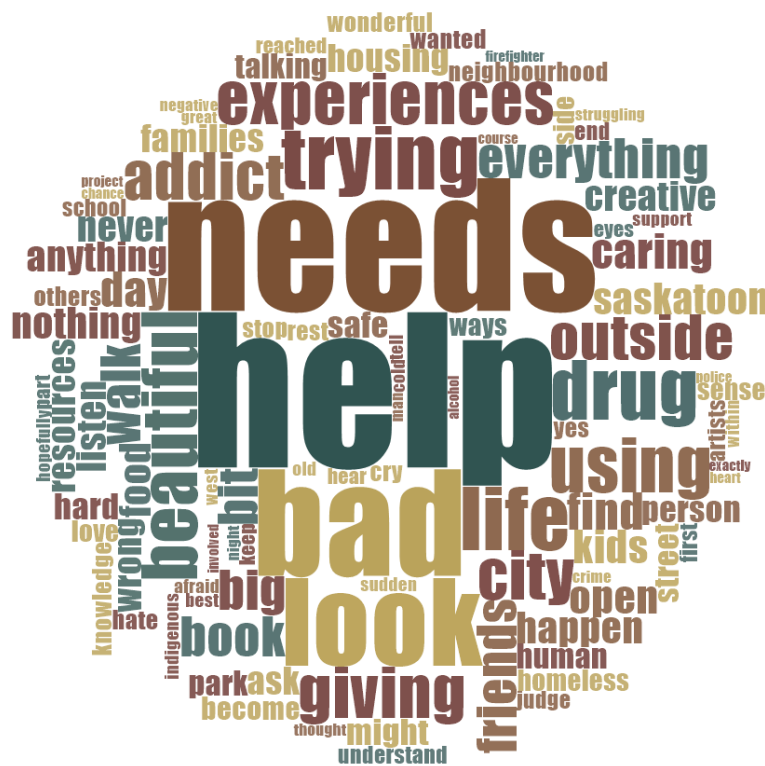


Figure 5.3. Top 100 Words for Material Coded to ‘The One Thing to Know about Pleasant Hill is’

Note. Stop words (words excluded from the query as they were deemed not meaningful to the data and/or answering the research questions) included: ‘gotta’, ‘let’, ‘indistinguishable’, ‘wanna’, ‘want’ and ‘somebody’.

5.1.13 Play: PHR and DRUGS

BLANK: Drug addiction. Yeah. Uh a lot a lot of drug use uh whether it's you know marijuana or crystal meth it's a it's like in it's almost in every household I would say.

JEREMY: Yeah because there's just like there's just a lot of it in this community and like it like it starts from a young age too. Like because they like they could possibly see their parents doing it and they're like oh I wanna try that and so they'll basically try to get and it just like it's kinda like a cycle.

TRISH: Oh the crime rate and uh the homelessness caused by the slum landlords who don't keep up their properties and then people have nowhere to go so they hang around behind St. Mary's church and they wait for the injection site to open. That's that's a big problem is bringing that injection site into our neighbourhood.

TRISH: It just has brought people from the wrong kind of people from all over the city have come here now. Because that's where they can get the drugs.

MARY: Prairie Harm Reduction I can't speak up for them because all I see is addicts all gathered up and they're able to sell dope. There's they're able to sell dope to each other, they're able to do everything, it's just like a a breeding ground for more addicts so if you're looking for something just go to Prairie Harm they'll f- you'll find every kind of dope that you need there. It's not effective here. It's a downfall. It's a degrade. It doesn't help our community. It made our community worse. So I have no I have no hope for Prairie Harm.

MARS: Prairie harm so to me that is uh there is this this group of people coming together uh like I say the art of loving, the art of giving, the art of receiving, uh and the art of supporting those in need.

BUTCH: Something that could be construed as negative is the needle exchange program uh but I don't want to see that as negative like get it out of our neighbourhood what I'd like to see would be making it a program for people instead of just making needles available.

GUS: When it's warmer and people are out more but uh sometimes when we go behind or like that alley behind PHR you know some people are drawing. Like sketching, coloring, whatever they have right? Whether there's- sometimes they show us right? Their art and it's really pretty good right? It's actually really good. A lot of them are amazing drawer at art you know despite their circumstances.

JEREMY: the overdose just like how much overdoses are happening now is just so bad.

ANDREW: I would say that drug use has to become a controlled uh like controlled setting usage like support networks that provide safe places to use those drugs and that's really important.

Because the overdose rate in Saskatoon is probably one of the highest in Canada. And with that we need to you know ensure that that's not that's not the case anymore because it's it's not worth it. It's not worth you know the lives that are ruined and dead you know.

5.1.14 Journey: The Third Act

Pleasant Hill Talks Debrief

The day after the *Pleasant Hill Talks* event, the Sum Theatre team met with Pleasant Hill Community Association community members and discussed ideas that came up in the interviews. The skating rink idea seemed to have lots of potential. Pleasant Hill is the only community in Saskatoon without a skating rink. The community association members took this to their meeting and the group was split: half were in favour of a rink and half against it. There was concern that the small community association would not be able to fundraise or maintain a rink. After discussion with community association members we decided what was needed was another “scene” in the play. I would conduct more interviews, specifically about the rink idea, and in October of 2022 we planned to gather for another *Pleasant Hill Talks* event to hear the rink scene.

United Way Involvement

Early on in the project I contacted Sheri Benson, CEO of the United Way of Saskatoon and Area. I had approached Sheri Benson at the United Way because she has been a guest on our AKA talk show when she was a federal politician. I did not know how United Way should be involved but I thought Sheri would be interested in the project. She was enthusiastic and open to collaborating. This is a clear example of the Big hART method of partnership first. I asked them to be a part of our project because I thought we shared values; the details would reveal themselves. Sheri was keen to contribute right away, offering to pay for the food for the April 4, 2022, event. This \$2500 donation paid for two soups, Bannock and tarts for more than 200 people.

United Way Debrief

Sheri and her staff attended the event and were moved. On July 5, 2022, we had a debrief and Sheri called it “profoundly moving.” Sheri and her team spoke about the power of hearing how much people cared about their community, about the “unfortunate maturity of youth” in the discussions—such as a 15-year-old talking about a liquor store on 20th Street—and about the space created to talk about difficult and complex issues like harm reduction. After hearing the United Way team’s experiences and recapping the “themes” from the interviews, I proposed three ways in which United Way could continue to stay involved: small, medium, and large. The small idea was the pilot project “rink scene” —a night in September. The medium was support for a rap opera. And the large was the asset of a rink or other new space for Pleasant Hill. Sheri shared that the timing is good as the United Way is looking for ways to engage with community to “model working together” in a community to build capacity in neighbourhoods. She cited a book by Peter Block, “The answer to how is yes.”

Rink Funds from City

In the first several interviews, one idea surfaced in the blue-sky section several times. This was a skating rink. At first I did not think much of it, until I reflected that several different people had brought it up, explaining there is no place to ice skate in Pleasant Hill. Even though we were far from the end of the project, I decided to call the City of Saskatoon to share this preliminary finding with them. I have had a relationship with the City of Saskatoon's Community Development Manager, Kevin Kitchen, since the beginning of Theatre in the Park. Kevin gave us money for Theatre in the Park before there was a special program for this funding. Kevin has been in community development for decades. I had kept him informed about the Pleasant Hill project since the beginning. When I called him to tell him about the skating rink idea that kept surfacing in the early interviews he said he thought they had a rink—he did not realise that they did not. When we both looked at the city's website it was right there: every community association and the location of their rink was listed, but beside Pleasant Hill it was listed 'no rink'. This showed the value of the community consultation process right off the top—we had gathered information that was not previously known. Alerting Kevin (and the city) about the desire for a rink could be seen as a form of Big hART's method of Partnership First; I was attempting to invite the city into the project. It could also be seen as a method I call "leveraging existing relationships." I already had a relationship with Kevin, I knew he had influence and power at the city, and I felt it was important to invite him in so he might contribute.

Kevin and I kept in touch and we chatted in late July about a new development: the city had found fifty thousand dollars to make a rink in Pleasant Hill. I asked Kevin how much this had to do with our work. He said, "what you identified was that there was a need ... a stronger desire than we thought." Without the arts-based process of dreaming about all possibilities, the rink might not have come to the surface as an idea. The arts, then, both metaphorically and literally, offer a way to imagine a different future in the way that Nicholson (2005) describes.

In the summer of 2022, the City of Saskatoon's community development office called the Pleasant Hill Community Association and myself to share some good news: they had found money to build a skating rink.²¹ The October event could now shift from a discussion about whether to apply for funding to a rink to a discussion about the rink project. I also secured a \$10,000 donation from B'nai Brith Lodge #739 to support the project. The United Way connected with a generous anonymous corporate donor who wanted to help support a project in the core community by moving it from good to great. David Fineday and I met some of the staff of the potential corporate donor and told the story of the rink project.

Corporate Presentation

The ongoing relationship with the United Way continued to show the advantages of a partnership-first approach. Nicole Bangs, the Stakeholder and Engagement Coordinator at the United Way, called me in the summer of 2022 to let me know they had been approached by a corporate sponsor who wanted to support a project in a core community that was already

²¹ Since then, the Pleasant Hill Rink has been designated a Municipal Project by Saskatoon City Council. Ward Two Councillor Hilary Gough in particular has worked to promote this project including finding an additional city funds to support it.

happening, but that with additional support could move from good to great. Immediately Nicole had thought of the rink in Pleasant Hill. What if it could be *more* than a basic rink? The only other conditions of this potential sponsor were that they remain anonymous, and that we go make a presentation to them. Pleasant Hill community leader David Fineday agreed to accompany me and we talked to three staff members of the anonymous corporation about the project. Before moving to Pleasant Hill, David had lived in Riversdale and had been very active as a hockey coach for the children in the community. David spoke about the increased gang activity in Pleasant Hill and spoke to the value of kids being a part of a team. He said he wanted to make sure kids in Pleasant Hill found that sense of belonging with a sports team, as opposed to a gang. Their staff responded very positively to our proposal, explaining that all three of them have experience coaching. They seemed optimistic that our proposal would be approved. David's leadership from within the community is an example of Smith's (2012) call for community ambassadors as well as Big hART's idea of dramaturgical thinking. David is both a leader in the community, and a key person in the story of the project.

5.2 Summary

In this chapter I have braided together the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*, my reflections on my journey as an a/r/tographer and the primary research instrument and writing about the research. Through this braid I have attempted to create resonant points supporting and illustrating my framework and honouring my experiences in the Pleasant Hill Community. These three strands of the braid are interconnected and resonant. My experiences and thoughts as an artist cannot be separated by those I have as a researcher or teacher/learner. The *Pleasant Hill Talks* reading is an example of how a non-literal space of humanization was created through using the verbatim theatre process as a tool of communing. The braid structure continues in the following chapter, where I extend the discussion with further description of my journey as an artist, my observations as a researcher, and scenes from the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*.

Chapter Six: Beyond the Stage: The Rhizome Expands

6.1 The Braid Continues

In this chapter I continue to braid together the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*, my reflections on my journey as a/r/tographer and the primary research instrument, and writing about the research including analysis, synthesis, and contextualization. In the previous chapter I began with the first half of the play *Pleasant Hill Talks* and explained my journey from the beginning of my relationship with the Pleasant Hill Community Association. This chapter continues where the last one left off, with the second half of the play and the continuation of my artistic journey after the community gathering event. The research findings also continue, with discussion of what the community feels art is, and what art already exists in the community. The findings then continue with a discussion of the way the community sees opportunities for connection and areas of need. Adding to the braid structure in both Chapters Five and Six, I have noted resonant points supporting and/or illustrating my conceptual framework and my central argument.

6.1.1 Analysis: Art is...

How Art Functions

Art was described by Pleasant Hill residents and professionals as a form of communication in terms of allowing a person to express their inner thoughts, feelings, or lifestyle. Expression was the most highly coded to category. It was described as ‘a platform for when there are no words’, communication, stories (of the past, present, future), a language, and a form of communication that bypasses walls and defenses (and goes straight to the heart). On a formal level, art is a poignant way to deliver important messages and bring things to the public eye. It is stories come to life and ‘a way to someone’s soul’. It shows when people cannot show the vision in and of themselves. One person mentioned ‘I drew pictures that I couldn’t talk about’ when defining art and its purpose in their life. The next most frequently occurring function of art was that it brings sensory pleasure; it is beautiful or beautifying, colourful, and attractive.

For many, art serves a therapeutic or cathartic purpose. It is healing, peaceful, and calming. Art is a form of therapy that helps us cope, and ‘helps us deal with inner struggles’. It is a release, an escape, and it can be what goes through a person’s head or gives peace of mind. Art also sparks positive emotions, like happiness. It moves people, and for one person it was mentioned as ‘the way I navigate through the world’.

Art was also described as an outlet for talent, or a means of taking in talent. Art invokes creative spirit, and builds confidence and character. It is something you can do, and for one person it was described as ‘my favourite thing to do’. It is taking risks, and a part of education. It is important for the growth of the spirit of a person and for communities, particularly if you imagine the world in its absence.

Art was also spoken of as part of a healthy lifestyle and, in some cases, essential to a healthy lifestyle. It is ‘good for everybody’ and ‘elevates the soul’. Art enhances quality of life and is a form of exercise that strengthens well-being.

For the children interviewed, art was described as colourful; ‘you get to colour’ and ‘explore colourful things’. Art is ‘like going into a whole other world’; it is creative, fun/awesome, and you ‘do whatever you want.’ Art was defined primarily in terms of function or the purpose it serves for individuals, communities, and humanity.

Lastly, in terms of the function art serves, it is an occupation. It is a form of work that one can make money from. For one person, it was their profession. It takes patience and takes a lot of work.

The Nature of Art

What is art itself? Various responses from community members precipitated a need to capture the essence of art. Art was said to be emotional (people show emotion through art or it stands as a representation of how a person is feeling). It is creation, like giving birth to ideas that go on to have lives of their own. Some people did not quite know how to define art, only to say that it is hard to define because people ‘have their own minds on that’. It is personality and personal; it expresses individuality. Art is ability, unique, love, everywhere and everything; it takes many forms, is deep engagement with life, understanding, wonderful, imagination on paper, meaningful, different faces in a crowd, mind blowing, exotic, beyond functional to captivating (like architecture). It is justice (it speaks when people can’t speak). It is graphic.

Art is a way of being or doing. It is humanity. Art is a way of life. It is open minded. Art is compassion, authenticity, and potential. It is spectacular, powerful, offensive, and inspirational. Art is bigger than Pleasant Hill. It is life. It can be found anywhere. It is a gateway. It is a result of drive (something that results from motivation). Art is activity. It is a ‘special way of paying attention’. Art is art. Art is explosion and chaos. It is different mediums and something that ‘flows from you’. It is subjective and has deeper meanings. Art is the space between being awake and sleeping. It is unified. Art is perceiving, non-judgmental, relatable (resonates regardless of your background), magical, and metaphysical. Art is a manifestation of being present in our lives. It is something bigger than oneself and something you can picture yourself as part of. Art is an integral part of being human. **Figure 6.1**, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as responses to the question “Art is...”

