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# RETHINKING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: THE DIVERSE ECONOMIES OF ARTISTS AND ARTISANS IN RURAL MASSACHUSETTS

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RETHINKING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: THE DIVERSE ECONOMIES OF  
ARTISTS AND ARTISANS IN RURAL MASSACHUSETTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

ABBY IRENE TEMPLER RODRIGUES

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2018

Sociology

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## DEDICATION

For M and others who struggle with belief in themselves.

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## ABSTRACT

### RETHINKING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: THE DIVERSE ECONOMIES OF ARTISTS AND ARTISANS IN RURAL MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 2018

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This dissertation explores the contours of artistic economic activity through participatory action research conducted with artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County, Massachusetts. The creative economy has drawn significant attention over the past ten years as a principle economic sector that can stimulate the redevelopment of post-industrial cities. However, dominant creativity-based development strategies tend to cater to the tastes of an economically privileged, and implicitly white, “creative class,” leading to gentrification and social exclusion based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender. These exclusions also apply to artists and artisans, occupational groups whose economic activity and needs have been paradoxically erased from dominant creativity-based development prescriptions.

The data were collected as part of a collaborative research project in which twenty-two artists and artisans were hired from the region to conduct interviews to explore the economic lives of their peers. These peer-interviews were embedded in a collaborative research process, which generated two data streams: one hundred and thirty-two peer-interviews conducted by the research team and the ethnographic data from the collaborative research process itself.

Through analyzing the peer-interview data, I find that regional artistic economic activity spans both the formal and informal economy and derives from a wide range of non-market logics. I argue that the multiple values of artists and artisans give rise to heterogeneous economic practices and logics, which fall outside the formal economy and are thus largely ignored in existing entrepreneurial initiatives to support the arts. Within the already precarious situations of professional artists, I also find that these conventional initiatives intensify vulnerability for artists from marginalized groups.

Through analyzing the ethnographic data from the research process, this dissertation also deepens understandings of community-based research methods. In particular, I extend the discussion of peer interviewing beyond how interviews are conducted to developing new ways to analyze the data produced by this method. I also illustrate the micro-political effects of conducting participatory action research on its subjects, arguing that this method offers an innovative model for transformative social change.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*I see this is a reoccurring theme with artists, that they move into an area with dilapidated lofts, and warehouses, and empty boarded-up storefronts and apartments. And people are jamming and playing music. The actors get up and try some improv: someone has a camera, someone has a guitar, someone has a feather boa, so anyway, horsing around. Then somebody says, "Let's open a coffee shop," and then somebody starts baking, and then, "Oh let's make it a restaurant," and in comes the tofu. And so we make a scene and people start coming down because there's music and there's food and there's some action going on, and we got studio space because, like I said, it was a dump. And once the scene starts happening they kick the artists out and in comes the investors and the money people and they redo the studios, which we then can't afford. This has happened time and time again.*

*-Suzy Polucci, Actress & Writer interviewed by Singer & Photographer Moonlight Davis, 10/8/10, Erving, Massachusetts.*

Across the world stage, cities are turning to arts and creativity-based development for economic revitalization. Suzy, an actress, writer, and white woman in her mid-fifties, illustrates the central paradox of this creativity-based development.

While development discourses celebrating art and culture are now plentiful, artists and artisans, along with other low-income residents living in the revitalizing neighborhoods, tend to be priced out as the neighborhood transitions. In her interview, Suzy discussed her participation in the creation of three "scenes" in urban areas. In each case, she and her fellow artists ultimately had to leave as developer-driven development moved into the neighborhood.

This relationship between artists, developer-driven post-industrial urban renewal, and gentrification was first brought to the attention of sociologists in the early eighties by Sharon Zukin's (1982) study of New York City. Since then, the informal process of development following artists became an explicit development strategy. This "creativity-based" development exploded into a dominant model of urban redevelopment for post-

industrial cities large and small, both domestically and abroad. Within the social sciences, urban creativity-based development is well studied. Yet, there is a gap in understanding how creativity-based development unfolds in rural settings. Additionally, there is still limited discussion in the literature about how creativity-based development varies by place, and about the specific role of artists in these processes. This dissertation addresses these gaps through exploring the economic practices and values of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County, Massachusetts in 2010, where creativity-based development was being introduced.

Franklin County is the most rural county in the state. The region's economy was originally built around agriculture and small-scale industry in the first wave of industrialization in the United States. The region was home to scores of small-scale manufacturers that made products ranging from cutlery to sewing machines to metal components for weapons. All of these industries were connected to their markets through the railroads. As the nation transitioned from small- to large-scale manufacturing and from dependence on railways to the automobile, the region's economy started to wane. At the height of World War II, Franklin County had the highest per capita income in the state. By the time this study was conducted in 2010, it had the lowest per capita income. Many towns in the region had not found new ways to redevelop after manufacturing left. The towns that had found new strategies primarily depended on growth in service industries, which pay significantly less than manufacturing. Given that the region had been economically depressed for decades, as creativity-based redevelopment became popular, the region followed the trend.

In Franklin County, individual artists and artisans make up the largest segment of the creative sector. In this region, artists and artisans primarily live on fixed incomes. Excluding public workers and the self-employed, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the annual wages for Franklin County workers in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector for 2009 were \$15,046 compared to an average income of \$33,380 for all Franklin County workers. Only those working in Accommodations and Foods Services earn less (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:23). Material need is real in this region in general, and for artists and artisans specifically. Artists and artisans desire increased economic support, but are wary of development strategies that will kick-start the gentrification process that many experienced in other places.

The data for this dissertation were collected as part of a participatory action research (PAR) project commissioned by a regional arts organization, the Fostering Arts and Culture Project (FACP). This organization was, and currently still is, the primary advocate for artists in regional development planning. Artists and artisans were concerned about gentrification; they did not want to be priced-out nor did they want their working-class neighbors to lose their housing. Following this concern, the organization was keen to build policy supports around the existing practices and values of regional artists. The hope was that utilizing locally-based support rather than importing models from elsewhere could allow for more equitable, sustainable redevelopment. The FACP also wanted artists and artisans to play an integral role in collecting this information about the existing creative economy.

To conduct this study, the FACP secured a \$9,000 grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. At the time of the study, my fellow academic, Leo Hwang, was the

Chair of the FACP through his position as Associate Dean of Humanities at Greenfield Community College (GCC). He and I were both pursuing our PhDs at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and had met through our mutual advisor, Julie Graham. He asked me to come on board as co-coordinator to design and implement the study. We subsequently applied for and received the President's Creative Economy Fund Grant from the Office of the President of the University of Massachusetts for \$32,200. We conducted the study using the combined budgets of both grants.

To carry out the study we recruited 22 regional artists and artisans to work with us as a research team. After receiving training on research ethics and techniques, each artist/artisan researcher interviewed five peers about the diverse economic practices that support their work, and their motivating values. The aim was twofold: to present a region-specific alternative to the dominant creative economy development script through documenting and highlighting the diversity of values and practices within the region's *existing* creative economy; and, through the research process itself, simultaneously empowering artists and artisans to play a larger role in regional development.

### **The Creative Economy, the Field of Artistic Production, and Feminist Political Economy**

Understanding the relationship between creativity-based development and artists and artisans requires exploring the contours of the creative cities discourse of Richard Florida (2002). In the United States, creativity-based development strategies tend to draw most heavily from Florida, who argues that the redevelopment of urban centers in the post-industrial economy is primarily driven by the creative class. This is a mobile class of "creative types" whose decisions of where to live are no longer based on the availability

of jobs but on the qualities of place, namely an abundance of talent, technology, and tolerance. Given the role of this class in driving growth, Florida argues that the best development strategies for cities to pursue are those that attract creatives through amenity building and the cultivation of tolerance.

There is a robust literature, mostly concentrated in urban studies and geography, which directly engages Florida's concept of the creative class. One side of the literature is devoted to testing the growth potential of the creative class as measured and defined by Florida (for example, see Currid-Halkett and Stolarick 2012). The other side of the literature challenges the analytical usefulness of the concept altogether (for example, see Markusen 2006; Kratke 2010). I locate myself in this second camp.

Florida defines the creative class broadly to include occupational groups utilizing "creative production" or "creative problem solving" (Florida 2003). Yet, Florida does not clearly specify what he means by these categories. The creative class, as defined by Florida, includes occupations traditionally considered creative such as artist or scientist, conventionally professional occupations such as lawyer, and more conventionally commercial occupations such as advertiser. Through careful analysis of Florida's measure of the creative class, Markusen (2006) finds that it is not creativity that binds this group together, but rather formal educational attainment. This grouping of occupations with very different standards of entry, working conditions, pay scales, and motivating logics does not allow for careful analysis of how any of the individual occupational groups are supported, or not, by creativity-based development. Thus, Markusen argues for disaggregating the occupational groups bound together by the

creative cities discourse. This disaggregation allows for a sharper focus on the specific working conditions and needs of artists.

Other studies of Florida's development model have argued that it is precisely the amorphous nature of the creative cities discourse and its related strategies that give it so much traction in city planning. In his study of creativity-based policies in Amsterdam, Peck (2012) finds that the discourse remained vague, allowing it to be utilized to repackage existing development projects. Similarly, in his study of a redevelopment project in Buenos Aires, Lederman (2015) found that the flexibility of the creative economy discourse allows cities to espouse non-market values such as creativity and diversity while the development practices themselves serve the interests of developers, in some cases acting to deepen existing inequalities. He found that the development of an arts district in a historically impoverished section of town increased property values. As in other cities, Lederman projects that this rise in property values will mostly likely price out existing artists, artisans, and residents who were renters, while benefiting property owners.

While these problems are grave, there is also more to the story. There is variation in how development occurs within the creative sector, given the flexibility of the discourse and the specificities of place. In some cases artists and artisans are able to work the creativity-based development discourse in their favor. In his analysis of government-led cultural development in Providence, Rhode Island, Salkind (2013:33) found that cultural workers "forged symbiotic relationships" with city government, strategically using the narrow development discourse of the city to "foster city-wide civic engagement and more equitable access to art and culture." Keen to the fact that development as usual

creates gentrification, an artist collective leveraged connections with the Mayor to buy property in the newly zoned “cultural district” before the prices spiked. This ensured artists continued access to affordable artist workspaces. Additionally, this organization used the government’s rhetoric of creative diversity to lobby for the protection of a pre-existing working-class rock-and-roll bar that would have otherwise been forced to move as rents rose.

In Providence artists were able to put this top-down development model to work for them because of their geographic and class proximity with city leaders. The cultural capital provided by their university education and affiliations allowed them to fit the Floridian norm of who is a “creative.” Their claims were visible and thus actionable.

This is not the case for creative workers who fall outside the norm set by the Floridian discourse of creatives. Using a Floridian model of redevelopment, Holyoke, Massachusetts, seeks to redevelop a “blighted” neighborhood in which a large working-class Puerto Rican community lives. Breitbart (2013a) found this neighborhood to be rich in creativity. However, city planners talk about this region of the city only in terms of deficits to be fixed by creating high-end housing and amenities to attract an external creative class. In these plans, the Puerto Rican population is made invisible in terms of the assets that they bring to creative-based development initiatives; their desire to continue living in the neighborhood; and their need for quality, low-income housing options.

Taken all together, creativity-based development tends to be based on a “fuzzy concept” of the creative class and creativity (Markusen 2006). This elasticity allows planners to utilize a discourse celebrating diversity and cultivating inclusive cities to

“repackage” (Peck 2012:475) the usual unequal development. As a result, creativity-based development has been linked to gentrification (Allen and Hollingworth 2013; McLean 2014; Peck 2005), pricing out low-income residents in both large and medium-sized cities. These development strategies have also led to social exclusion based on race and ethnicity, class, and gender (Breitbart 2013; Edensor and Millington 2013; Kern 2013; Leslie and Catungal 2012; Shaw and Sullivan 2011). The flexibility of this discourse can also lend itself to re-appropriation by artists and artisans, but even the success of such re-appropriation appears to be linked to the normative definition of creative type set forth by the Floridian script.

The scope of creativity-based development, its link to the perpetration of social inequalities, and its potential for re-appropriation make it an important focus of sociological study. In line with Markusen (2006), I argue that getting below the surface of the discourse requires breaking apart the vastly different occupational groups that have been bundled together under the “creative class” umbrella. Additionally, in line with studies such as Breitbart’s (2013) edited volume on creativity-based development in medium-sized post-industrial towns or the 2006 study by Kong et al. of the implementation of creativity-based development strategies in a number of Asian cities, I argue that this development trend cannot be understood independently from how it interacts with the specifics of place. In the case of the Greater Franklin County, a major factor of place is its rural character. Thus, this study also meets the call for further investigation of how creativity-based development plays out for artists and artisans in rural regions (Markusen 2014; Zukin 2011).

Understanding the role of artists in creativity-based development requires exploring the unique logics and struggles within artistic occupations themselves. For this endeavor, I draw on the literature on the production of art, starting with Bourdieu's (1993) seminal mapping of the field of artistic production. The field of artistic production is distinct from other professional fields on two crucial fronts. First, it is structured around its own logic, one that eschews many of the logics underpinning other professional fields (Bourdieu 1993:39):

[T]he economy of practices [within the field of artistic production] is based, as in a generalized game of 'loser wins,' on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honors and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue).

Rather than organizing itself around the logic of maximizing profits or power, the field of artistic production is organized around the value of producing art for art's sake. This gives rise to an "interest" in economic "disinterestedness" (Bourdieu 1993:40). Artistic occupations, thus, cannot be understood from the economic logic that underlies other occupations considered part of the creative class.

Second, the field of artistic production is highly contested because of its low barriers to entry (Bourdieu 1993). Unlike other professionalized fields such as medicine, law, or academia, there are no standardized educational requirements, little government regulation, and no codes of ethics. The borders of the field are thus highly elastic; anyone can call himself or herself an artist without formal training or professionalization. As the previous quote highlighted, those without training can, at times, even be valorized for their perceived "authenticity," or freedom from convention. These permeable borders

make the field highly contested as different types of artists vie for legitimacy. It also means that there is more variation among artists than among professionals in other occupations. Therefore, any study of artists should take into consideration the heterogeneity within the category “artist.”