Modality and Content (forms of art)

Below is a table where the various forms of art are listed in descending order of how many times they came up across transcripts (see **Table 6.1**).

Table 6.1 *Art is (by modality and content)*

Art Is...	Files	References
Painting	10	18
Music	7	11
Drawing	9	10
Dance	6	7
Graffiti	6	6
Theatre	3	4
Tattoos	1	4
Murals	3	3
Poetry in motion	3	3
Calligraphy	2	2
Allyship	1	1
Logos	1	1
Styrofoam snowmen	1	1
Scenery	1	1
Writing	1	1
Designing clothing	1	1
Play	1	1
Storytelling	1	1
Totem pole making	1	1
Skateboarding	1	1
Hockey	1	1
Activism	1	1
Doing things with family	1	1
Speeches	1	1
Jokes	1	1
Trees	1	1
Garden	1	1
Flower arrangement	1	1
Crafts	1	1
Pictures	1	1
Carpentry	1	1
Whistling	1	1
Imagery	1	1
Sport	1	1
Books	1	1
Sculpture/sculpting	1	1
Acting out stuff	1	1
Food	1	1
Nature	1	1
Architecture	1	1
Sunset	1	1
Live drama	1	1
Total	26	101

took that for what it was and I kept on walking and uh and that that type of interaction happened on more than one occasion and I started thinking to myself well here's the thing uhm the general population in in Pleasant Hill they they don't get to scream at the rooftops that they love and support the police because of the gang violence that happens that I can't put a cop in front of her house and make sure that her house won't have a break and enter I can't I can't pro- like you know what I mean we're we're very responsive in regards to the calls that people when things are happening is when people call the police right? And for me I just thought wow like she was almost scared to say uh out loud that she loves seeing the police on the fear that maybe a gang member would hear this and maybe a drug dealer would hear this and then cause problems for her and her family. And that was a big shock to me uh I think that that was a big indication of I I and that's why I say misunderstood in that once again it's the the quiet majority of Pleasant Hill versus the loud minority of Pleasant Hill.

JAMES: When I tell people that I like work in worked in central division or now that I work in the Pleasant Hill area it just people think so that covers and I essentially just say well the alphabets that's kind of the way that you'll know it and then people will go oh, kind of thing and I think uhm I think people I want people to know that it extends beyond just how you know when people say the alphabets that that immediately has a negative association to it and I I think uhm it's only fair to give the area the benefit of the doubt that it goes way beyond just having that negative association to it. Uhm

JONATHON: I've never seen a community look after each other the way that it does uh I see that in uh the example that I spare to mind is is patrolling the safe consumption site in the back often uh a lot of homeless homelessness there and a lot of homelessness there actually uh and uh there was an individual that didn't have anything to eat also homeless and amongst even just the homeless community they looked after someone opened his bag he said hey I got an extra sandwich you can have it. And I was shocked at that of of here's this individual the only thing he has left in his bag really is a couple pieces of leftover lunch and he's willing to sacrifice and give it to a person that he doesn't really know and he gave him his entire gave him an entire sandwich

JAMES: There's unfortunately many uh...a large one I would boil it down to would be uh drug use and abandonment

JONATHON: as a police officer you kinda see uh it breaks your heart when you're seeing you know a single mom of five our four that are all in diapers and they're running around and this mom is doing everything she possibly can and uh you know the support that she requires is not quite met

JAMES: So many things tied into it like the the drug use, the homelessness, the the poor mother who's juggling five kids and just having the hardest time not picking up that needle or that pipe that's a large part of what leads to the other large problems that I see as being the gang activity, being the the drug use, being the homelessness that sort of thing I think is uh they're all they're all kinda interwoven in that sort of thing but I I just feel I feel I feel the pain in a lot of people of like that kinda comes from this feelings of being alone and and being abandoned in one in one way or the other and it's just kind of a uh revolving cycle that you just you can't really put your

finger on a direct cause but it just it just kinda keeps going and keeps going and uhm it it's hard to know how to stop it but.

JONATHON: The community's been lied to. I don't mean by the police uh by gangs. And I have a huge issue with gangs because they that is to me the root of a lot of of issue where you meet these awesome kids they're young and you and literally just working in the couple years I have you watch a kid you're playing basketball with them Pleasant Hill school there which me my other partner used to do and and uh go to the skate park or whatever and there'd be these kids and they they never there's no dislike towards you they're actually quite interested hey yeah and they have all these questions about police and all these things and there's life to them. There's uh you look at them and there's hope there's there's uh there's a future, there's uh all these things and then a couple years later you don't really see them around anymore and next thing you know they're sporting gang colors coming in and out of gang houses. And you try hey trying to make interaction with them and they're pretty stand off ish already they're they might and maybe they recognize you cause you have a personal relationship with that kid but realistically they've already they've been lied to and they've been lied to by gangs and the promise of uhm you know of success right?

JAMES: I I just uh I want people to know that uh it is much more thriving and happy place than it gets credit for even though there is so much darkness in there I guess it it's impossible to avoid it you can't you can't not see it but uhm but that there's a lot more I guess happiness and brightness that is uhm slipping between the cracks of uhm what people see on the news and what they see in terms of police activity

JONATHON: these it it it's easy to kinda just paint the picture black and white right? Gangs bad you know bad guy put em in jail right? Uhm but these kids didn't often times like they're they're not they're not inherently bad kids they didn't grow up bad and I don't I don't I don't believe that I believe that when a kids grows up they're going to be a product of their environment and at the end of the day it is frustrating cause you see like I said I can picture the kid in my head like seeing him at the skate park and then now he's tatted up and got wears gang colours and it's just that's that's his identity because he got dealt the cards that he got dealt and the end of the day as humans we all want to belong we all want community we all want family.

6.1.3 Journey: Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0

Integrating Rappers

Following Maria Campbell's advice, and with a desire to continue to involve the youth rappers from Chokecherry Studios, I planned to make the new rink scene a mini-rap opera. This is an example of Big hART's methods of dramaturgical thinking and the flow of change, in that I was responding to the changing process with a dramaturgical choice. We were designing the process and performance in a way that would be powerful for all involved. After conducting additional interviews with city staff and David Fineday, Yvette Nolan and I edited the new transcripts into the new "rink scene." We then sent the rink scene to Zoe Slusar (aka ZHE the FREE), the MC who has been facilitating the rappers' group at Chokecherry. ZHE was keen to help us see how we could integrate the youth rappers into the verbatim material. For the initial *Pleasant Hill*

Talks, the young writers composed verses about whatever they wanted. For this scene, we were asking them to respond to what they heard in the interviews. We made a plan to rehearse separately with the actors and rappers for a few sessions, and then we would come together for a rehearsal and heard the new raps for the first time. The verses the youth wrote were quite angry, they were critical of the skating rink idea, saying it is not a priority when many kids in the community had no food, when all they had to eat was hot dog buns.

I did not know how to handle this, because I wanted to honour the young people's feelings, and at the same time the rink idea had come from the community, and I thought it would benefit the community. I did not want to censor these young artists, but I wanted them to see the value of the project. Thankfully Yvette Nolan was in the room as the Sum Theatre Company dramaturge. She respectfully but firmly gave the young artists a teaching, explaining that what they were objecting to in the rink was something they felt was not as important as food. She said their rap, their art, is not as important as food either, but we need them to be making art for the community and for themselves. She said "you are the artists," and asked them if we should spend money just on food and not on them as artists, not on Chokecherry Studios. Yvette then dropped her pen like a mic drop. The young rappers took a moment and then said they really appreciated what she had said. They got it. Then they asked for another try. This was an example of Big hART's method of marking a moment: the young people saw the value of art, and of themselves as artists, in a new way. We took a break from rehearsal so the rappers and ZHE could compose new verses. They went into the lobby of the theatre and it was buzzing with energy. They came back with new lyrics that did not compromise their feelings, but at the same time, captured a hope for the impact of art and creative work in the neighbourhood. K.\$tone, who had written the angriest of the verses originally, put it like this:

*I know what it's like to be hungry an' fiending
Watching the greedy bend the blocks in a Beamer
Crumbs on they plate, I see 'em starving
Walks for peace, skating rinks, they hungry regardless
Lessen up the politics, barter less
More barbecues
See everybody lose when the family feuds
Figure skating would be cool, jus pitch it good
But Food for the youth gotta be the tools
Make the hood better, come together an spread the love
I'm jus tryna show y'all we could be better bruh*

Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0

On October 27, 2022, we held another Pleasant Hill talks event. This public presentation was attended by over 100 community remembers ranging from grassroots community members who were interviewed for the project, local youth, elders and seniors, and civic leaders including, the Mayor, city councilors, school board officials and the Chief of Police. Once again, the local OPG drummers from the community welcomed the participants, and David Fineday offered a blessing. The new 'rink scene' was presented. This time Sum Theatre and Chokecherry Studios collaborated on the play, weaving together interviews about the rink and new raps responding to

the interviews written by local youth. After the presentation and before the meal sponsored by the United Way, we once again had discussion circles.

Just as we had done with the first *Pleasant Hill Talks* event, we used the discussion circle format to share ideas. This time the circles focused on the rink idea: What kind of rink would the community want? Where should it go? And how much more could it be than a rink? The four discussion groups all shared amazing ideas for a rink. There was a consensus that it could/should be more than “just” a rink. Ideas such as skating trails, a paved court for basketball and tennis, and a warm up shack were discussed.

Once again, this event created a place for people to come together. There were plenty of moments to mark, which were also examples of Forklifts method of Anecdotal Evidence. A few of the rappers were performing publicly for the first time. I watched as one of the rappers’ parents cried with pride as their child performed. I found out later that this rapper lives in a group home, and rarely sees his biological parents. The parents had come to see him perform for the first time. Once again there was a large group of young people, particularly from St. Mary’s school.

In the discussion circle facilitated by Sum Theatre Artistic Associate Mac Dawson, there was a large group of St. Mary’s Elementary school students. Mayor Charlie Clark was also in this circle and offered to be the note taker for this group. Watching the mayor of our city take notes of ideas from children in their community was a beautiful moment. It said something about our current mayor, but also was an example of the Big hART method of Modelling Community. We were practising the way a community could be by showing the young people that their voices mattered. This connects to Nicholson’s (2005) belief that theatre can be a rehearsal for alternate realities. In the discussion circle facilitated by Sum Theatre Company Dramaturge Yvette Nolan there was young Indigenous girl from St. Mary’s who kept encouraging Yvette to “let the cop speak.” There was one “cop” in the group who was being quite quiet wanting to let community members speak. After the third or fourth encouragement from the young girl, Yvette asked “the cop” to share his thoughts. The cop was Saskatoon Police Chief Troy Cooper, who is Métis. When Troy spoke he shared his belief that the rink should have an Indigenous design. For the young girl to advocate for the Chief of police to speak, and then for her to hear him talk about Indigenous design, is another anecdote which helps us work against the innate challenges of Race, Power, Privilege and Positionality. It is also an example of Little’s (2016) view that community is a medium to connect individuals to society. The process of communing inherent in the play sharing and discussion circles connected children from St. Mary’s to the mayor and the chief of police, in a positive way.

Walk with Charles

As another way to use the method of partnership first, I invited architect Charles Olfert to attend the *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0* gathering as a listener. Charles is one of the founding partners of Saskatoon’s AODBT architecture and is a community-minded and caring person who has been an audience member and sponsor of Sum Theatre for several years. By inviting Charles, I was also once again leveraging an existing relationship. Charles attended and listened, and the next week we went for a walk to discuss what he had heard. Design-wise he said the two big

takeaways were that the rink should be a multi-use facility and that it should have Indigenous influence. Charles offered to draw a design to send to the city. All of a sudden, the ideas from community would be tangibly illustrated. This is an example of social capital being a place-based and relational process: the ideas came from community and flowed through the play-making process, to the discussion groups, to me and Charles.

6.1.4 Analysis: Art in Pleasant Hill

Given the timing of the interviews (most were conducted during the winter season) or the fact that some members were newer to the community, a few individuals stated they did not know of art happening in Pleasant Hill and could not name examples. For the remainder who were able to speak to this, the most frequently mentioned forms of art in Pleasant Hill were graffiti or building murals, organizations (CUMFI, CHEP, Chokecherry, Quint, Native Ministry, La Troupe du Jour, Gordon Tootoosis Nīkānīwin Theatre, Bridges Youth Cultural Center, EGADZ, CNYC, and PHR), drumming or drum circles, and cultural events, such as round dances, pow wows and park days.

Beyond perhaps the more anticipated responses of independent artists, healing arts and spiritual care programs, dance, school or student art, singing, music, theatre, painting, and art classes, several less conventional items were described. People, markets, fundraisers, talent contests, makeup, games, older style houses, stained glass, studios, culture itself, spoken word, metal work, selfies, warm-up spots, sports, beading, bingo, fence panels, churches, architecture (Roxy Theatre), therapy, store windows, logos, ribbon skirts, art done while in treatment, Mount Royal tunnels, weekly smudges, the behavior of people, needle exchange, bikes and bike shops, chalk and sidewalk drawings, blue bus (that gives free food and blankets), the art of helping and caring (via social work, hospital work), gardening and people's yards, and tagging (graffitied gang names), shoes and clothing/appearances, were all listed as types of art seen in Pleasant Hill.

Figure 6.2, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as responses to “Examples of Art in Pleasant Hill.”

Folks described art in Pleasant Hill as being hidden, and more private than public. But also, art was described as an everyday thing, as art is found in everything that makes up daily life in Pleasant Hill. Pleasant Hill was described by a couple of people as a melting pot, made of people of different backgrounds who use art to tell stories. Art is something the people do, but it is also the people and the environment. It is how folks display their personal property, from yard care to hearts on windows for missing people. Art is not only an object created by a single person, it exists in nature, in how we carry ourselves, how we are in our interactions with one another and in our treatment of one another. In this sense, it exists at the individual, interpersonal, group and societal levels. It is everywhere in Pleasant Hill, if you only look for it or experience it. In this way, as one participant puts it, “Pleasant Hill is like a big canvas”.



Figure 6.2 Word Frequency – Top 70 words in coded material for ‘Examples of Art in Pleasant Hill’

Note. Stop words list (not included in search as deemed not meaningful to the data): ‘pleasant’ ‘hill’ ‘see’ ‘well’ ‘right’ ‘one’ ‘kind’ ‘going’ ‘stuff’ ‘get’ ‘actually’ ‘around’ ‘even’ ‘dunno’ ‘now’ ‘got’ ‘another’ ‘nice’ ‘every’ ‘mean’ ‘also’ ‘little’ ‘good’ ‘make’ ‘maybe’ ‘time’ ‘sure’ ‘take’ ‘works’ ‘coming’ ‘gonna’ ‘probably’ ‘put’ and ‘sort’.