The field of artistic production’s unique organizing logic coupled with its permeable borders gives rise to dynamics specific to artistic labor markets. Eikhof and Haunschild (2006) argue that for the employers, art for art’s sake “play[s] into the hands of economic profitability” because “art for art’s sake as a work motivation outperforms all organizational incentive schemes.” Through the study of a theater troop in Germany, they found that in the pursuit of art for art’s sake, some performers did not see a separation between their work lives and their personal lives. This mean that artists are willing to take more economic risks, work longer hours, and accept lower pay than professionals in other occupational groups (Caves 2000; Eikhof and Haunschild 2006). The field’s permeable borders can also have negative economic effects for artists and artisans. There is a perpetual oversupply of artists, which outstrips even the rise in arts-based employment (Menger 1999). Like in other occupations, artistic jobs have also become increasingly flexible, and contingent rather than stable contracts are more predominant. Together with the over-supply, there is fierce competition for even part-time and short-term employment (Menger 1999).

The field of artistic production is, thus, a risky place for artists and artisans. As an occupational group, artists tend to have higher rates of unemployment and under-employment, earn less than other workers with similar forms of human capital, and have more inequality and variation in income (Menger 1999). Artists use a combination of

strategies to hedge against the risks of this market: drawing on private supports such as a working spouse; public supports such as state grants or unemployment benefits; resource sharing with other artists; and/or holding multiple jobs (Baumol and Bowen 1966, cited in Menger 1999:562). Of these strategies, multiple-job holding tends to be the most studied (Menger 1999), and there is growing scholarship on self-employment, or arts entrepreneurialism (for example, see Coulson 2012; Eikhof and Haunschild 2006; Ellmeier 2003; Klamer 2011; Markusen 2013b). Less studied is how artists utilize various combinations of these strategies to make their lives work. Exploring this array of practices is one of the aims of this study. A related aim is expanding the academic conversation around the values that motivate artistic practice. This study confirms that art for art's sake is an important motivating logic. In the context of the Greater Franklin County, I also find other non-market logics at work.

Given that many of the strategies and logics employed by artists and artisans fall outside the market economy, I utilize the diverse economy framework, developed by feminist political economist J. K. Gibson-Graham (2006), to attend to the specificity of the field of artistic production. The diverse economy framework takes a very broad approach to the study of the economy. It explores all varieties of “transactions; forms of negotiating commensurability; labor and its corresponding compensation; forms of enterprise; and ways of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus” (2006:60). This framework allows me to chart market- and non-market-based economic practices and values that shape artists' economic lives. This framework has been extended (see Sweet 2016; Wright 2010) to attend to how diverse economic practices and their efficacy vary based on intersectional inequalities such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, legal status

etc. This “intersectional diverse economies framework” (Sweet 2016) allows me look to the diversity within the category “artists,” asking how intersectional inequalities might shape artistic careers and/or practices.

Through analyzing the economic practices and values of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County, I will make three substantive arguments and one methodological argument. First, I argue that artists and artisans have, unequivocally, to be studied independent from the so-called “creative class” as a whole. My results show that artistic economic activity spans both the formal and informal economy and derives from a wide range of non-market values, which signifies a disjuncture from the market-focus of dominant creativity-based development strategies. This disjuncture paradoxically leaves artists and artisans vulnerable to the gentrification generated by dominant creativity-based development strategies. The disjuncture also masks the non-market values of artists and artisans, such as social justice and community building, around which more inclusive creative economies could be developed.

Second, I argue that studies of the economic lives of artists must also take into consideration the heterogeneity within the category of artist/artisan. Within the already precarious situations of professional artists, I find that women artists, artists of color, and artists from working class backgrounds face a different set of challenges. As a result, understanding the lives of artists, in all of their diversity, is crucial for generating more inclusive creativity-based development policies.

Third, I argue that studies of the creative economy and studies of the lives of artists must be rooted in the specificities of place. A region’s history, demographics,

institutions, cultures, and values all shape formal and informal creativity-based economic activity.

Finally, through shifting my analysis to the research process itself, I argue that peer-interviews used as part of participatory action research projects offer an innovative model for transformative social change. I find that the micro-political effects of conducting participatory action research on its subjects could point to links between the subjective effects of participatory research and community-level change. This method could provide inroads for understanding and addressing the marginalization of any group within development practices, not just artists and artisans.

### **Dissertation Outline**

In Chapter 2 I present the methodology used. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I discuss PAR, the guiding principles around which we designed the project, and the specifics of our research design. I also outline the demographic information for all participants—the research team and the artists and artisans they interviewed. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss how I analyzed the peer-interviews. Our methodological approach to the interviews foregrounded the project's transformative aims over the collection of uniform data. As a result, the peer-interview data at times took on focus-group-like characteristics. This led me to an innovative approach to analysis that foregrounds the interaction within the interviews as a strength of the data.

In Chapter 3, I flesh out the context of the Greater Franklin County and its creative economy. I start with a discussion of the region's patchwork of towns and diverse cultures, highlighting the distinct economic and cultural features of the region's

two sectors: the Mohawk Trail and the Interstate I-91 corridor. I argue that an artist or artisan's location within this geographic and cultural patchwork shapes his or her experiences and perspectives of the region. This chapter also provides an overview of the informal, bottom-up development pursued by regional artists and artisans, which started in the late '70s early '80s, and the top-down creativity-based strategies that came to the region in the early 2000s. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of how and why the Greater Franklin County provides fertile ground for artists and artisans.

Chapter 4 presents the diverse economic practices and values of artists and artisans living and working in the Greater Franklin County. I start the chapter with a discussion of the logics motivating artists and artisans. As Bourdieu argues, producing art for the sake of art is a strong motivating logic within the field of artistic production. Within the socially-conscious context of the Greater Franklin County, other non-market values such as sustainability, social justice, bringing art into the schools, and community building also shape the decisions of artists and artisans. Thus, I find that artists in this region balance meeting material needs with meeting their own non-profit-driven logics. I find that artists and artisans perform this balancing act through both formal and informal economic strategies, which are shaped by the region's rural character.

Artists and artisans are not a homogenous group, and Chapter 5 focuses on some of the inequalities among artists. Bourdieu presents a careful analysis of the class struggles within the field of artistic production, which remain salient to my findings. Drawing from feminist political economy, my findings also point to the need to attend to differences based on race, gender, and caregiving responsibilities.

In Chapter 6, I analyze the ethnographic data from the research process to discern what was produced, or what changed, as a result of the project. I also outline the mechanisms through which change occurred. I find that participation in the project opened the door for a series of material and micro-political changes for members of the research team: new economic opportunities; new ways of relating to self and community; and new engagements with art itself. I then engage with the PAR literature, discussing how my findings inform theorizing the sustainability of change created through action-oriented research.

In Chapter 7, I conclude by drawing together the theoretical and methodological contributions of this dissertation. I also present policy recommendations drawn from my findings to better support artists and artisans within creativity-based development projects.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

This project utilized peer-interviews embedded in a collaborative research process, generating two data streams: 132 interviews conducted by the research team and the ethnographic data from the collaborative PAR process itself. As such, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first half of the chapter, I introduce the methodology of PAR, discuss the specifics of our research design, the demographics of participating artists and artisans, and end with a discussion of the data used to analyze this research process. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss the interviews. I discuss how we approached the interviews, including a discussion of the training provided to the team members. I then discuss how I ultimately analyzed the interview data given the rich, yet heterogeneous data that the peer interviews produced.

#### **Part 1: Participatory Action Research**

The concept of participatory action research (PAR) originally developed in Latin America in the 1960s and '70s as a sociopolitical critique of oppression, extending the Marxian theory of power, with its focus on the means of production, to also include knowledge production.<sup>1</sup> While there is no unifying ontological position from which PAR is conducted, PAR tends to start with a critique of the positivist belief in a singular reality

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<sup>1</sup> The specific term Participatory Action Research emerged from the collaboration between Colombian scholar Orlando Fals-Borda and Chilean scholar Francisco Vio Grossi (Hall 1992). Their work was part of a multi-country movement, integrating research, adult education, and social action, heavily influenced by the critical pedagogy of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire.

that can be known through neutral observation (Fahmi 2007; Fals-Borda 1991; Hall 1992). As Fahmi (2007:23) argues, PAR tends to be conducted from the understanding “that there is no unique, pre-existing ‘real’ world, independent of human mental activity and human language;” there is no pre-discursive world “out there” to be “discovered.”

Second, there is no neutral observer. Just as there is no pre-discursive world, there is no pre-discursive observer. Rather, all knowledge is situated (Haraway 1988), a product of the particular social conditions in which it was produced, including the assumptions of the researchers based on their social location. Thus, knowledge produced from a position of dominance within the social hierarchy tends to naturalize that hierarchy. From this perspective, expert knowledge is seen as *a* situated knowledge that, when produced unreflexively, plays a role in maintaining existing social orders. Therefore, PAR critiques expert knowledge, while at the same time placing values on *all* forms of knowledge, particularly experiential knowledge: the knowledge produced by the human capacity to learn through lived experiences (Fals-Borda 1991; Freire 1970). In addition to breaking down the hierarchy between types of knowledges, PAR researchers also aim to break down the hierarchy between “researchers” and the “researched” inherent in the subject-object divide of a positivist epistemology. In PAR projects, research is conducted *with* rather than *on* communities, creating a subject-subject relationship (Fals-Borda 1991).

Finally, PAR projects create knowledge with communities aiming to engender empowerment with the potential to lead to larger social change (Fals-Borda 1991). In short, PAR projects start from the assumption that knowledge production happens everywhere, and that conducting research with communities can create new

understandings of the world, leading to social change at the individual and/or structural level.

American sociology has a complicated relationship with PAR. The foundational concepts of Southern PAR, which I outlined above, were originally incorporated into North American sociology in the 1970s under the name Participatory Research.<sup>2</sup> While working under different names, PAR and PR have common roots and refer to “the same general process” (Hall 1992:17). Twenty years later, American sociologist William Foote Whyte published an edited volume named *Participatory Action Research*, in which he made no reference to the wide body of international or domestic literature extending from the Southern model of PAR (Hall 1992). While PAR as articulated by Whyte envisions the co-production of knowledge, this process of knowledge production is detached from questions of power (Hall 1992). Rooted in organization sociology, PAR from this school of thought is largely used to examine research questions focused around the organization and efficiency of existing systems, in contrast to the focus of critiquing and changing existing systems that is inseparable from Southern PAR.<sup>3</sup>

As such, PAR or any other “participatory” method is not a panacea (Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991). Projects can solicit participation for a wide range of goals, not all of

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<sup>2</sup> In 1971 Paulo Freire brought the PAR concepts from Latin America to Tanzania, sparking what came to be known as Participatory Research (PR) methods (Hall 1992). Canadian scholar Budd Hall, who was working in Tanzania at the time, then brought these ideas to the North American Academy and, along with Ted Jackson and Peter Park, popularized the term PR in both the Canadian and American Academy.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the first case study in the book uses PAR to solve the problem of the Xerox Corporation’s falling market shares and profitability (Whyte et al. 1991). Giving labor input in management’s decision-making process is discussed only to the degree that it assists in solving the problem of profitability.

which change or even question existing hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, as I will discuss below, even when research is conducted with the aims of change or empowerment, practitioners and the communities with which they conduct research still have real-world constraints that can limit the realization of these goals.

### Locating Our Epistemology

Our project drew on the work of Cameron and Gibson (2005), who bring the insights of feminism and post-structuralism together to posit a different PAR model. See Table 2.1 for an overview:<sup>5</sup>

	PAR	PAR in conversation with post-structuralism
<b>Identity &amp; Subjectivity</b>	The subject has a pre-existing identity, repressed or alienated by social structures.	There is no pre-existing identity. Rather, subjects are always in the process of becoming, shaped in multiple ways by a variety of discourse and practices
<b>Language &amp; Representation</b>	Local representation as authentic and transformative.	Local as fragmented, with multiple competing representations. Actively choosing to foreground representations for their political effects.
<b>Politics</b>	Discontent and anger are used for consciousness raising for collective action.	Developing a receptivity to a politics of becoming allowing for the emergence of new subjectivities. Micro-politics of self-transformation as part of macro change.

**Table 2.1: PAR with a Post-Structuralist Twist**

Cameron and Gibson (2005) start from the understanding that the subject, constituted by discourses and practices, is fluid. Thus, unlike PAR based in “modernist” understandings of the individual, there is no pre-existing identity, repressed by social structures to

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<sup>4</sup> Writing in 1991, Rahman and Fals-Borda expressed uneasiness about the cooptation of PAR, a concern which has come to fruition as participatory methods have become commonplace within development agencies such as the World Bank (World Bank 2005), arguably placing only a democratic veneer on the same top-down practices that Freirean methods were developed to challenge (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

<sup>5</sup> I created this table based on my understanding of the argument presented in Cameron and Gibson (2005).

uncover (de Roux 1991; Park 1993). Rather, the discourses and practices comprising the self become a site of politics as researchers disrupt disempowering discourses aiming to create the potential for new subjectivities to emerge.

Second, feminists have long critiqued the androcentric use of “community” within PAR projects, arguing that “local” perspectives vary by one’s social location within the community. As such, working with communities without recognizing existing social stratification runs the risk of only engaging with the views and experiences of those with power in the community, reinforcing social hierarchies (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Maguire 1987; Watson 2006). Cameron and Gibson (2005) leverage this insight to explore the multiple narratives that exist in any given location, “promoting” narratives that have the potential to lead to the emergence of new subjectivities.

Finally, this exploration occurs concurrently with cultivating a receptiveness to change through micro-political acts, “such as tapping into positive affective and emotion registers ... [and] harnessing the creativity of ... everyday events that might inspire a willingness to explore different ways of being in the world” (Cameron and Gibson 2005:320). In short, researchers using this model aim to disrupt disempowering discourses while conducting research to uncover the existing heterogeneity of values and practices within the community. This is paired with a commitment to cultivating receptiveness to change, increasing the likelihood that disrupting one way of thinking, while highlighting others, could lead to new ways of being.

Cameron and Gibson (2005) and the Community Economies Collective (2001), apply this insight to the question of economic change, aiming to create shifts in economic subjectivity through the use of discursive disruption paired with peer interviewing.