6.1.5 Play: OPG²²

GUS: Uh I think it was in what 2017-2018 right? Uh uh this little girl was uh abducted at uh Pleasant Hill school park right? And uh she escaped from that you know and she was pretty shook up for a bit and the police were from what I remember the police response wasn't that wasn't that great at the time. So, that's when (Nicole?) and (Lanny?) they decided enough was enough and so they wanted to create so they created this uh this group here to watch out for you know to watch out for kids at the playgrounds right?

²² OPG stands for the Okihtcitawak Patrol Group, a grassroots community organised Indigenous led safety patrol group that operated for several years in Pleasant Hill (James, 2019). The three people in this scene were active members of OPG.

MARIE: Pleasant Hill is home. It's home to me now basically uhm I considered the people out there like my brothers and sisters cause you build a connection when you're out there and you get to know them and you know know their story

TOEHMAK: Place where I sing, round dance, I guess I dunno like uh Pleasant Hill is a place where I call home too you know.

GUS: My community has the potential of being great. Of being able to liberate itself from uh colonization. And it is and you can tell that many people are on the streets out there they they really look out for each other as much as they can right? As well as the services and organizations that are out there too they try their best right? So, the community is trying its best. And and I'm thankful for that.

MARIE: Well, I think our community needs more acceptance and understanding like as well as a lot more empathy. There's a lot of people with like great potential but they just lack the resources and the proper respect because of like the stigma due to homelessness, poverty, and addiction you know but it's we just need more empathy really.

TOEHMAK: You know that you know that good old rumble in your tummy you can't let go away it's it's it's the 500 years of abuse on our people. You know? That's that's just it but that's why I sing is because I want to change the perception and I want to change you know you know I wanna bring beauty. How do we give people back that choice that's the challenge you know like how do we make them choose to want to be better that's the challenge not better in our own personal perspective but just like healthy. How do we live holistic lifestyles you know how do we you know influence them in and you know evoke that change.

MARIE: There needs to be like more understanding, more empathy, more uhm collaboration as well between like the organizations like we need more unity and communication. There needs some just a really big need for more shelters cause they're like really overflowing and people like they don't deserve to be sleeping out on the streets especially in this weather. There's a big need for more treatment facilities and after care support workers to like help people with the recovery.

TOEHMAK: how do we bridge the gap between these organizations and then how do we change their mentalities how do we change you know their perspectives. We need more organizations out there you know integrating uh indigenous values. It needs to be all indigenous based. It needs to be all from right from the get go it can't be half like popcorn elder. That's what we need. Those are the biggest challenges is like how do we fire up our leaders out there too to help and want to help our people.

6.1.6 Journey: Next Steps

Since the October 2022 event the United Way, the City, The Pleasant Hill Community Association and I have met to keep the momentum going. Architect Charles Olfert has offered his services free of charge to help with the design process. The city has said there is potential for a special equity-based program to provide a paid rink coordinator from the community. This

support will allow this new community asset to be cared for, and for programming to occur. The real opportunity now is how great can we make this project. With support from a variety of sponsors, this can be far more than a basic rink. It can be a community recreation hub.

Following the *Pleasant Hill Talks* event, Sum Theatre applied to SK Arts for a second artists in communities project grant to produce drumming and youth programming in Pleasant Hill. We were unsuccessful and the feedback was that the jury saw this as too much of a stretch. This is good learning that we need to articulate better that artistic direction and producing is a form of art. Our consultant recommended we apply again with a creation project, to create a full production based on the work we had done.

The Work Continues

As the formal dissertation work comes to a close, the work of art making continues. The next phase of art making is the rap opera. After listening to Maria Campbell's advice, and using the *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0* as a pilot project to try combining verbatim theatre and rap, I have decided to continue with a full rap opera. This project responds directly to the stated need of the Pleasant Hill community to change the way they are seen. I feel art has the power to change hearts and minds. As we heard in the interviews, Pleasant Hill has a stigma of being 'the hood'. I know from my conversations with Saskatoon residents that Pleasant Hill is seen as a dangerous place where many people never go. The rap opera will expand on the draft of the original *Pleasant Hill Talks* script. completing additional interviews with community members and integrating original raps from Chokecherry Studios' youth. We will work with a large group of community members and professional theatre artists to create a full production.

This project has innovative form (rap opera) and delivery (targeted participation of both public and high school audiences). The twenty-minute performance will be accompanied by facilitated discussions. We will work with partners in the greater community to invite the public to come to Pleasant Hill to see the public performances. We are aware many adults will not come to Pleasant Hill because of the stigma. We will combat this by working with schools to organize student audiences. Imagine growing up in the suburbs of Saskatoon and being bussed with your class with the inner city to watch an emotional, engaging, and informative play spoken by people in that area. It is unlikely you would have the same fear of Pleasant Hill as your parents. This project will facilitate change in minds and hearts across our city by bringing awareness to the humanity of the Pleasant Hill community. It is my hope that it will be an inoculation against stigma. By involving young people in the performance in Pleasant Hill, we are creating an experience they will hopefully remember and value more than the rumors they hear about the area

The rap opera project will be an extension and application of the learning from this work. The experience of the art has the potential to illuminate the connections between people living in Pleasant Hill and living outside of Pleasant Hill. These connections, or networks, are a form of place-based social capital in the way that Massey (1997) sees places as networks of relations, Jacobs (2011) asserts social capital as webs or relations and trust, and Studdert (2016) believes community is a continual process. The continued artistic work in Pleasant Hill is a non-literal place. When this non-literal place (the art) is meshed with the literal place of the Pleasant Hill

neighbourhood—in the form of and through relationships—there is a potential for systematic humanizing to occur.

6.1.7 Analysis: How a Theatre Company Could Work in the Community

This question was asked in eight interviews, to nine people total, out of 100. As well, it was asked to residents or former residents. A theatre company would accomplish bringing people together, increase engagement with the community via synergistic experience, create partnerships, and serve as a voice that could help increase understanding between conflicted groups. Considerations should include venue (schools, hospital, churches, powwow grounds) and the frequency of productions (twice a week and presenting to as many as you can). As with recommendations for other types of ventures, it should be open at night and during the winter. As for themes for the story or narrative, they could be around sharing or good will towards one another. The concept of garden could also be interweaved into a production (i.e., natural elements as not separate and part of life). A theatre company could help folks keep out of trouble and be a site for distribution of naloxone and a donation box so that food and grocery does not go to waste and could be offered to those in need. The industrial area could be replaced by a theatre, where things like workshops for artists, storytelling between elders and youth, plays, role play, an art hub or drama clubs could all take place. A documentary could also be made about the Pleasant Hill community. **Figure 6.3**, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as responses to “The one thing to know about Pleasant Hill...”



Figure 6.3 Top 50 words for “How a Theatre Company Could Work in Pleasant Hill...”

Note. Stop words (words excluded from the query as they were deemed not meaningful to the data and/or answering the research questions) included: ‘theatre’, ‘need’, ‘King George’, ‘space’, ‘money’, ‘give’, ‘great’, ‘new’, ‘part’ and ‘deedee’.

Areas of Connection (the good already being done)

The safe injection site (which aligns with police goals and morals) was most frequently discussed as an area of existing connection (across seven interviews). White Buffalo Youth Lodge,

doctors and nurses and ambulance uh like you can do ambulance tours you can do fire truck tour. I suppose the point is to help kids uhm interacting like healthy and fun ways with uh their kind of emergency responders and health care that kind of a thing. Uhm but that happens once a year. I think that more things like that. Uhm that are super fun and community building uh not necessarily always done by St. Paul's but by other community organizations. Uhm that create space for like I said earlier to have uhm healthy like healthy community building. --

TOEHMAK: to have uhm like a more uhm youth based organization that like more developed around uh like recreational events you know like uh singing too or you know like have like a video game uh uhm center you know like kinda like a youth center you know but like you know like somewhere where they can call home. You know kids. Somewhere like cause like that's all kids are wanting you know out there you know somewhere where they can actually have fun, be themselves, unjudgmental free.

KAY: Ah let's see we've got a school right behind me and so they're uhm I see school kids going to school there's parents a lot of them have parents walk them to school which I think is very nice.

MARIE: Pleasant Hill is a nice community to live in but we need a lot more people around to watch what's going on. We need a lot of things to be happening to keep children off the street and they need they need uh a place for them to go but to be in supervised.

PRISCILLA: Club houses! Yes! Uhm when my daughter was younger there was club houses, the kids would go there, they would watch a movie, uh they would have like little snacks, they would do drawing, they would play games they would...that will keep a lot of these children off the streets from getting in trouble. I haven't heard of any. In the Pleasant Hill area where these young kids can go. Cause a friend of mine just used to live on U and her kids had to play in the back yard all summer long two years ago because there was nowhere to bring them. There was nowhere for these kids to go and get to meet other kids. Like these kids are stuck in the house and that's why they lash out the way they lash out and go out into society and get themselves in trouble. They haven't anything to keep their minds occupied.

PABLO: um i'd say just like more places like like this like the Chokecherry cause like i feel like a lot of the reasons why like kids go like to drugs or join gangs is because like they don't have a like a safe place and usually like mm a majority of the time uh wha-from what i see people join gangs because they feel wanted they feel like they'll have a family if they do and so ya.

KAY: Way back when my kids were little they had a community association and a community association yes. But we're I think I only paid five or ten dollars for my children and me to join and the kids were able to take my daughter the Ukrainian dance or tap uhm boys played hockey uhm there was baseball, softball in the summer time and then and I got to participate in things that were going on you know like crafts and stuff like that I think that I think that's gotten lost over the years. Cause to me I may be wrong but to me I think that we lost a lot of uh community spirit within the community of gathering together. And I think that that would be somewhat encourage people and you know to get out and do things together. And and that way you get to know your neighbour that way too.

ANDRE: At the most basic level uhm I think everybody on the street just wants to you know uhm live peacefully, allow the children to play uhm and so sometimes we you know there are threats of the nature we're always kind of aware in this neighbourhood that bad things can happen.

GUS: Uhm I guess uh...like the...there's uh....I'd like to see like something I'd like to see uh uh a moment in Pleasant Hill where you don't need to worry about you don't need to worry about our kids you know when they go play at the playground. Yeah. That'd be one.

TOEHMAK: We need to build that relationship with these youth and then give them those positive atmospheres. Let's say there's like ten thousand children in that area. Why don't we open up enough to cater to those ten thousand maybe all of them will go there instead of going out and party you know and maybe they'll go there and uhm you know what it is called there the like uh experiment on how to play hockey better. You know instead of experimenting with marijuana in the back you know I'm not saying that's bad but like- what I'm saying is like you know there's just like these small things that you can like you know subtly change their perspectives slowly you know and actually build these wholesome lifestyles for them. It's just the small things maybe that will change their minds. But they don't know how to see that yet. These are small things like I'd want to change the kids perspectives and maybe they'll you know infect their parents with that you know? With that positivity.

WIENER: One day myself and and one of my colleagues we ended up going to Pleasant Hill park just to go sit in the park and have our lunch and and there was some kids there saying nine, ten, eleven and they were in the spray park and everybody was having a good time and it was hot out and this kid came by on a on a BMX bike and he woulda had to be probably sixteen seventeen? And there's some kids playing on the apparatus there and it caught his eye so he went over and got off his bike and he like doing like uh how do I say...how do I say this well you can collect probably you know like like like a monkey in a tree you know, swinging from limb to limb. Well, the kids were doing that on the apparatus and they had a thing that went across uh went into the other so they were hand to hand climbing it. So this this other guy he was on there he was having a good time and then he went right on top of the apparatus. Right on top of it. And he stopped and he did a somersault off of the top of that and landed on his feet. And kids were all around him coming up and talking to him and all around him. And uh he hung out with the kids, they walking on his hands he was doing different stuff. And then he was getting ready to leave and he passed by me and my colleague and and my friend says why why aren't you at in the gymnastic uh club or sports club and you know you could go far. And he turned around and he said really? He said you know why I'm out here? And then my friend said why. My effing parents are at home drunk. And again no effing money it went to their effing booze. Sad. Very very sad. Very sad.

MARIE: My daught- granddaughter has been in dancing for a long time. Well, it's exercise uh being together, learning to get learning uh as a team I think I think if you gotta bunch of uhm people either doing something like that together they become a team and in on a whole then the community becomes a team if everybody's learns to be a team they're going the rest of the community become a teams too.

6.1.9 Journey: Children and Youth

Throughout four years getting to know the people of Pleasant Hill, there are three memories that stick in my mind. They all relate to children.

The first memory is sitting with one of the interviewees on the front porch of his apartment and having him tell me about his childhood growing up in Pleasant Hill. Sunny (his chosen pseudonym) shared with me the story of watching his father stab his mother in their kitchen, and watching his mother bleed to death in his arms. He was eleven years old when this happened. I was floored by Sunny's vulnerability and willingness to share his story with me, a stranger. I was equally moved by the tragedy that this eleven-year-old had had to endure. Sunny and I are similar in age, and yet in our relatively small city of Saskatoon, our experiences were worlds apart. Sunny also shared with me that he thought of killing himself many times as a teenager, but what saved him was hearing stories from other people who lived in Pleasant Hill, and hearing that he was not alone.

The second experience was sitting with three youth at Chokecherry Studios, and hearing them talk about their struggles with school, addictions, and the law. I heard them talk about how it was easier for them to be in jail than at home, and how they wanted to do, and be, better, but they did not have the opportunities. One of the young women shared how disappointed she was after her mother did not show up to her grade eight graduation and that things in her life went downhill from there. These young women were fifteen years old. They seemed already to be very low on hope.

The third experience was interviewing a group of grade five students at St. Mary's school in the heart of Pleasant Hill. These students were lighthearted, goofy, and kind. We had lots of laughs and jokes, but they also had intelligent and caring answers about their community and their connection to culture. They talked about hearing the drum and feeling a connection to their ancestors.

As a parent, and as a human being, I am left deeply affected by these connections with children and youth in Pleasant Hill. It is no mystery that childhood is a crucial part of development for any person, but we are now seeing tangible medical evidence that this is the case (Maté and Maté, 2022). As we reviewed the ideas from the Pleasant Hill community, it was not surprising that a shortage of youth programming was identified as an issue. It is so clear that the biggest investment we can make in our future as a city—and as a society—is supporting young people.

6.1.10 Play: TRIO

OTIS: it's easier to do bad than it is to do good in my opinion. Like it's easier to get into that lifestyle instead of it's and it's hard to like actually like go to school and it's hard to get a job and it's hard to do all these things but it's just so easy to fall back into that hole where it just goes all go all goes wrong.

G-WORD: Finishing school. Getting education. Can't get anywhere in life without an education.