Specifically, Cameron and Gibson (2005) make two discursive shifts to expand the conceivable horizon of economic possibility in communities, like Franklin County, that are struggling with economic decline. First, they foreground economic heterogeneity, increasing the range of activity considered “economic,” arguing that an exclusive focus on market-based activity renders other forms of economic activity invisible and/or considered politically unviable (Gibson-Graham 2006).<sup>6</sup> Second, they foreground community assets, arguing that an over-reliance on needs-based assessment and expert knowledge among community development agencies (Kretzman and McKnight 1993) creates dependent economic subjectivities. Residents are seen as “dependent, and lacking in the ability to formulate solutions” (Cameron and Gibson 2005:324), making community-based development strategies unthinkable.

The focus on assets is not to the exclusion of need but rather to highlight that existing *community* assets might be used to address existing needs.<sup>7</sup> The aim of these discursive shifts or disruptions is to facilitate a “rethinking” of the economy, creating an opening for economically-marginalized community members to shift their economic

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<sup>6</sup>Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003) and Gibson-Graham (1996) extend feminist economists’ attention to non-paid labor, arguing that economic activity—that activity that supports individuals and communities—is much more than just paid and unpaid labor within a capitalist market economy. It is *all* forms of labor, exchange, and transactions.

<sup>7</sup> Understanding assets from a diverse economies perspective means that “assets” are not limited by traditional economic metrics such as wages or existing capital. Rather, the full range of activities used by individuals and communities to support themselves are considered assets. For example, gifting garden produce, participating in a time-bank, sharing studio space, and the prevalence of a social justice ethic that shapes how individuals or groups participate in the economy, are all considered community assets from a diverse economies perspective.

subjectivity—to see themselves differently in relationship to their economic subject position.

As applied to our research context, we explicitly aimed to intervene in the prevailing needs-based discourse in Franklin County in order to create openings for the emergence of new economic subjectivities. We also aimed to catalogue the diverse range of economic activities and values that sustain and motivate regional artists and artisans in order to provide a regionally-specific alternative to the creative cities discourse and related development practices. Bringing these goals together, it was our hope that participation in the research, either as a member of the research team or as an interviewee, could engender an alternative discourse and set of practices around which to develop Franklin County's creative economy, while leaving participating artists and artisans feeling empowered to do so. We were thus, in the broadest sense, designing a project with the dual mandate of “knowledge production” and “transformation,” intending the research process itself to engender the latter.

### **Community Participation and the Roles of the Academic Researchers**

With the aims of empowerment, knowledge production, and social change, PAR creates different standards by which to design research projects than those organized around data collection alone. First and foremost, the research process is conceptualized as a site of empowerment as well as knowledge production. Recognizing experiential knowledge honors the pre-existing knowledge that community participants bring to the research process *and* the capacity for all participants to learn and grow through the interactional experience of conducting research (Fahmi 2007). New knowledges are

produced through the dialogue between experiential and academic knowledges (Freire 1970). Through this interaction, all participants have the capacity to learn and change.

PAR projects are thus planned with the aim of maximizing the participation of community researchers to amplify the potential for change, to ensure ownership, and to break down the hierarchy between the academic and community researchers. Together these aims create a strong ideal for how this research should be conducted. Ideally, it is the community itself who proposes the project, with the academic researcher acting as a co-learner and facilitator. Community researchers then participate democratically in every step of the process: the creation of the research question, choosing the method, collecting and analyzing data, and the creation and management of any resulting action projects (Fals-Borda 1991; Park 1993). Fahmi (2007:37), however, calls on PAR practitioners to “demystify” these ideals or “promises of PAR,” which are often “measured only in terms of attainment or non-attainment, without due attention to the process that culminated in their realization or non-realization.” By emphasizing how the ideals *guide* the research process, he argues for open discussion of the real-world obstacles to their attainment: community groups rarely independently embark on research; there are significant barriers to democratic participation in every step of the process; and community leadership is cultivated, not inherent.

Park (1993) warns academics against getting swept up by “democratic idealism,” expecting marginalized populations to spontaneously self-organize. While self-organization does and can happen, there are significant challenges given the material and psychological conditions of oppression. The harsh material reality of poverty is such that community researchers often do not have the time or the resources to self-organize

(Fahmi 2007; Park 1993; Stoecker 1999) or to fully participate once a project is started (Maguire 1993).<sup>8</sup> Poverty and social oppression also lead to psychological effects such as a survivalist orientation to daily life (Fahmi 2007), and internalized oppression (Freire 1970; Rahman 1991), which can act as barriers to full, egalitarian participation.

Relatedly, when planning and conducting PAR, academics need to take into account the structural differences between themselves and their community collaborators (Cooke and Kothari 2001). If academic researchers have not taken into consideration the psychological elements of the structural difference between themselves and the community with which they are working, internalized oppression can lead community researchers to remain subordinate in the process while internalized superiority can lead the academic researchers to remain dominant (Freire 1970; Rahman 1991).<sup>9</sup> Given these material and psychological effects of poverty and oppression, leadership among community researchers is often slowly cultivated over time, requiring a transition of skills, knowledge (Fahmi 2007), and often a shift in subjectivity (Cameron and Gibson 2005).

Additionally, PAR projects carried out by academics are shaped by the institutional constraints placed on the academic: meeting funder expectations and deadlines, the need to publish and/or defend, obtaining ethics approval, and available

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<sup>8</sup> McGuire (1993) explains that transportation and childcare were a significant challenge to participation, as was the need of participants to work several jobs.

<sup>9</sup> The internalization of superiority is not simply the belief that one is superior based on one's race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. It is also about a masked belief based in cultural superiority. This form of internalized superiority can lead to a "well-intentioned" reification of hierarchy as the socially privileged seek to educate marginalized groups on how to make the "right choices." For a more in-depth discussion of how this specifically functions in relationship to race in the United States see Bonilla-Silva (2003).

time to spend working with a community (Stoecker 1999).<sup>10</sup> All of which is balanced between the collaborative ideals of PAR and academic merit systems that value publication-based, individualist output (Fahmi 2007; Hall 1992; Stoecker and Bonacich 1992). Harking back to feminist critiques of the “add women and stir” approach to studying gender, researchers cannot simply “add participation and stir.” Rather, PAR projects are most likely to succeed when designed around the particularities of the community in which the research will be conducted, paying attention to the real world constraints of the community and academic participants.

Our project was commissioned by a regional arts non-profit, the Fostering Art and Culture Project (FACP). They wanted a PAR project with artists to collect information about the region’s existing creativity-based assets. Aside from this original mandate from the FACP, there was nothing community based about the research design process. As discussed in Chapter 1, to expand the scope of the project, Leo and I applied for an additional grant from the President of the University of Massachusetts’s Creative Economy Fund. To meet the application deadline for the grant, we needed to quickly produce a research design and timeline, meaning that we did so independent of community input. We found ourselves in a similar situation in relationship to gaining institutional ethical approval to conduct the research. Fleshing out the details of the research design and producing an interview schedule was a required part of gaining approval, and we did not have time to solicit community input into this process while also

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<sup>10</sup> For these reasons, some PAR participants choose to leave academia altogether so that their projects are beholden only to the communities with which the project is conducted (Fahmi 2007; Rahman and Fals-Borda 1991).

obtaining approval in time to begin the project by the start date promised to the FACP and our funder. Thus, Leo and I designed all aspects of the research: the research structure, the interview questions, the design and implementation of the researcher training, the initial project timeline. We determined the organization of the researcher check in and the collaborative analysis, and worked closely with staff at GCC and UMass to administer the grant funds.<sup>11</sup>

Given that the community researchers would be participating in a pre-designed project rather than crafting it themselves, we focused on insuring the quality of their participation in a number of ways. First, we turned to feminist methodologies, designing and conducting the research utilizing what Harding (2004:55) calls strong objectivity where “the subject of knowledge [is] placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge,” requiring “strong reflexivity.” We took this reflexive approach informed by Collins’ (1990) understanding of the ways in which standpoint is shaped by our positions within a “matrix of domination.” Thus, in every aspect of research design and implementation we considered the role of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, etc., in shaping our standpoints and those of our fellow team members.

Our ability to reflect on the way our various social locations shaped our thinking was heightened by the fact that we came from different locations. Leo is a first-generation Korean-American man from Boston, a parent, Associate Dean of Humanities

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<sup>11</sup> A heartfelt THANK YOU to Regina Curtis at GCC, and Nicole Pietraszkiewicz at UMass, who figured out how to split the administration of the funding between the two institutions, figured out the logistics of how to pay the community researchers, and then administered the funds. And to Jan Ross at GCC who made sure that we got all the proper employment paperwork needed to pay the researchers and, as Leo’s Personal Assistant at GCC, answered calls, took messages, scheduled rooms for our events, etc.

at Greenfield Community College, a Ph.D. student in geography, and ten years my senior. I am a white woman from rural Missouri, with no children, a Ph.D. student in sociology, who is a part-time instructor for the University of Massachusetts. As I discuss in more depth below, our goal was to maximize diversity within the research team and, inspired by Sato (2004) and Cameron and Gibson (2001), we incorporated discussions of positionality and non-binary thinking into the researcher training to open a space for a variety of perspectives based on the different social locations of all participants—academic researchers, artist researchers, and interviewees alike.<sup>12</sup>

We also aimed to minimize the hierarchy within the project between academic and community researchers in a number of ways while also recognizing our different structural locations. First, we paid members of the research team. Paying members of the research team placed equal monetary values on the work of the academic and community researchers while directing grant money straight to regional artists and artisans, supporting the regional economy (McGuffey 2013).<sup>13</sup> As I discuss throughout the dissertation, artists and artisans living in the Greater Franklin County tend to live on limited incomes thus, the project generated *modest* economic activity for a population living on the economic margins. Second, following the lead of researchers before us (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Community Economies Collective 2001; Graham and

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<sup>12</sup> We also found Reid and Frisby's (2008) work very useful for actualizing the feminist values of reflexivity and honoring multiple perspectives within the process of conducting research.

<sup>13</sup> Researchers were paid \$500.00 each. This was \$20 per hour for the 8 hours of training, conducting 5 one-hour interviews, and participating in the check-in and collaborative analysis. I was paid the same hourly rate of \$20 per hour as a project-coordinator. With 22 researchers, this meant \$11,000.00 went directly to regional artist and artisans.

Cornwell 2008), all participants in the study were given the option of being named.<sup>14</sup> For some participants this was the first time they had the chance to tell their personal stories and they were proud to be named, and for others being named generated another point of name recognition in the county's arts community.

Finally, we used a flat organizational structure in implementation of the research conducted from an asset-based stance.<sup>15</sup> While academic and artist researchers did play different roles, in every step of the research implementation artist researchers and academic researchers were treated as equally capable of contributing to the form that data collection took, were treated as equally worthy of respect, and we operated from the assumption that all members of the team were the experts in their own lives. We were co-learners. Additionally, while the researchers did not suffer the extreme conditions of social oppression and poverty such as homelessness, lack of formal education, fear for their physical safety, etc. which leads to the internalized oppression discussed in the PAR literature, many struggled significantly financially, and the needs-based discourse is the dominant economic discourse for the region. Thus, while not as extreme as in other PAR

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<sup>14</sup>Anonymity plays a vital function in social research, providing participants and/or informants with the freedom to share information that they might not otherwise divulge. However, there are limits to anonymity even when it is promised by researchers (Whyte 1996) and in some cases being named might be preferable. While interviewees were given the choice to be named or remain anonymous, given the high visibility of the members of the research team, we could not promise anonymity in this role. However, in writing and presentation, I mask researcher identity when discussing sensitive information.

<sup>15</sup> Through facilitating this project I came to understand that cultivating egalitarian relationships does *not* mean lack of structure. In fact, it requires a very clearly delineated structure for communicating and participating such that all members of the decision-making body have equal chance and ability to participate. And, it does not preclude specialization; while we are all equally capable adults, we have different areas of expertise and different types of responsibilities vis-à-vis the project.

studies, a shift in subjectivity was still required. Interacting with one another as equals from an asset-based stance became a primary tool for addressing the disempowering effects of economic need coupled with needs-based discourse. We therefore aimed to engender a shift in economic subjectivity away from dependency through the very way in which we interacted with one another as members of the research team.

### **Navigating the Institutional Review Board**

Conducting a project that stretched the bounds of conventional social research, we were concerned that we might have trouble gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)—the University entity charged with upholding ethical treatment of human subjects. While we did have to revise our original submission, rather than act as a brake on progress or on our creativity, the IRB process greatly assisted our research design on three fronts. First, the primary tenets of the IRB—data management and access, participant rights and confidentiality, and thinking through potential harms—provided the baseline questions around which I corresponded with fellow PAR practitioners, strengthening my academic community. Second, thinking through the IRB tenets provided structure for “operationalizing” collaboration, requiring us to outline the baseline practices for collaborating. Finally, the IRB tenets provided common ethics around which we could build a set of research practices as a research team.

Academic community was crucial to navigating the IRB. While we drew heavily on existing literature for other parts of the research design, with no standard procedure for conducting PAR, I consulted with other PAR practitioners to create the concrete practices and organizational structure required to meet the standards of the IRB. PAR practitioners were *very* giving of their time, knowledge, and resources, and I received

input from academics in Anthropology, Geography, and from a former community researcher.<sup>16</sup> While the practitioners I contacted were all connected through a shared mentor—Julie Graham—I also believe that the PAR propensity toward collaboration lead PAR practitioners to “pay it forward” in terms of providing support.

In addition to allowing for the further development of academic community, the IRB process required us to think very concretely about the details of collaborative research, moving collaboration from an “ideal” to a set of practices that we would enact. For example, the IRB requires applicants to clearly delineate their protocol for data management. In order to answer the question of how we would protect data, we had to first determine who would have access to the data—a question that does not often emerge in non-collaborative projects. It was through applying for the IRB that we decided to make the interview transcripts available to all members of the research team; it was data collected by us all. After making this decision we then had to build the structure around which this kind of secure data sharing would be possible.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Specifically, this research design—with both community-based researchers and interviewees—required two versions of the Informed Consent forms. Julie Hemment used an analogous design in her research (Hemment 2007) and her consent forms provided the model for ours. Steven Healy also gave generously of his time, meeting with me to discuss the research design and outcomes of the Pioneer Valley PAR study on which he was an academic researcher (Community Economies 2001). Finally, Anasuya Weil, a community researcher on the same project as Healy, provided me with the researcher packet used during interviews, serving as the model for our packets.