OTIS: Most of us it is drugs because I dunno you can't even go to school like if you go to school there's and you don't focus then you're not learning anything then what's the point. And then if you can't go to school and if you get kicked out then you can't get a job. You can't even work at McDonald's without a grade twelve or being in school so.

CARLOS: Sometimes you have to watch your siblings for your for your own parents some days. Sometimes a lot of people I know I did uh lot of people drop out so early cause they don't know how to ask for help. And they're like too embarrassed to like go and ask for it or yeah.

G-WORD: I dropped out in Grade nine. Cause like you know how grade eight has has a like grade eight grad going into high school. Uhm my mom couldn't make it there so It just I dunno kinda hurt.

CARLOS: I'm way behind. Heh heh heh. Yeah. I wish I wish I never dropped out. Yeah.

CARLOS: Uhm grade I slowly stopped going grade six seven and then grade eight I finally just stopped. Well in the middle of grade seven I just stopped. And then I haven't went since. Unless I'm locked up. And that's probably the only time I get to go to school.

G-WORD: Yeah. Kinda hurts but I dunno. Coming into grade nine though I, I was gonna go back but then it just stuff going on with my family with my parents and our living situation. Always move going to one house to another and just never didn't have a stable home. And I went back in grade ten this year but then drinking got in the way. So I dunno. Kinda embarrassing so I didn't go back.

CARLOS: Unless like I'm behind bars is the only time I'm like I fully am able to like get my school done and shit like that. Sorry my language. Yeah.

CARLOS: Housing and housing getting like a house and jobs cause you can't get a job without a house and you can't get job without a house yeah housing's really hard. I know like there's a lot of people struggle out there tryin to either afford their own place or just having their own place in general.

CARLOS: Bathrooms. And showers and stuff like that. Uhm there is like a there's like actually I don't even think they I dunno if there is any places where you're able to go shower or anything like that. No, there isn't?

G-WORD: There's the spray park.

CARLOS: In the summer time I've actually seen a lot of people washing and like washing their clothes in the uhm spray in uhm Pleasant Hill spray park and and washing themselves with their clothes on so they're able to like shower and stuff and yeah it's just sad.

OTIS: Instead of calling the police maybe you should help them out. Because it's not gonna make anything better

CARLOS: Calling on the people that were trying to like clean themselves or whatever but when it came to like people using drugs in front of like the kids there nobody would say anything and like even when they did cops wouldn't cops like didn't really care enough to come and stop what they were doing. Yeah it just doesn't make sense how society is and what it is.

G-WORD: I wanna be a better role model for my sisters instead of showing them the path I'm going down. Avoid putting your addiction first. Bad. That's how you do bad.

OTIS: Some of us don't know how to do that though. Some of us don't know how to put our addiction aside.

CARLOS: I wanna be happy. Successful future.

G-WORD: addiction is real

OTIS: it's like it takes you it's like wired into you no matter what. You'll always think of it.

G-WORD: Can't see your life when you're addicted to something.

CARLOS: At one point, maybe not all of us but most of us has been like out in the cold before and like it's it's sad and stressful and it's really depressing and emotional and it just draining and it just makes you feel so ugly on the outside and the inside.

G-WORD: Don't wish homeless upon nobody. Don't wish bad on anybody.

G-WORD: Like we- uhm me and my mom uh we had nowhere to go and like it was probably like two three two in the morning we were walking around it was like last winter or two winters ago. And I dunno we were just cold and didn't have nowhere to go so we made our way down to the police station there and they just- social services got involved uhm they kinda just helped out then. But like my mom had to do- my mom basically had to like beg them just to help out. It's pretty sad. Don't wish that upon nobody.

OTIS: My son. My son gives me hope. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be here right now.

G-WORD: Seeing my brother graduate. He used to always talk about it like back then. Cause the lifestyle we were living used to always talk about finishing school and you know making it out of the hood. Sure enough he's out there doing what he said. Took in my brother and that's just uhm he's doing what he's told told us.

CARLOS: Uhm I feel like to become a better you you gotta start looking at life differently. And just looking at more of the positives than the negatives and what how like look at the good stuff that you're doing and the good things that you can be doing. And just focus on all that and just make a positive out of your life.

G-WORD: It's all about the positives. Positive. You got- you really believe in yourself.

CARLOS: And that's another thing uhm you don't yeah the only person that will be able to push you on cert- to where you wanna be is yourself so you have to believe in yourself because if you don't believe in yourself who else is going to believe in you.

6.1.11 Journey: Coding and Triangulation

In discussion with my supervisor, Dr. Ryan Walker, we decided it would support the project to have the interview data coded by the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR). With our work on the play, Yvette Nolan and I had already coded the data as playwrights. As described in the previous chapter, by engaging CHASR to code the data using NVIVO software, we created an opportunity for triangulation of findings. This triangulation also offers us the chance to compare how and why we code what we code in the different methods of coding.

Playwrights' Coding

By creating a verbatim theatre play we were able to involve the members of the community as participants in the work throughout the process. I use the word “work” here because it encapsulates both the work of research and the work of art making. The art making is the research and vice versa. As we worked on the editing of the transcripts for the verbatim theatre play, Sum Theatre Company dramaturge and my close collaborator Yvette Nolan had a conversation about how we as playwrights made the choices we did in terms of what material we included in the play. Neither Yvette nor myself are trained social science researchers, so we were not coding from a formal research perspective. Rather, we were coding as playwrights. As an unexpected finding of this project, I believe a discussion of “playwrights’ coding” is a useful and interesting method to explore.

In our conversation about playwrights’ coding, the first thing Yvette brought up is that we are looking for the “things that pop” or the “signals” that are powerful to us. It has become instinctive (I have been making theatre for over fifteen years, and Yvette has been making theatre for over thirty years). We believe it has become instinctive because as theatre artists we are trained to listen to the voice. Voice in this context is both the person’s or actor’s actual voice, but it also means the content of the voice—what the argument or emotional voice is. The voice is the essence of a person, and also the essence of a community. Our training is to listen to the voice in two ways: what the voice is saying, and how we think it will affect the audience. Theatre is only theatre if there is an audience. In this project the audience is the community, adding the extra layer to our playwrights’ coding. We were asking ourselves, what is the community saying and how will the chunks of text we choose affect the community when we share it back to them?

Our training as theatre artists is also in narrative and dramaturgy. We are always interested in and aware of the story that is being told, or trying to be told. As a dramaturge, Yvette has developed a sense of watching from the “outside” to give “big picture” commentary on what story or stories are being told. This is very resonant with Big hART’s method of dramaturgical thinking. Dramaturgical thinking is a way to think about the entire project as a story. Within dramaturgical thinking we can see different stories, or counter-narratives. This awareness and

desire for narratives and counter-narratives influences our coding because we are looking out for chunks of text that support what we see as the emerging narratives and counter-narratives.

We are interested in narratives and counter-narratives both because it makes the play more interesting, but also because theatre has an agenda. We are interested in using theatre to change the world by creating space/place for empathy. This means hearing both our thoughts and ideas but also the thoughts and ideas of someone different from us. Then, when we share our work with audience participants, we are asking them to come and physically share space with people who are different from them. In an overly polarized and politicized world, Yvette and I both feel the place of the theatre offers a unique opportunity for the practice of empathy. This is similar to Forklift's method of Embodiment. We are asking people to participate in the embodiment of empathy. To share space/place with people different from them. This is a clear connection to my theoretical work and central argument. As Tuan (1977) writes, bodies can be seen as the unit of measurement for socially created place, and we become human in place (Malpas, 2018) through our interdependent interactions with "the other" (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2012). The embodiment of empathy humanizes both the issues and the people in the process (Kushnir, 2016). In other words, the relationships we create by being in process with other people create place; that place allows us to become more human and, in turn, more related to other humans.

As playwrights we break the text into different "containers." Working with the goal already outlined, such as the affect on the audience and the story, the first container is the container of the play. For this project we knew we wanted about a forty-five-minute play. This influenced the next choice of containers, which were the scenes. Plays usually have scenes, and the scenes offer a change in theme, or stepping stones in the story. These containers influenced our choice of material as we started grouping material into different scenes, such as "The Drum" or "Kids." Within a scene the next container is beats or beads. These are the "mini scenes" within a scene. We aim not to have repeat beats (unless done intentionally to support the story). The awareness of beats and beads influences the selection and editing of the text because we are paying attention to how the text serves the beat, both the story and the rhythm of the story.

The creating of a new work of theatre includes "workshopping" a new script with actors. This means rehearsing the draft of the play and hearing the draft read out loud by the actors. Yvette points out that actors are "magical creatures" because they are trained to inhabit other people's words and voice. Through the rehearsal process they re-present the material to us, giving us a clean interpretation, allowing us to hear the material again with new ears. In the process of verbatim theatre, actors are a research tool. Much like a microscope, they allow us to take a closer, more refined look at the passages of text we are working with. The workshopping of the play influences the selection and editing of text because it allows us to refine our choice based on our experience hearing the re-interpretation.

Comparing Coding

It is useful to compare " coding and social sciences' coding using NVIVO software. The comparison sheds light on the strengths and weaknesses of both processes and offers a potential contribution to research-based theatre practices. There are some clear resonances between the

two processes, and some differences. At the outset of this project, it appealed to me to do both types of coding because I felt that the more artistic playwrights' coding might be more subjective than the more traditional social sciences' coding using NVIVO software. However, it is now clear that both processes are more art than science, and both are subjective. Any critique of playwrights' coding should apply to social sciences coding as well. It seems both these forms of coding are trying to achieve the same thing, but with subtle differences. Both processes are trying to support answering the research question(s). These differences stem from the motivation of the two processes. The intent of playwrights' coding is answering the question through emotional impact on the audience, and the intent of the social sciences coding using NVIVO software is to describe the situation to the audience. In simple terms, one is *showing* and one is *telling*. The practical differences in these two coding processes that are a result of these two different intentions include different level of detail, the form/function of the material, the training of the coders, and the degrees of relationally.

Verbatim theatre plays aim to create empathy. As a verbatim theatre playwright, I believe verbatim theatre practitioners are trying to achieve something specific with re-presenting the quotes from the transcripts in the way we do. I emphasize the “re” part of the word re-presentation because, in both forms of coding, we are trying to be as true as possible to what participants presented to us in the interviews. Even though verbatim theatre playwriting is different than fictional playwriting, I believe verbatim theatre playwrights are trying to create both person and story with the quotes they select for each speaker. Because we are trying to create a person, we look at the quotes for each speaker in relation to the other quotes the speaker said. Because we are trying to create a story, we also compare the quotes between each speaker. I believe social science coding is trying to answer the research question. As such it also looks to compare potential quotes to what else has been coded. A social science coder does not aim to create story or re-present people. Rather they are trying to describe a story that already exists.

In both processes, a practitioner does interviews, and then transcribes them. After the transcription of interviews, the level of detail, form, and function in the two coding processes starts to differ. Yvette Nolan and myself read through all the transcripts and then spent eight hours editing the first draft of the play together, and then another sixteen hours working with actors in rehearsal to refine the script before reading it for the community. Rachel Tang (who completed the analysis) spent over one hundred and ten hours by herself coding the interviews and writing a report. The play was entirely comprised of quotes and the report was about sixty percent quotes, and forty percent commentary and graphs/tables. Rachel's coding took more time. When I asked her what she did with this time, she said she read each transcript, looking to see which codes could be applied to each piece of text. In contrast, Yvette and I were reading through the text looking for quotes that ‘popped’ —particular wordings that caught our ear because they connected to an argument or idea we felt would be powerful to the community audience. Yvette and I eventually sorted the quotes into containers, which is a similarity to the social science coding. However, we are not initially looking with that filter in mind; we are thinking about which quotes will be the most powerful and meaningful to our audience.

Both the play and the report were composed with an intended audience in mind. The audience of the play was the Pleasant Hill Community; the audience of the report was for an academic thesis. One could argue that Rachel's report using NVINO had more “detail” than the play. For example

it is interesting to see that the word cloud charts showing what words were said most often. However, the play offers emotional ‘details’ that the report does not, such as an entire scene about how people feel about their cultural connection to the drum. Not only do the two documents have different form; they also have different functions. The play was shared with over 200 members of the Pleasant Hill community, prompting discussion after. Would the reading of the report generate the same audience? Would it be as impactful? To date the report has not been shared other than as material to go into this dissertation. If you are reading this you are one of a handful of people who have read the report. The function of the play then, has potential to reach a greater audience.

There are a few clear examples of how the intentions behind the two processes manifest in the data. The people involved in both coding processes were qualified at their jobs. The playwrights who edited the play have over forty years of professional experience making plays. The coder who prepared the report has over ten years of experience working for her employer, so both coders are qualified. Is one better positioned to know about their audience?

The drum is a rich example of how the presence of the coder in research community is crucial to understanding significance. Rachel reflected she was aware of the prominence of the drum and did not know where to put it. Yvette and I created an entire scene about the drum. How could this piece of data be treated so differently? First of all, while we have identified that both forms of coding are subjective, Rachel has had little experience with the community, whereas Yvette and myself have been working directly with the community. I did most of the interviews, and Yvette is Indigenous—a relevant point because a large part of Pleasant Hill’s population is also Indigenous. The drum is a significant part of Indigenous culture. The awareness and integration of the Drum Scene in the play then shows a deeper understanding of the community on behalf of the playwrights. This is not meant to fault Rachel, but rather to show that connection between researcher and community strengthens research. The process of making verbatim theatre demands this connection. It is built into the process.

The youth and children of the community are another clear example of how the intentions behind the processes are evident in the data. In the play *Pleasant Hill Talks*, there are two entire scenes dedicated to youth and children. In the scene, Children, we hear adults from the Pleasant Hill community describe the youth of their community and their challenges. In the scene ‘Trio’ we hear directly from a trio of youth. In the reports, there are several mentions of youth needs and youth challenges. The report and the Children scene are similar - they are both describing the situation, to paint a picture in the mind of the audience. The Trio scene is different. It is showing the situation. It is included with the intent of having an emotional impact on the audience: hit someone in the gut, as well as make them think.

6.1.12 Analysis: Areas for connection (challenges and recommendations)

Challenges facing Pleasant Hill that came up the most (that is, across the most interviews) were drugs (23 files), housing (21 files), gangs (15 files), addictions (13 files), and poverty (12 files). The fact that challenges facing the community are interconnected also came up significantly often (9 files). One challenge, brought up by both kids and adults, was that it is easier to be bad than be good in Pleasant Hill. This is a key challenge facing the community; the promise of

acceptance, belonging, and resources that stems from gang culture and gang life reinforces the need for children and youth to have safe, accessible opportunities in sports, education, recreation and culture. These children have the potential to thrive just as all children do, but they face social neglect that comes from deeply rooted systematic challenges. The children of Pleasant Hill's time and minds need to be supported so that they are given the same opportunities to learn and grow as any other children in any other neighbourhood.