<sup>17</sup> We created a public website for the project on which we planned to have a “members only” section where members of the research team could access the transcripts, which were to be posted without identifiers. Researchers initially expressed interest in access to the data; Rochleigh was interested in drawing on the data in applications for grants for women artists and was interested in drawing on the data in order to talk to kids to counter the prevailing cultural trope that art is not a viable career. However, by the time it became apparent that the transcripts would take much longer than we thought, the majority of the researchers said they would not actually use the transcripts. Thus, we did not create the

Lastly, the IRB tenets provided the foundational ethics around which we could build a set of research practices as a research team.<sup>18</sup> For example, the IRB requires the researcher to name potential risks of participation in the study so that interviewees can make an informed decision about whether they would like to participate. The only risk of participation that we could foresee was having a participant's name attached to underground economic activity. At the team check-in, which occurred after conducting the first round of interviews, we discovered that underground and unreported economic activity was very common, and that it often came to light during very generative parts of the interviews.

Through a discussion of what the interviewers had done when this occurred, we developed a set of research practices as a team that allowed the interviewee to talk about their underground economic activity while keeping this activity anonymous even if the participant elected to be named in the study.<sup>19</sup> Here the IRB ethics of informed consent and confidentiality became the focus around which we fleshed out concrete practices as a

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secure page and left it open for members of the research team to contact us for transcripts.

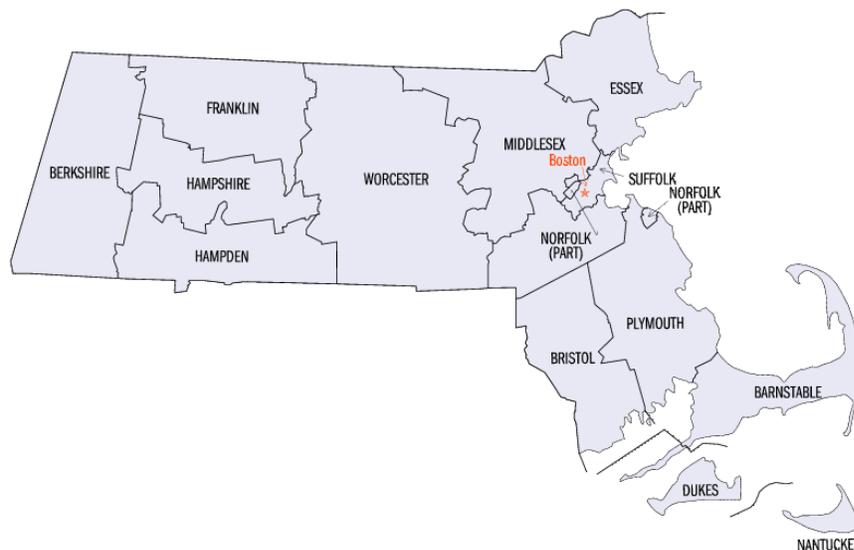
<sup>18</sup> In order to be approved by the IRB, all members of any research team are normally required to complete online ethics training through the university. The IRB panel originally requested that we have all members of our research team complete this training. However, the IRB panel, realizing how costly it would be to the university to train 22 individuals who were unaffiliated with UMass, later requested that Leo and I train the community researchers in the basics of privacy and confidentiality. Each member of the team then signed forms "certifying" that they had been trained. So while we learned from the IRB, they also learned from us.

<sup>19</sup> We settled on the following protocol: give the interviewee the opportunity, up front, to declare anything "off the record." When off the record, the interviewer would turn off the recorder and take notes by hand. Any data collected off the record would only be presented in the aggregate, and always without identifiers.

team. And it was this creation of practices—together—that helped enact a flat organizational structure.

### Recruiting Artist and Artisan Researchers

Franklin County is in northern Massachusetts, bordered to the north by Vermont and New Hampshire, to the west by the Berkshires, to the east by Worcester County. It is also considered part of the Pioneer Valley, along with Hampshire and Hampden Counties to the south (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: Map of Massachusetts Counties<sup>20</sup>**

While it is easy to point to a county on a map, defining *economic* regions is difficult. People, capital, and goods and services transcend politically-designated borders, particularly in the creative economy where artists travel to perform, show, and/or sell their work. The Artisans of Western Massachusetts is a non-profit amalgamation of

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<sup>20</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved on 7/14/15 at: [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/massachusetts\\_map.html](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/massachusetts_map.html)

regional artisans who aim to support “creative culture” and encourage “regional sustainability” through promoting the purchase of local, handmade goods. They define the region to include the “creative-rich” counties of Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties and the North Quabbin Region, which spans Franklin and Worcester Counties. The Northampton-based non-profits, Valley Art Share and C<sup>3</sup>, designate Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties as a “corridor of creativity,” mapping all the local arts resources in the Connecticut River Valley. Finally, the FACP uses the term the Greater Franklin County to denote that even as a county-specific organization they recognize the fluidity of the creative economy.

Since the FACP commissioned our project, we used the term “Greater Franklin County” to describe and demarcate the bounds of our study. In practice, this meant that while we drew researchers and interviewees from the surrounding area, Franklin County was the hub of our study. We heavily recruited members of the research team from Franklin County, advertising in the *Greenfield Recorder*, the paper in Franklin County with the largest circulation, and on the listserv for the FACP. Facebook was the primary venue through which those living outside the county learned about the project.

Additionally, all of our recruitment events, trainings, and project team meetings happened in Greenfield, the county seat.

We had three primary aims when hiring artists/artisans as researchers. First, as previously mentioned, we wanted to include the widest range of community members possible. Since social marginalization operates, in part, through making invisible the experiences and values of non-dominant groups, we selected *for* artists and artisans from socially-marginalized groups. Who we were demographically, as a research team, would

shape the perspectives that we brought to the collaboration, the variety of peer networks that we would access as a team, and it would shape how community members and interviewees would interact with us as individuals and as a collective. We thus aimed to maximize diversity on the team in order to maximize the diversity of perspectives we would hear through the interviews.

Second, we aimed to maximize heterogeneity of art/craft form, explicitly including artists *and* artisans to counteract the hierarchy between the two. Similarly, we did not limit participation to individuals who earn the majority of their income as artists and artisans. Limiting participation in this way tends to disproportionately exclude women who, as a group, are more likely than their male counterparts to be balancing their creative endeavors with caregiver responsibilities and paid employment.

Finally, we aimed to hire individuals who were open to and/or excited about “rethinking the creative economy” in Franklin County by both exploring the full range of economic activity in the region and, more importantly, by shifting from a needs-based to assets-based approach. In order to think differently, we needed a team willing to do so.

We started recruiting artists and artisans for the project in August 2010 by advertising in regional media outlets and through holding informational sessions throughout the county.<sup>21</sup> In total, we received inquiries from forty artists and artisans.

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<sup>21</sup> We presented to community leaders: to the Board of Directors of the Franklin Community Coop in Shelburne Falls and at a faculty orientation at GCC in Greenfield. We organized information sessions for all interested interviewees in Greenfield. After the interviewees had been hired, we presented at a FACP event in Deerfield to recruit interviewees. We placed advertisements in the *Greenfield Recorder*, the newspaper with the widest circulation in Franklin County, the Fostering Art and Culture Project’s E-bulletin, Facebook, Craigslist, and email list-serves.