Inequality and disproportionate struggles in Pleasant Hill also increase the need for outside support and funding from other communities and the government to remediate core issues that are interconnected and systemic. What is necessary is 'sharp mind, soft heart'. Attitude and awareness and judgement also play a role in the community's connection to the city as a whole. The people of Pleasant Hill are asking for people to get to know them, hear them, and know the community. Historical injury in the form of white supremacy, racism, colonialism and prejudice have all left physical, emotional, social and mental suffering that impacts the community's capacity to lift itself up. Loss of identity, neglect, overdose, tension with medical professionals and police, domestic violence, abuse, grief, incarceration, fear, dependency on welfare, division, and disconnection are all challenges individuals in Pleasant Hill face daily.

The need to follow families (with holistic longitudinal care, system relief, assessment of family problems) and help people be self-sufficient is a starting place to resolution and increased opportunity to turn things around. Because the community lacks support, and is characterized by people battling to survive, there should be a primary focus on basic needs of safety, security (job and housing), food, and shelter. For youth and adults, education, recreational opportunities, and workplace programming are vital. **Figure 6.5**, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized as 'Areas for Connection'.

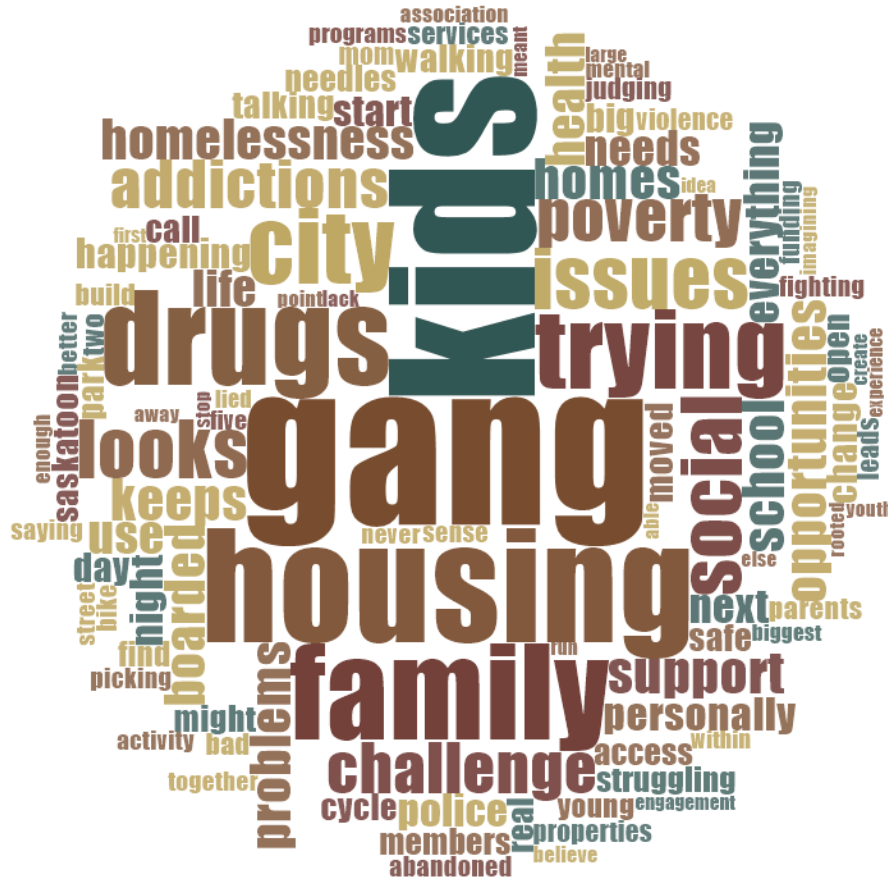


Figure 6.5. Top 100 Words in “Areas for Connection ”

Note. Stop words (excluded from the search query as they were deemed not meaningful to the analysis) include: ‘hard’.

Taking into consideration responses to all questions, the following list of actionable recommendations suggested or endorsed/enacted has been compiled:

Table 6.5. Recommendations by Key Area

Component	Pathway to its Achievement or Action Item(s)
Safety	Safe housing, safe consumption sites, safe places to have children and walk; keep streets clean
Housing	Fix up more houses; lower rent; give the homeless a better place to stay; take care of boarded up housing; better housing; safe housing (no cockroaches or bed bugs)
Food Security	Grocery store within walking distance

Employment	Everybody should have a job. Educate. Help people get their proper id or credentials
Control of drugs, gangs	Control gangs, drugs, alcohol; stop the drugs
Accessible Opportunities in Sports, Recreation, Art	Community association membership to access dance, hockey, baseball, softball; somewhere for all these younger kids to go that could do their graffiti; close off 20 th street on a Sunday afternoon for artisans and street performers etc to show their wares (opportunity to learn artforms without the cost); get them equipment; big recreation facility (hockey rink, indoor playgrounds), pool, weightroom, zipline; Zumba at St. Mary's; walking track; all year round; free.
Addictions Programming	Understanding addictions, all kinds of addictions, where those come from
Indigenous value integration	Importance of Indigenous value systems in everyday life.
Cultural	Pow-wow; bands being concerned for their people (that are very unfortunate)
Youth and young adult programming	More activities after school to keep them away from drugs and gangs; keep kids off the streets and keep them in a controlled, supervised environment; educate younger generation; something special that they can go to (hockey, chess); keep the kids busy; see there is better stuff in the community; literacy, belonging activities, sports related, team related
Adult wellness	Active living resources; attachment to recreation and positive experiences (to avoid risk of attaching to negative/gang related)
Investment	Energy, care, money; transportation/taxi funded by the government; guide them to get answers; educational programs
Values	Interact with the community to build compassion. Get more people coming out to the community. Compassion; treat people right, especially the homeless; a wish more people would be concerned with helping the poor; supports should be non-judgmental; encouragement from outside community

6.1.13 Play: BLUE SKIES

FIERCE: a free skating rink

WEINER: more lights in the park?

MACHIAS: a needle free environment.

BILLY: put in a two mile long skating oval -

ALEXI: like get a sign that says welcome to Pleasant Hill

DIFFERENT: For them to have a skate park

ASENI: a centre a place

JEREMY: a community centre

ALEXI: clean up those alleys

JONATHON: Everyone forgets what meth is

CHER: Uh...Uh...an amusement park...

DIFFERENT: - I dream of a day that everyone could walk around without judgment.

SWIRLIO: Free movies every two weeks.

BILLY: a massive rec centre right in the middle right in the intersection of P and 22nd

TOEHMAK: a grocery store you know that actually had a food bank

ASENI: Drummers used to uh sing out their songs and uh people would get involved. That's that's the thing that is missing

MARIE: a facility of some kind... a skating rink

PRISCILLA: Having people out there to help.

JONATHON: a personal like life coach in a sense for people like of our highest uh you know our most vulnerable sect-

PAYWAPIN: a shelter for people to go stay at like if they get kicked out they will have all the necessities they need. Food, water, toiletries, a shower, a bathroom, a kitchen.

TOEHMAK: purchase uh every single house a residential area in uh Pleasant Hill (that) or (condemn?) house destroy it all. And then figure out how many people there are you know, how many people are displaced you know in who don't have homes and then you know kinda develop a plan for every single person that's gonna be living there and then build real houses

FRANK: art kind of takes over uhm every corner in every place it can be and that not just our community but the people with the purse strings who recognize this that go oh yes we can change people's lives through art let's just do that.

SWIRLIO: I feel I would think what something what what what what what what comes to my mind is something it's uh something that would be available to the community in which they they uhm money will not have to be involved.

MACHIAS: Like a like a exhibition or something.

SWIRLIO: Like people would just be you know they would be free to have a free access to go out and participate and be part of it. That's what you need to build you know to build the main confidence to us. Yeah. To build more together man. Cause a lot of people just they want to stay in their homes.

ROBIN: More people out. Like i guess right now it's winter so it's hard but like especially in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood. I get that people might not wanna be outside but i think i like seeing people out and about that's what makes it feel alive and like its a good place to live.

SWIRLIO: As long as they're bringing a you know bringing it's gonna bring the community together it's gonna you know it's gonna create that bond you know it's gonna bring connection. It doesn't matter what it is man. Really bro you know what I mean. On the periodic basis? Like every once in a while bro bring toget- people will start getting use to it. So let's go to that oh yeah let's bring uh my auntie let's bring my cousin my bro. Let's go in there bro there's no one would be drunk nothing worry about nothing let's go there. Let's get used to building it. Start creating that that so people can start kinda start growing that-

RAECHELLE: seeing spaces claimed by community for positive things is something that is really meaningful uhm and that art is often you know uh well placed to do right?

LUCY: create space to have healthy like healthy community building. –

JEREMY: a community centre because there's just not a lot of gathering places like public spaces especially if the school's closing down that kinda takes away the one community space that we have. We need something to do so something that's available in the evenings and weekends uhm particularly in the winter I think when it's uh it's just very isolating and dark and reinforces the narrative of like fear

DEANE: I would love to see some kind of like network like oh on this block I know that person and that person's safe and I know that person and to start to counteract rather than feeling

afraid of neighbours I can actually trust my neighbours. To see community as the antidote of fear.

REESE: I would like to see pride be given back to the people who have been relegated to live in neighbourhoods with without pride. And I feel like opportunities get lost when your pride is taken away from you. And that's probably an investment from the city uhm I think that that would hit so many birds with one stone if we had something in our community that was our hub or our art for our artists and our children and our elders and everyone that we are proud of.

BLACKOUT (end of play)

6.1.14 Analysis: Blue Sky Ideas

Blue sky ideas were strongly spoken of at the community level. Intervention and addition to what is already happening was primarily discussed in terms of community-wide aspirations. Community projects, community-based centers for exchange, increased programming (in the park, teaching botany, gardening or horticulture so people can be sustainable), coffee and bike shops, convenience stores, more green space, and the teaching of gardening would all help support lifestyle changes and build a sense of safety and cleanliness that the people desire. Having an OPG storefront, or Habitat for Humanity exercise where houses are built and community members can become invested and learn carpentry or other construction skills would be a good thing for the community. Reclaiming unused billboard space with inspirational quotes and adding a welcome sign were also some ideas. One professional mentioned that having a holistic arts healing centre and a dedicated space that is inclusive to all is something they feel is needed and feasible. In this space, options can be explored both in terms of doing art and receiving traditional or alternative medicines. It would be a place where people of all backgrounds and beliefs are welcome. Potential community events were discussed such as a big barbecue, having a fringe or flea market/street fair, rally in Optimist Park, movie night, closing off 20th Street to offer food and clothing or for a weekly market fair where vendors can show their work, or a sports tournament to bring people together.

The following categories include summaries of the blue-sky ideas:

Sports and rec. Sports and recreational opportunities and venues for, say, skating, basketball, hockey, 3x3 basketball. Parks and park usage, big swimming pool, winter playground, rec centre on Ave P and 22nd, amusement park, mud hole, baseball field, camping ground, drive-in size movie screen, winter park or Optimist Hill replica for tobogganing in the winter.

Theatre and Art. Art hub (to get art known), leisure centre for arts (pottery, India ink, fine print), teach different art things all the time, get better art at St. Paul's, shows for the elders (singing, dancing), outdoor theatre, big festival, perform it, use a gym, bring back old art work (beading), reclaim abandoned and unused spaces (i.e. put up a billboard with inspirational quotes), see how Pleasant Hill views the play, singing, drumming, statues, more murals.

Social and Health Services. More housing, work & skills training, more counsellors, more support groups, personal life coach, holistic wellness, avoid putting addiction first, government

wasn't an issue. Drug free, families in stress—have more openings for them, ride-alongs, so citizens can see the world through the lens of a cop, relief, treatment facilities.

Housing and shelter. More shelters, better housing, 24/7 open bathrooms and showers, consider the Holland Model (youth get subsidized rent for being with seniors in the homes).

Economic. More funding/injection of capital, ensure basic needs are met, 'Adult 101' (life skills training about mortgage, job), free things in general (food, tournaments, exhibition, movie night), help the homeless, sub-funding agency, labour-ready building, grant process more friendly to the marginalized, free helicopter or hot air balloon rides, free art classes, meaningful economic opportunities – jobs, training.

Safety and cleanliness. Keep areas safe and clean for kids, put guns away, safe activities and spaces for parent-child bonding, more lights, signage at crosswalks, cleanup day, make it a needle-free environment.

Food and Nutrition. Accessible amenities—grocery store, feast, food cupboards, hydration, food bus or truck, opening something for supper (as often times people go without this meal), restaurant, wholesome nutritious food, food banquets.

Cultural. Bring back smudging. Protocols, laying tobacco, powwow, cultural events – mass appeal, broader audiences, bring back true history, self-identification, Sixties Scoop, harm reduction, 50-foot teepee on 20th Street, show we are on Treaty Six.

Examining or rethinking processes. Mentorship so that elders and youth engage together, different search practices at shelters so people avoid feeling violated, more synergy between organizations/better understanding between professionals and less backlash from other service providers, restrictions—curfew, cut off drug supply—to help people quit and keep crime rates down, more collaboration—coordinated responses to issues (talk to us, listen to us, then act); opportunities and spaces to gather, and more to do and more that stays open on weekends).

Considering population-specific needs. opportunities and spaces for women, LGBTQ, Native-based taxi service, new school, maternity walks, highlight the value of local art for youth, storytime for kids, child care, elders (entertainment in seniors' homes), club houses (for youth to occupy their minds, their time, make friends). For youth specifically, safe spaces for youth/youth drop-in centre, youth training (to keep them away from gang life), arts programming, summer student employment opportunities, clean up community events, art, and student exchange.

Figure 6.6, displays the most frequently occurring words in what was categorized in response to the question “Blue Sky Ideas.”

6.1.16 Analysis: Conclusion

One hundred interviews conducted with residents and workers within the Pleasant Hill area generated a narrative of a community that is aware of its current and desired state. While several positive community traits and aspects are recognized, they are overshadowed by tragedy and historical trauma that has left a heavily distressing imprint on the individuals and families of Pleasant Hill, as represented in these interviews. It is clear throughout responses to main questions asked that past infractions have impacted and infiltrated the family unit. Poverty, homelessness and poor housing quality, addictions, drugs, and gang culture have slid to the top of the community's concerns and are understood as interconnected challenges that the community faces.

This community is not lost, but it has been placed under immense stress. Help is needed to restore, uplift, and return. In this case though, the concept of what could be the antidote has to be flexible, expansive, and open-minded. Within these discussions, art was conceptualized very broadly and inclusively, to the reader's advantage. How do we leverage a community's understanding of itself and of art, to bridge gaps, serve human needs, and alleviate pain and suffering?

Because social and cultural fractures are relational, the antidote may also be most effective if it is relational. Art, described across interviews as highly relational (relatable, unified, emotional, communicative, etc.), could be the mechanism through which cultural understanding and positive contact is gained. The community of Pleasant Hill was frequently framed as misunderstood. Its people strive for a better life for themselves and their loved ones. This ideal is hard to reach and largely unattainable due to social, economic, and systemic conditions. The beauty of art is that it can take on many forms and function for several purposes. Art is a tool for communication, amplifying voices and expressing what words cannot always express. Impactful messages can be sent and received through art, whether in transient forms like in song, dance, drumming, marches and community events, or the more literal and finite pieces like paintings, graffiti and murals. The expansive meaning of art offered by individuals from Pleasant Hill equates to possibility and opportunity to increase health and well-being among those who take up art for their own mental reprieve or professional aspirations. Art in the form of programming, safe spaces, community-mindedness, respect, and opportunity for youth could serve as the vessel for growth and healing to occur. It could also mean a united front that the community builds upon and leverages to create communication and connection between Pleasant Hill and other communities or the city at large.

Pleasant Hill residents rely on a strong sense of community, finding comradery and remaining resilient through supporting one another in tough times. Though there are moments and pockets of feeling in community, in support, and at home with one another, external support and thoughtfully allocated funding would be invaluable in addressing systematic root cause barriers to thriving that individuals and families currently face.

Whereas the hurt seems to have originated in the family unit, this is also where healing can begin, and resources restored. In much of the discussion of ways forward and ventures the community would like to see, youth are central. Safe and meaningful opportunities in education,

art, sport, and recreation will serve to deter a darker path and ensure a brighter future for individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Though the picture of Pleasant Hill is filled with complex contradiction (darkness and light, evil and love), it remains a unified people in heart and spirit; it remains a human work of art.

6.2 Summary

This chapter continued to braid scenes from Pleasant Hill talks with my reflections as an artist and researcher. The scenes in this chapter are from the second half of the play. The reflections on my journey occurred after the Pleasant Hill talks event, including the conversations about what to do with the findings and how to keep being a part of the flow of change. The research strand of the braid began in this chapter with “Art is” and continued with analysis of current art in Pleasant Hill, as well as the challenges and opportunities the community members see. Throughout this chapter I have continued to provide connections to my theoretical framework and central argument. In the following chapter I offer some conclusions, including recommendations for future research and creation.

Chapter Seven: A Call for Stronger Relations

7.1 Research Summary

I began my research journey with the broad research question of *How can theatre strengthen a city?* I was interested in this question for two main reasons. Firstly, because much of my professional theatre work over the past decade has involved the interplay between theatre and cities. I wanted to understand on a deeper level the work my collaborators and I have been doing. The second motivator of this project was/is the fact that most theatres in Canada are currently focused on selling tickets instead of engaging with their communities. I see this as a problem, because most theatre companies are publicly funded organisations, and yet they are stuck in a capitalist, consumer-driven model of operation. Either they feel they must stay in this model, or perhaps they just don't know another way to operate. Through my work I have seen the potential of theatre to make a positive contribution to communities. As I completed my literature review, I realised that cities are really comprised of communities, and I was drawn to the concept of social capital. I revised my research question to *How do theatre companies construct bonding social capital in their communities?* However, this question turned out to be still too broad. I found examples of theatre companies and theatre artists constructing social capital in their communities, but I wanted to explore a practical local example of how theatre could be used as a tool for positive change in a city setting. I reflected on my training as a journalist and playwright, especially my professional verbatim theatre productions, and decided to use the methodology of autoethnography and the method of verbatim theatre. My main research question ended up being *How can verbatim theatre be used as a community development process?*

I found both practical and theoretical answers to my research question. For the theoretical answers, I worked with my supervisor Dr. Ryan Walker, and my other committee members, to review relevant literature and devise a conceptual framework. For the practical answers, I worked with my collaborators at Sum Theatre, especially company dramaturge Yvette Nolan. For over four years we built relationships with members of the Pleasant Hill Community, under the guidance of elder and cultural advisor Maria Campbell. To inform both my theoretical thinking and my practical work in the Pleasant Hill community, I conducted two short exploratory case studies on the methods of Forklift Danceworks and Big hART. The findings from these case studies fed directly into my theoretical work on this dissertation and my practical work in my research creation project

7.1.1. Research Problem Revisited

The broad research problem I was/am interested in is the disconnect between theatres and the communities they work in. In a recent conversation with a colleague who is an artistic director of a local theatre company, I asked him if he had ever met with the community association for the community in which the theatre works. He did not even know what community his theatre is in. While this is an extreme example, it does seem theatres are disconnected from their local surroundings. They are liminal spaces. People go there to go somewhere else in their imaginations. As I described in the introduction, theatres (like galleries) are publicly funded arts

institutions and yet they have shifted to a consumer model. This is a problem. Many theatres now have a “community engagement” or “outreach” person on their staff. They are trying to *engage* or *reach out* to the community instead of seeing themselves as already a *part of* the community or in *relationship with* their community. The more specific problem then is that it seems many traditional theatres do not know *how* (or care to work to find out how) to use their art to illuminate their relationships with their communities. This problem creates a lose-lose situation for both the theatre and the community. My research question looks at one potential way for theatre and the process of community to intersect.

7.1.2. Central Argument

The central argument of this dissertation is that verbatim theatre can be used as a community development process, because it has the potential to create a place of humanization. This place is a first step towards communities where citizens feel responsible for the place they live and where they “see” the people with their communities as connected and related to them, as opposed to as “others.” An important realization I had along this journey was that theatre does not just have the potential to create communities, but it also has the potential to show people *they are already in community*. My viewpoint is largely influenced and informed by Indigenous knowledges, specifically the nêhiyaw worldview of wâhkôhtowin, which I have been taught is the interrelatedness of all beings (human, more than human, plants, and land). In short, I argue verbatim theatre has the potential to create a place based process that humanizes people.

To explore this potential in my literature review, I outlined a range of questions connecting this research to academic study of concepts of social capital, creation of space/place, and socially engaged theatre. I used four conceptual areas to create a framework to set the stage for this thesis. They are:

1. Indigenous knowledge offers non-colonial ways of conceptualizing how we understand, measure and value spaces, places, and the interconnected relationship between all things.
2. Social capital can be seen as networks of relations between people and community as an active process of communing.
3. Spaces become places when they are endowed with meaning. This meaning is produced through relationships between people, which can only happen in place.
4. The theatre arts have the potential to create places where “systematic humanizing” can occur. These places can be both literal and imaginative.

In my literature review I explored how neoliberal pedagogy has pervaded our daily lives and wider culture. I then outlined how my research explores how the theatre arts create new sites of public pedagogy, and how tools from the theatre can be used to effectively transform space into place. To support this exploration, I cite the work of Creswell (2004), who explains that place does not need to have a fixed location (p. 95). I use Creswell’s work to argue that in fact visibility is not a requirement for place, and that place can be qualified and understood through an emphasis on community and networks of social relations instead of visibility. To enrich my thinking on space and place, this dissertation looks to Indigenous knowledges for insight into the concepts of space and time, including what they mean and how they are measured. Practically, the transition from space to place means people participating together in a meaningful activity.

Throughout this dissertation I am interested in the idea of networks of social relations. I ask if the networks of relations that make places can be seen as social capital itself? I then integrate a critical perspective building on Razack's (2002; 2015) work and exploring the context of Saskatoon, using my research creation project as a tool to make the connections between a diversity of bodies clear. I believe if systematic dehumanization is possible through place, then it is possible to also go the opposite direction and humanize people through a connection to place. This research looks to the tools of the theatre to systematically humanize people.

In summary, this research argues that socially engaged theatre is a resonant and effective tool for humanizing people in place. Places and communities are processes, and so the bulk of the value lies within the *process* of the art making, where the place and knowledge is co-created and difference and diversity between people is not an obstacle but a resource. This project proposes and investigates a way theatre can be used to create place where people feel supported to engage with art that challenges them in a way that makes them uncomfortable. In this way, theatre moves beyond just entertainment or representation and toward being a theatre where social engagement is the essence.

7.1.3. Objectives

The broad aim of this research is to show that theatre can be used to create humanizing places that serve to strengthen communities and, in turn, the cities they compose. Within this overarching objective, there ended up being four main sub-objectives. They are:

- To rethink the concept of social capital.
- To understand methods used by two successful companies using arts for social change.
- To create a verbatim theatre play with the Pleasant Hill Community to better understand their thoughts, ideas, and needs.
- To create a process of using verbatim theatre as a community development process.

7.2. Findings

There are four groups of findings based on the objectives outlined above.

My theoretical findings relate to a new way to think about social capital. As I have described, I propose thinking of social capital as place-based networks. In this way of thinking, social capital is a process that is tied directly to place. Much like economic capital needs to continue to circulate to accumulate, so does social capital. To be clear, this way of thinking sees the networks as already there. People are already connected in community, but these connections need to be illuminated and activated. This builds upon theorists like Studdert (2016), who describes community as a verb, or “communing.” Because of my particular focus on humanization, I am interested the very first step of this process, which is making the networks visible. I use, with great respect, the world view of wâhkôhtowin taught to me by elder Maria Campbell (2007), that we are already all related. I believe verbatim theatre is a tool to create humanizing place for the process of communing, which in turn allows us to see each other as

relations. This new way of thinking about social capital offers one answer to Putnam's (2000) call for artists to propose new ways to think about social capital.

My case study findings offer practical methods to do arts work in communities. Thanks to the generosity and openness of the arts of both Forklift Danceworks and Big hART, I collected a list of methods to use in my own research creation work. Some of these methods were similar to things I have tried in my work previously, but the discussion of their use in different contexts helped me clarify and articulate their true value. Examples of these tools are the method of potential partner mapping (the idea that we can always be looking for ways to connect more partners to the work) and the goal of acknowledging unacknowledged relationships. Other methods were new and fed directly into the research creation project, such as the method of hanging out/being with (spending lots of time in community before doing any "work") and the method of elaborate tech (enhancing the art made by community with professional standard tech support). A common theme in these methods was the amount of time, energy, and intention that resulted in spending time creating relationships in/with community. Deeper understanding of these methods allowed me to support my conceptual framework and I was able to practically use many of these methods in my research-creation project.

My research-creation project created the verbatim theatre play *Pleasant Hill Talks* spoken by the people of Pleasant Hill. This play (woven through Chapters Five and Six) includes a range of perspectives from members of the community, such as the community's strengths, their dreams, hopes, and the challenges they face. As one would expect with a socio-economically disadvantaged community, many of the findings within the play connected to basic needs such as food, housing, and safety. There were also findings about a lack of youth activities and safe nurturing recreational spaces. As described in Chapters Five and Six an unexpected finding was the fact Pleasant Hill does not have an ice rink. Thankfully, the play has catalyzed development on this project and at the time of writing the Pleasant Hill Community Association and its allies continue to raise funds to make the new rink as amazing a resource as it can be for the community.

My procedural findings show a process for how verbatim theatre can be used to engage with community. The success of this process answers Norris' (2000) call for theatre to be used throughout the research process. This process, informed by the work of Big hART and Forklift Danceworks, includes the following stages: creating meaningful relationships with community members, spending time "being with" community, doing a wide range of interviews, transcribing these interviews and reviewing them, maintaining relationships with as many interview subjects as possible in order to get their additional consent to use their words after they have been transcribed, editing the transcripts into a play, workshopping and rehearsing the play with actors, maintaining relationships with interview subjects and community members so they can be invited and feel compelled to participate in the sharing of the play, and finally the sharing of the play followed by sharing of food and community discussion. The success of this process is evidenced by the attendance at both *Pleasant Hill Talks* community gatherings.

7.3. Recommendations

After reflecting on this research, I offer three clear recommendations:

1. Verbatim Theatre can (and should) be used as a community development process.

From this research it is clear verbatim theatre can be used as a community development process. This process could be used by any level of government, a nonprofit, a business, or an arts organization/artist to engage with communities. As this project has shown, the verbatim theatre method invites direct participation by/with the community throughout the process and offers an opportunity for sharing of the research through a play that is potentially more attractive and entertaining than other current ways of community engagement. Many governments, non-profits, business, and theatres have “community engagement” or “outreach” staff – but often their practices are limited to less than creative processes such as the classic public consultation time where public can write their thoughts on sticky notes. While sticky notes are sometimes useful, they are not exactly a robust form of engagement. Verbatim theatre offers a process where meaningful relationships and dialogue are at the forefront. Verbatim theatre has the potential to create radical empathy, which affects change.

2. Equitable Support for Pleasant Hill, and all similar communities with hidden or invisible disadvantages.

It was my goal from the outset that this project would have some sort of tangible positive impact on the community of Pleasant Hill. At the time of writing a new rink has been planned for the Pleasant Hill community and has been designated a municipal project by the City of Saskatoon. I hope it will not stop there. Future and additional work is desired by the community. In addition to the rink and the other ideas/needs described above, a community coordinator position and a theatre production to connect Pleasant Hill to greater Saskatoon are needed. In my conversations with city staff, I was surprised to learn that until recently “equality” was more important than “equity.” This claim not only discounts the nuances of both equality and equity, but the more I learned the more I realized just how unfair it is. For example, new suburbs in Saskatoon have new recreation facilities (such as rinks and recreation centers) built for them because of fees paid for by developers. Then, if a recreation centre makes money, it goes back into the community. A core community like Pleasant Hill does not have a recreation centre, so they get no extra funds. This to me seems both unequitable and unequal. Something must change.

3. Playwrights’ Coding

It is clear to me that Playwrights’ Coding is a legitimate and effective form of data analysis. It is no more/less subjective than the qualitative coding using process using NVIVO software. I would like to see Playwrights’ Coding used more often in academic research, by both artists and those who have not yet used arts-based methods. Even if the verbatim theatre process is not used throughout a research project, making a play from data creates an interesting and engaging way to share data. Research based theatre has explored this method already, but I have yet to see Playwrights’ coding recognized as a “valid” form of organizing and presenting data.

7.4 Opportunities for Future Research

Finally, I see four opportunities for further research:

1. Continued Rethinking of “Social Capital”

This research has offered one way to reframe the concept of “social capital.” Instead of being rooted in participation, social capital can be seen as the illumination or activation of existing networks between people in a community. Monetary capital needs to circulate to increase, and so does social capital. The use of verbatim theatre as a community development process offers the potential to create networks through which social capital can be circulate. In what other ways might the idea of social capital be re-conceptualized or re-imagined?

2. Continued learning from Indigenous knowledge and science

In looking at the design and impact of community-based arts work, and the theoretical work that supports it, it has been helpful for me to look to both Indigenous knowledges and the world of science for alternative ways of being, seeing, doing and knowing. These are not “new” ways; they have been present in Indigenous knowledges since time immemorial but have recently become “in vogue” thanks to scientific publications. The inter-relatedness of all things can be seen through Indigenous teachings as well as scientific studies. Examples useful for further exploration include the sharing of energy between trees, the spread of viruses and different types of chemical catalysts. How might Indigenous knowledges and arts/science interdisciplinary collaborations continue to help all involved learn, think, grow, and be?

3. The creation of a Rap Opera in Pleasant Hill

After the *Pleasant Hill Talks* presentation, my friend, and our elder/cultural advisor Maria Campbell (beautifully dressed and wearing her Order of Canada Pin) swept the floor of St. Mary’s School Gymnasium while I chatted with community members. Then she asked me for a ride home. As I described in Chapter Five, she told me that our verbatim play was good, but that the youth rappers from Pleasant Hill were great. She told me “Rap is the new drum.” She told me the next production should be a rap opera. When Maria talks, I listen. *Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0* was a pilot project for a rap opera, we experimented with how verbatim text and rap could be woven together. I originally thought that in addition to the play, we could create the rap opera as a second creative output of this research. I am grateful to my supervisor Dr. Ryan Walker for advising me to finish this dissertation and then move on to the rap opera. Thanks to the support of SK Arts, the National Arts Centre, The David Edney Fund for Theatre and B’nai Brith Lodge #739, myself, Yvette Nolan, Maria Campbell, Carrie Catherine, ZHE the Free, Byron Sebesteny, and youth rappers from Chokecherry Studios will co-create a rap opera in the coming year. My hope is that the main target audience for the rap opera will be high school students from across the city. We have spent time building relationships with leaders in the public school division to make this happen. I envision a potential research project where we interview students from suburban schools about their knowledge and feelings about the core community of Saskatoon before and after their attendance at the performance. It is my hunch/hope this project will show how art can help inoculate young people against stigma and racism.

4. Theatre/Theatres more related to the Community

The bulk of Canada's well-resourced traditional theatres are currently operating with a consumer driven capitalist model. Their number one goal is to sell tickets to their shows. Community engagement seems to be an addition or an afterthought. Most traditional theatres produce well known plays and musicals, often written by American playwrights. They program Disney musicals, paying royalties to an American mass media conglomerate. While it is naive to think that these theatres will ever make a dramatic change in direction, I do believe there is a genuine desire to be more community engaged—but that the majority of theatre just don't know how to shift course. How could theatres incrementally change, even by twenty percent, to *serve* their communities instead of selling to their communities? How can theatres discover or at least articulate their methodologies? Or maybe incremental change is not the answer. Maybe we need to burn the traditional theatres down and start again? I call for concerned and passionate artists to study and pursue a new way of making theatre with/for community. It could be called "***The wâhkôhtowin project.***"

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Appendix A – Adult Consent Form



Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:

Beyond the Stage: Social Capital, Place and Theatre

Student Researcher:

Joel Bernbaum, PhD Student, Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Saskatchewan 306-966-5853, joel.bernbaum@usask.ca

Research Assistants:

Laura Negraeff, Sum Theatre
Krystle Pederson, Sum Theatre
Mackenzie Dawson, Sum Theatre

Research Supervisor:

Ryan Walker, Professor, Geography and Planning, University of Saskatchewan 306-966-5664, ryan.walker@usask.ca

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to investigate how theatre might be used to strengthen a city.

Procedures:

The primary research activity is interviews. We are interested in your perspectives and ideas about your community and how a theatre company might play a role in it. The location of this research is in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood in Saskatoon.

Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes. With your consent we would like to audio record the interview. We will use either an iPhone voice memo or a Marantz audio recorder. You may request the recorder be turned off at any time without giving a reason.

Interviews will be done either in person or online using the online meeting software Zoom – depending on your preference.

In person interviews will be conducted either outdoors in Pleasant Hill Park, or indoors at

Chokecherry Studios. In either location 2 metres distance will be maintained between interviewer and interviewee. There is no need for the interviewer and interviewee to touch or share objects.

Zoom interviews will be conducted in a private area of the home that will not be accessible by individuals outside of the research team during the interview. We recommend you also locate yourself in a private area if this is the case.

For online interviews we are using the online platform Zoom. Their privacy policy is available at https://zoom.us/privacy#_Toc44414844. Zoom's servers are in Canada, so no data will be transmitted or stored outside of Canada. Please note that the use of any online videoconferencing platform carries certain unavoidable risks, so we cannot guarantee of your privacy or the privacy of your data.

Only the audio will be recorded in this interview. If you prefer a phone interview that can be arranged. The recording will be saved USask-managed computer. By consenting to participate you agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.

- After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit. You will be given one week to respond with any changes to the transcript. If you do not respond within one week we will understand that you accept the transcript as is.
- With your consent (below) the interview material will be shared with Sum Theatre so they can make a short verbatim play out of the transcripts to share back to your community.
- The interviews will be transcribed by one of our team: Krystle Pedersen, Laura Negraeff or Mackenzie Dawson. They will all sign confidentiality agreements.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and purpose of the study or your role in it.

Funded by:

This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated physical risks to you by participating in this research. It is possible that discussing your community might put you at emotional risk by creating anxiety or other challenging emotions. If this were to occur, you will be offered to speak with elder/cultural advisor Maria Campbell and/or Registered Clinical Social Worker Barbara Morrison.

Potential Benefits:

The benefits to this research are not guaranteed. However, it is hoped that this research will help with understanding the needs and desires of your community. It is also hoped that this research project will help understanding how theatre companies can do work with communities that make cities stronger.

Compensation:

You will be offered a \$20 gift card for your participation in the interview process. This gift card will be given to you whether or not you complete the project and you will keep the gift card even if you withdraw any of your interview data.

Confidentiality:

The data from this research project will be used to help understand the needs and desires of your community and how a theatre company might work with your community. In order to do this the interview data will be shared with Sum Theatre artists who will edit the interviews into a short verbatim play.

The data from this research project will be published (in a thesis, and in academic journals) and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations may be reported from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym/nickname (which you will have the chance to choose), and all identifying information (list relevant possibilities such as the name of the institution, the participant’s position, etc.) will be removed from the report.

Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a relatively small group of people, all of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) to grant or deny your permission:

I grant permission to be audio recorded and understand that my transcribed interview will be shared with Sum Theatre after I have had the opportunity to approve it.	
--	--

*If you choose not to be recorded, we will make a point form record of the interview with field notes and share those de-identified notes with Sum

Theatre.

Please only select one option below:

I wish for my identity to be confidential	
I wish for my identity to be confidential but you may refer to me by a pseudonym. The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____	

Page 3 of 4

You may quote me and use my name	
I would like to be acknowledged for contributing to the research	

Storage of Data:

Any physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Ryan Walker’s university office. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer during analysis and then moved to a USask data storage system for long term storage.

Data will be stored for five years post publication and then destroyed beyond recovery. Consent forms and master lists will be stored separately from the data and will be destroyed at the same time the data is.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw your data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed. The deadline for withdrawal is one month after your participation has ended.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please email joel.bernbaum@usask.ca

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics

Office: ethics.office@usask.ca; 306-966-2975; out of town participants may call toll free 1-888-966-2975.

Oral Consent:

I read and explained this consent form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

Name of Participant:

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Appendix B – Youth Consent Form



Participant Consent Form

A young person who you are the parent or guardian of is being invited to participate in a research study entitled:

Beyond the Stage: Social Capital, Place and Theatre

Student Researcher:

Joel Bernbaum, PhD Student, Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Saskatchewan 306-966-5853, joel.bernbaum@usask.ca

Research Assistants:

Laura Negraeff, Sum Theatre
Krystle Pederson, Sum Theatre
Mackenzie Dawson, Sum Theatre

Research Supervisor:

Ryan Walker, Professor, Geography and Planning, University of Saskatchewan 306-966-5664, ryan.walker@usask.ca

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to investigate how theatre might be used to strengthen a city.

Procedures:

The primary research activity is interviews. We are interested in your perspectives and ideas about your community and how a theatre company might play a role in it. The location of this research is in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood in Saskatoon.

Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes. With your consent we would like to audio record the interview. We will use either an Iphone voice memo or a Marantz audio recorder. You may request the recorder be turned off at any time without giving a reason.

Interviews will be done either in person or online using the online meeting software Zoom – depending on your preference. In person interviews will be conducted either outdoors in Pleasant Hill Park, or indoors at Chokecherry Studios. In either location 2 metres distance

will be maintained between interviewer and interviewee. There is no need for the interviewer and interviewee to touch or share objects.

Zoom interviews will be conducted in a private area of the home that will not be accessible by individuals outside of the research team during the interview. We recommend you also locate yourself in a private area if this is the case.

For online interviews we are using the online platform Zoom. Their privacy policy is available at https://zoom.us/privacy#_Toc44414844. Zoom's servers are in Canada, so no data will be transmitted or stored outside of Canada. Please note that the use of any online videoconferencing platform carries certain unavoidable risks, so we cannot guarantee of your privacy or the privacy of your data.

Only the audio will be recorded in this interview. If you prefer a phone interview that can be arranged. The recording will be saved USask-managed computer. By consenting to participate you agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.

- After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcript as you see fit. You will be given one week to respond with any changes to the transcript. If you do not respond within one week we will understand that you accept the transcript as is.
- With your consent (below) the interview material will be shared with Sum Theatre so they can make a short verbatim play out of the transcripts to share back to your community.
- The interviews will be transcribed by one of our team: Krystle Pedersen, Laura Negraeff or Mackenzie Dawson. They will all sign confidentiality agreements.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and purpose of the study or your role in it.

Funded by:

This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated physical risks to you by participating in this research. It is possible that discussing your community might put you at emotional risk by creating anxiety or other challenging emotions. If this were to occur, you will be offered to speak with elder/cultural advisor Maria Campbell and/or Registered Clinical Social Worker Barbara Morrison.

Potential Benefits:

The benefits to this research are not guaranteed. However, it is hoped that this research will help with understanding the needs and desires of your community. It is also hoped that this research project will help understanding how theatre companies can do work with communities that make cities stronger.

Compensation:

The young person who you are parent or guardian of will be offered a \$20 gift card for your participation in the interview process. This gift card will be given to you whether or not you complete the project and you will keep the gift card even if you withdraw any of your interview data.

Confidentiality:

The data from this research project will be used to help understand the needs and desires of your community and how a theatre company might work with your community. In order to do this the interview data will be shared with Sum Theatre artists who will edit the interviews into a short verbatim play.

The data from this research project will be published (in a thesis, and in academic journals) and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations may be reported from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym/nickname (which you will have the chance to choose), and all identifying information (list relevant possibilities such as the name of the institution, the participant’s position, etc.) will be removed from the report.

Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a relatively small group of people, all of whom are known to each other, it is possible that your young person may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) to grant or deny your permission:

I grant permission to be audio recorded and understand that my transcribed interview will be shared with Sum Theatre after I have had the opportunity to approve it.	
--	--

*If you choose not to be recorded, we will make a point form record of the interview with field notes and share those de-identified notes with Sum

Theatre.

Please only select one option below:

I wish for the identity of my young person to be confidential	
I wish for my identity of my young person to be confidential but you may refer to me by a pseudonym. The pseudonym my young has chosen is: _____	
You may quote and use the name of my young person	
I would like my young person to be acknowledged for contributing to the research	

Storage of Data:

Any physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Ryan Walker’s university office. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer during analysis and then moved to a USask data storage system for long term storage.

Data will be stored for five years post publication and then destroyed beyond recovery. Consent forms and master lists will be stored separately from the data and will be destroyed at the same time the data is.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to withdraw your data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed. The deadline for withdrawal is one month after your participation has ended.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please email joel.bernbaum@usask.ca

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights

as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office: ethics.office@usask.ca; 306-966-2975; out of town participants may call toll free 1-888-966-2975.

Oral Consent:

I read and explained this consent form to the participant and their parent/guardian before receiving the parent's or guardian's consent and the participant's assent. Both the parent/guardian and participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

Name of Participant:

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Name of Parent/Guardian:

Date:

Appendix C – Semi Structured Interview Guides

A.) Exploratory Case Study Interview Questions

5. How does your work build community?
6. What is your process?
7. What methods do you use?
8. How do you engage with other partners to do your work?

B.) Pleasant Hill Community Member Interview Questions

1. Finish the thought: Pleasant Hill is...?
2. Finish the thought: My community is/community is...?²³
3. Finish the thought: Art is...?
4. If there was one thing you would like the rest of Saskatoon to know about Pleasant Hill, what would it be?
5. What are examples of art happening in Pleasant Hill right now?
6. What are the biggest challenges facing Pleasant Hill?
7. If money and time were not factors, what three “blue sky” ideas could you imagine that would make your community stronger?

²³ It is important to note that question two was asked both as “My community is...?” and “Community is...?”. This subtle difference yielded different responses. In response to the “my” question, people tended to speak about their specific community, as opposed to their definition of community, creating overlap with question one. Respondents’ definitions of community were the more interesting and useful responses.

Appendix D – Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0 Script

Pleasant Hill Talks 2.0 “The rink scene”

PROLOGUE / EPILOGUE - - BLUE SKIES

WEINER: more lights in the park?

MACHIAS: a needle free environment.

ALEXI: like get a sign that says welcome to Pleasant Hill

DIFFERENT: For them to have a skate park

ASENI: a center a place

JEREMY: a community center

ALEXI: clean up those alleys

JONATHON: Everyone forgets what meth is

CHER: Uh...Uh...an amusement park...

DIFFERENT: - I dream of a day that everyone could walk around without judgment.

SWIRLIO: Free movies every two weeks.

BILLY: a massive rec center right in the middle right in the intersection of P and 22nd

TOEHMAK: a grocery store you know that actually had a food bank

ASENI: Drummers used to uh sing out their songs and uh people would get involved. That's that's the thing that is missing

PRISCILLA: Having people out there to help.

JONATHON: a personal like life coach in a sense for people like of our highest uh you know our most vulnerable sector.

PAYWAPIN: a shelter for people to go stay at like if they get kicked out they will have all the necessities they need. Food, water, toiletries, a shower, a bathroom, a kitchen.

TOEHMAK: purchase uh every single house a residential area in uh Pleasant Hill, every condemned house destroy it all. And then figure out how many people there are you know, how many people are displaced you know in who don't have homes and then you know kinda develop a plan for every single person that's gonna be living there and then build real houses

FRANK: art kind of takes over uhm every corner in every place it can be and that not just our community but the people with the purse strings who recognize this that go oh yes we can change people's lives through art let's just do that.

SWIRLIO: I feel I would think what something what what what what what what comes to my mind is something it's uh something that would be available to the community in which they they uhm money will not have to be involved.

MACHIAS: Like a like a exhibition or something.

SWIRLIO: Like people would just be you know they would be free to have a free access to go out and participate and be part of it. That's what you need to build you know to build the main confidence to us. Yeah. To build more together man. Cause a lot of people just they want to stay in their homes.

ROBIN: More people out. Like i guess right now its winter so its hard but like especially in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood. I get that people might not wanna be outside but i think i like seeing people out and about that's what makes it feel alive and like its a good place to live.

SWIRLIO: As long as they're bringing a you know bringing it's gonna bring the community together it's gonna you know it's gonna create that bond you know it's gonna bring connection. It doesn't matter what it is man. Really bro you know what I mean. On the periodic basis? Like every once in a while bro bring toget- people will start getting use to it. So let's go to that oh yeah let's bring uh my auntie let's bring my cousin my bro. Let's go in there bro there's no one would be drunk nothing worry about nothing let's go there. Let's get used to building it. Start creating that that so people can start kinda start growing that

RAECHELLE: seeing spaces claimed by community for positive things is something that is really meaningful uhm and that art is often you know uh well placed to do right?

LUCY: create space to have healthy like healthy community building. –

JEREMY: a community center because there's just not a lot of gathering places like public

spaces especially if the school's closing down that kinda takes away the one community space that we have. We need something to do so something that's available in the evenings and weekends uhm particularly in the winter I think when it's uh it's just very isolating and dark and reinforces the narrative of like fear

DEANE: I would love to see some kind of like network like oh on this block I know that person and that person's safe and I know that person and to start to counteract rather than feeling afraid of neighbours I can actually trust my neighbours. To see community as the antidote of fear.

REESE: I would like to see pride be given back to the people who have been relegated to live in neighbourhoods with without pride. And I feel like opportunities get lost when your pride is taken away from you. And that's probably an investment from the city uhm I think that that would hit so many birds with one stone if we had something in our community that was our hub or our art for our artists and our children and our elders and everyone that we are proud of.

RAP A - Nate Mack

*I've struggled myself with addictions
Was lost in the Pleasant Hill park
Woke up with a little spark in me
To change into a different direction
For wanting to change my ways
And now most days I see people locked in their cage
Or people who want to express their rage
It doesn't really matter what age
We all need for this area to change*

*Let me explain
Okay you see
Let's start by talking about how there's no skating rink
Or the fact that sometimes it may be a little too scary to link wit the homies or even your friends
What's up with that
I wonder when the violence will end*

*I remember when I used to play 21
Shooting hoops until some other troop
Who wanted to challenge our skills
And now its gangs who want to show
How this community kills
Yeah!
Never knew drugs were lethal
Until the teachers warned us about the needles*

*I just really wish that people
Could come together as one*

*So the little ones could once again have fun
And the older ones could play with their daughters
Or even their sons
That's the real light that families can heal from*

Scene 2 – Rink Dreams

ROSIE: Well we have long winters here as you know so uh I guess some of the uh like if we had an area where summer theatres could be held and maybe in the winter time it could be turned into a winter playground.

TYLER: I have a simple one. Uh yeah a skating rink. A nice big skating rink.

ANDRE: Yes.

TYLER: Cause I know those kids at St. Mary's and I gotta say kudos to Jason the janitor there he runs a hockey team for girls and boys and they love it. And people donate skates and that and like yeah. And I mean hockey's not maybe the world's most like inclusive, loving sport but it's pretty awesome physicality and it's community.

BILLY: put in a two mile long skating oval

FIERCE: a free skating rink

MARIE: a facility of some kind... a skating rink

ROSIE: Well I guess there'd have to be a skating rink and ski trails uh...that's about all they could I don't know if there's some other outdoor sports that could be played. That way you're getting people active and uh as well as forming community.

ANDRE: Well and just just plain skating because last winter there was all this controversy but I saw it I'm a regular user of the Meewasin rink downtown. And in previous years kids from my neighbourhood took the trip all the way out there cause they love to hang out there in the afternoon and skate there was the free skates, there was the warm up shelter, there was the heated bathrooms.

TYLER: Yeah. Something parallel here.

ANDRE: And uh they went all the way out there even to brave the prejudice and discrimination of the white supervisors of the site and some of the other white users uhm but uh yeah if we if we could have that here that would be so awesome.

FIERCE: Mmm...the a skating rink? Like there's no there no there is no skating rink in Pleasant Hill area like there's one in Meadowgreen and then there's there's one in Mount Royal area but

there's not one in Pleasant Hill.

MARIE: I've I think they need to have a big place or they can have different like sports. They're playing uh in indoor like you know so that the winter so they can do it in the winter too like you know. Some if a facility of some kind. Uhm what else could they do there like you know but it should be uh well they could have a skating rink. A covered one. For their little stuff so and also then you can have a skating but skating uhm not dancing but skating. For sh- yeah figure skating for a lot of times you got real good figure skaters from other countries and all that so why not why not Pleasant Pleasant Hill?

Rap B - K.Stone

*I've seen parents hit the playground with a sinus full
Lookin at life thru a meth induced kaleidoscope
Call me out Kuz I might be wrong
I saw a spying Rose get killed wit a line of coke*

*All these back streets fulla crack feens an jagged arms
Smack marks and jittering jaws, was Maslow wrong?
These kids got cleaner hands why waste the bands
These younger kats ducking shots from a Wesson blasts*

*I know what it's like to be hungry an fiending
Watching the greedy bend the blocks in a Beamer
Crumbs on they plate, I see em starving
Walks for peace, skating rinks, they hungry regardless
Lessen up the politics, barter less
More barbecues
See everybody lose when the family feuds
Figure skating would be cool, jus pitch it good
But Food for the youth gotta be the tools
Make the hood better, come together an spread the love
I'm jus tryna show y'all we could be better bruh*

FIERCE: Because everybody likes to skate and like if they had something like a free skating rink like if people form the around around the city would donate their used skates to that this place that would just be run like it would kinda like an outreach thing like EGAD's could EGAD's and the White Buffalo could kind of help orchestrate it have have one of their workers come and run it but it would be non-profitable and it would be uh community run.

BILLY: uhm and yeah again recreation uhm put in a two mile long skating oval for uh you know the kids and families to go out on a skate and during the winter months and I mean we all know that uh boredom and wandering minds translates to crime in a lot of ways I mean we need to get away that boredom and you know it's stagnant lifestyle out of people and get them active and engaged in the community right? I mean you create jobs you create uh places for people to go and they'll go they'll they'll do it

MARIE: I think we need that in uh Pleasant Hill too. Well, it's exercise uh being together, learning to get learning uh as a team I think I think if you gotta bunch of uhm people either doing something like that together they become a team and in on a whole then the community becomes a team if everybody's learns to be a team they're going the rest of the community become a teams too.

MACHIAS: You bring like uhm like a tournament. You know something that would something that would work in uh do it like like yeah you have your your your you have your family and you have your siblings family that's a team right there. Just sign up and then go do this event and all of a sudden it'd be like fucking it'll be all these things that'd be like uh proving them wrong, it'll be uhm

SWIRLIO: Change.

MACHIAS: Music.

SWIRLIO: Basketball game.

MACHIAS: Football would be fun hockey would be fun. Baseball not so much. There's a lot of things we can like want to do. But because there's sometimes there's not enough for people to actually enjoy it. And also uh no one knows how to play properly.

SWIRLIO: What would it take for us to go there and participate? Just my my willingness, energy, my health, my well-being. So as long as I walk and breathing in yeah.

MACHIAS: Jus my own stick.

Rap C - Pre\$\$ure

*All these bored kids on the street resort to doing crime
Cause they don't have no place to be
All this violence and beef would it really go down if we had somewhere we felt free*

*That's the question ain't it
How much longer till we can't take it
People walk around and dangerous
How can we change it
Well here's a start*

*We need a skating rink for the kids
Let's focus on the problem till it cease to exist
Remember growing up felt life was throwing me bricks
I'm used to violence but we can do better than this*

Scene 3 – To Rink or Not to Rink

D: I coached for 8 years. So I coached quite a few kids. But through Riversdale Association that's w- in 93 we didn't have a skating rink there too so we had to uh I forget who it was... Gilles Dorval I believe was working for the city back in the young days and he's the one that helped us set all that up.

R: Glen and I feel that before a structure is built there needs to be a clear picture of who is invested in running and using a rink. Glen and I have no interest in running or being involved at all. But, because we feel passionate about having structures for people, not just to say we have it, I am willing to contact the Kinsmen, to try to suss out which families are interested in this, and would be engaged in having this happen, in order to help whoever takes this on.

D: I had uh five kids that went to school there from K to 8 and I had to back em up I I just wanted them to have things to do and I coached and I was part of the association. I took them on field trips I did everything with them. Coaching's putting kids on the right track. Giving them something to look forward to team wise uhm instead of gang wise. Sports give you that opportunity to step to the next level of sports to the next level.

R: What appears to be the case there, is that even the Kinsmen couldn't keep interest in this going. Are the schools on board? Would they use the rink? Do they have any safety concerns about having it in their 'park'? Before a grant application is made, hopefully someone will ask these questions. Who is that someone going to be? That is our opinion.

Samantha: Yeah, well I guess what I'm wondering is...if there is perhaps some reluctance...to go through this based on the amount of person power if you will to to maintain it so like it's oner thing to...to secure the funding and get a and have the rink built but it's a lot of work to flood it, to shovel it, to to keep it to keep it operating on a regular basis cause people will expect the rink to be open you know seven days a week as long as the the weather is cold enough so it's a big k- so operating is the big is a really big commitment and and I guess I would thinking about that then it would go back to the size of how active and how big a group is on the community association itself and and so there's an executive but they would also have they would require volunteers who would be available at the right time of day, the right time of the evening to to keep the rink operating so I'm just yeah I guess so that's what I was thinking I'm wondering if there's some reluctance in part because of that

K: I updated the group on this idea. Much discussion ensued. Many people mentioned a concern of not having enough communal ownership and buy in to see this project through. As a whole the group embraces that this is likely a beloved idea and community ownership can be grown at any time, but most preferred having community leadership in the decision-making that the proposal outlines from the get go.

S: The other piece too I think for some community association's people get involved for different reasons and and sometimes it's recreation and other times it's for civics what we call civic planning and land use issues and both both both are right and both are good reasons for joining a a community association some community associations get really driven and fixed on on the land use and the planning issues and and maybe don't spend as much time on on the recreation end of things. what I'm thinking in terms of what what might be at play so you know what are the community priorities the the the land use planning the you know overwhelming? issues, housing issues, safety issues, uhm so there's that and that take precedent over recreation and the second half of it is if it is recreation you're gonna need volunteers and support too to keep that rink open.

REESE: Uhm yeah you know I think it comes back to Pleasant Hill feels marginalized and Pleasant Hill needs to feel proud. You know and I think pride in community gets community engagement and if you're not proud of your community I mean the more slums that are in- yeah you'll get a few people who are angry about slums but you also won't get all the people that would be doing proud community stuff. They would just be doing angry community stuff right? And so uhm community association that is fighting is only going to attract fighters but community association that's dreaming will attract dreamers right?

D: Pleasant Hill is very I used to be in Riversdale that's how Riversdale used to be everything crime uh sex, drugs, rock n' roll. Where we cleaned it up kinda. And now that they see that then we we want to take it up the hill and do that at Pleasant Hill too. That's what I'd like to see. That's what I that's what I you know that's my dream. And and to help people get back to themselves.

K: Two people were advocates for the "if we build it, they will come" stance. I am personally not a fan of this approach as the "us vs. them" narrative is inherent in it. Interesting to note that it was our two Indigenous members who thought this though!

D: Here's what I think about the skating rink that if funding put in Pleasant Hill uhm and utilize properly that it could bring our whole community together whether they're young, young adults or kids or older adults, grandparents, uhm just for them to get together and uh be together.

K: other nearby community associations are busting their asses to promote families actually using their rinks, and to keep their trained hired hands. I'll add to this that even if we hire out the position, someone still needs to supervise and train this person/team and assume responsibility if the hire doesn't work out.

Samantha: the community association model is based on minimal grants from the city to community associations but the model's really based on on association being really active themselves. Our approach to this model right now I would say is very it's based on equality not necessarily on equity so we tend to treat all associations the same like everybody more or less gets the same grant and the same level of support.

D: Some of these neighbourhoods are really really rich while a lot of neighbourhoods where Pleasant Hill the people living there aren't really aren't really earning top dollar they're minimum wage people and yeah they make they probably should get a little bit more of the pie than the rest of them heh. Yeah.

Samantha: That's something that we need to address and are trying to trying to address that so on an equity perspective we would perhaps give more support to some organizations than others for certain programs so that that is something that we could you know I think we would want to think about in terms of this this situation so treating everyone equally is sometimes a good idea but sometimes it's not the right the right approach. Not everybody is equal not everybody starting in the same place.

D: I'd like I'd like to ask the city what would they would like to uh provide to help us? To to run to start this and and keep it running for five years I'd say put it on the five year plan and then ask them take another five years and see if it needs improvements or uhm more people to run it or to hire uh coaches or something to come into the community like it can expand. Once you have it there you can expand it to hockey, floor hockey, shimmy, uhm you know we could throw a basketball in a couple of them you know. Like it can expand and it can it can only make Pleasant Hill grow heh.

Samantha: it's early days but it is, like now would be the time to to look at some solutions from an equity perspective so uhm so maybe the grants a little bit bigger for certain neighbourhoods so they could hire someone to to you know put uh flood the rink and come with a bobcat and clean clean out the snow like perhaps that's a perhaps that's a solution so I think there'd be you know I think we'd be open to looking at that.

Samantha I yeah I dunno. At this point I mean...maybe maybe there's a pi- yeah it could it could. It could perhaps uh perhaps it's a pilot program like could that uh that that could be established so yeah any anything is possible.

J: Spoken like a true artist.

Samantha: Spoken like a true bureaucrat.

K: we will need a plan for storage for rink gear.

D: Even if at first sometimes they won't talk. They'll they'll say hi, hi just like you walk up and down the street hi, hi, hi, hi. Ten times later hey just a minute, can I ask you a question. I gotta problem can you help me?

K: we could start a conversation now with the new developments that are coming soon on ave P (between 20th & 19th) that CUMFI and QUINT are building. Get them to include a storage room with outside water access to build a rink between their family housing and St.Mary's school. We've already have a lot of good will with CUMFI and the elder's lodge, and they may like this idea to incorporate into their 2nd development which will be for families.

D: That's that's what it'll do it'll it'll open up the community slowly. Talking. Pretty soon shaking hands and hugging. Just like you know that's what's missing out there. That's totally what's missing out there is the love. Heh heh heh. Community. Yeah yeah. We should all be able to work together, talk things out, put sports teams together instead of gangs you know. And build up the neighbourhood. Hiy hiy.

Rap D - Proto the Prophet

Chorus

*Pleasant Hill is a community
That needs more than opportunities
It's much more than facilities
We gotta build up the positivity (2x)*

Verse 1

*Hey government, where's the help
kids dying with a past without no health
Don't go outside with people acting stealth
Kids walking around afraid without no
wel-fare
feels like we waking up in nightmares
people playing us like musical chairs
going outside, people giving us stares
sure doesn't seem like anyone cares
So it's called Pleasant Hill, whats pleasant
People be scared to talk, they independent
The people I'm talking about is residents
So let's focus on not being quite hesitant*

Chorus

*Pleasant Hill is a community
That needs more than opportunities
It's much more than facilities
We gotta build up the positivity (3x)*

BLACKOUT – end of play