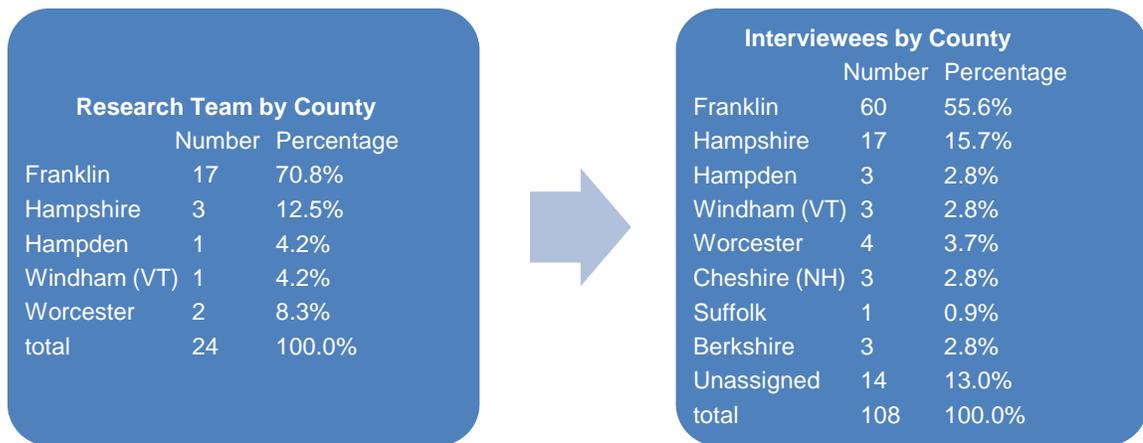
Based on the criteria above, we narrowed this number down to a team of twenty-four—twenty-two artist researchers and Leo and me as the academic researchers.<sup>22</sup> For the most part, the researchers were meeting for the first time through participation in the project. However, we had three married couples on the team, meaning both partners were on the team. I had a weak tie (Granovetter 1985) with two members, and given Leo’s visibility and activity in the arts community he had weak ties with five members. Three of the team members—one of the married couples and another member—were already friends.

Researchers decided for themselves who they considered part of this region’s creative economy, which lead to a lively discussion of who to interview. For example, what makes someone a regional artist or artisan: working here, living here, or both? This is a pertinent question. Many artists and artisans who live in the region primarily sell outside the region, while there are performing artists who live outside the region but primarily perform in the region, and many artists and artisans collaborate cross-regionally. Balancing between the unbounded nature of artistic activity and the bounded nature of social research, we decided as a group that the researchers should follow their ties and interests within the bounds of New England states. Some chose to primarily interview artists or artisans within their network, deepening existing ties, while others used the interviews as an opportunity to enlarge their peer network, interviewing artists and artisans outside their existing network.

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<sup>22</sup> Team members were chosen based on their fit with the aim of the project. We originally planned to hire twenty artist researchers; however, after receiving significant interest, we rearranged our budget to hire twenty-five. Three were ultimately not able to participate because their work schedules conflicted with the mandatory training, leaving us with twenty-two. Directly after the training one researcher had to leave because of a death in the family, bringing the number to twenty-one.

As table 2.2 demonstrates, 17 of the 24 researchers, (70.8% of the team) lived in Franklin County; 3 (12.5%) lived in Hampshire County, located south of Franklin County; 1 researcher (4.2%) lived in Hampden County (also to the south); 2 (8.7%) lived in Worcester County, located directly to the east; and 1 (4.2%) researcher lived in Windham County, Vermont, directly north of Franklin County.



**Table 2.2: Participants' County of Residence<sup>23</sup>**

This team of researchers interviewed artists and artisans from a wider geographic spread than their own, reflecting the range of their professional ties beyond their county of residence. Interviews were concentrated in Franklin County with 60 of the 108 (55.6%) interviewees residing there. Hampshire County represents the next largest portion of the sample, home to 17 (15.7%) of the interviewees, followed by Worcester, home to 4 (3.7%); and Hampden and Windham counties, each home to 3 (2.8%) of the interviewees. Extending beyond the researchers' counties of residence, interviews were conducted with 3 artists and artisans (2.8%) from Berkshire County, directly to the west

<sup>23</sup> All counties are in Massachusetts unless otherwise marked.

of Franklin County; with 3 artists and artisans (2.8%) from Cheshire County, New Hampshire, directly north of Worcester County; and 1 (0.9%) interviewee lived in Suffolk County, on the eastern edge of Massachusetts. Finally, 14 (13.0%) of those interviewed chose not to disclose the location of their residence. Artists who lived outside the county either worked some in Franklin County or were networked with members of the research team.

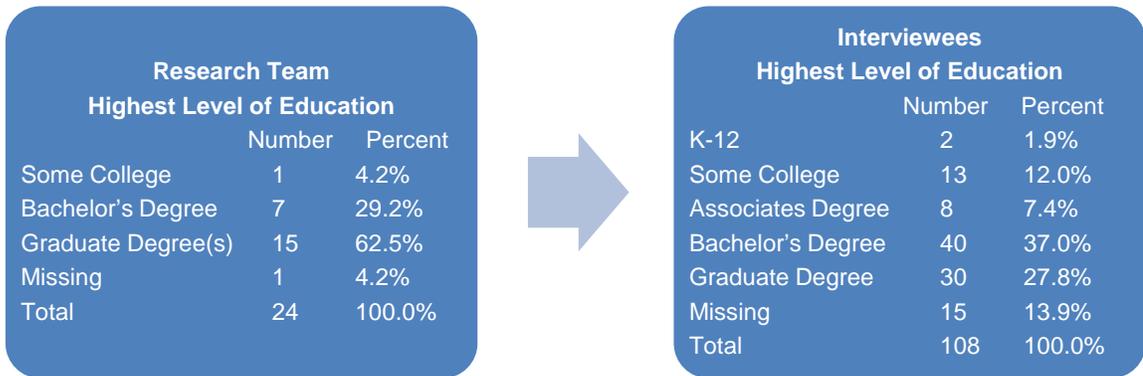
### **Participant Demographics**

The region has a high concentration of institutions of higher learning, which shapes demographic trends for the region.<sup>24</sup> Franklin County and Massachusetts as a whole have higher levels of educational attainment than the national average. In Franklin County, the U.S. Census estimated that in 2006-2008, 90.3% percent of the population twenty-five years of older had a high school degree or higher and that 31.6% had a bachelor's degree or higher (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2010:16).<sup>25</sup> As Table 2.3 illustrates, the artists and artisans who participated in the study, on a whole, reflect a higher level of education attainment than the regional average.

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<sup>24</sup> Franklin County is home to Greenfield Community College, The Hallmark School of Photography, and the Conway School of Design. The town of Amherst in Hampshire County is home to the University of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, and Amherst College, with Smith College and Mount Holyoke College nearby.

<sup>25</sup> The Census reports that in the same time period, 88.4% percent of the population twenty-five years or older living in Massachusetts had a high school degree or higher, and that 37.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher. For the United States as a whole, highest attainment was 84.5% and 27.4%, respectively (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2010: 16).

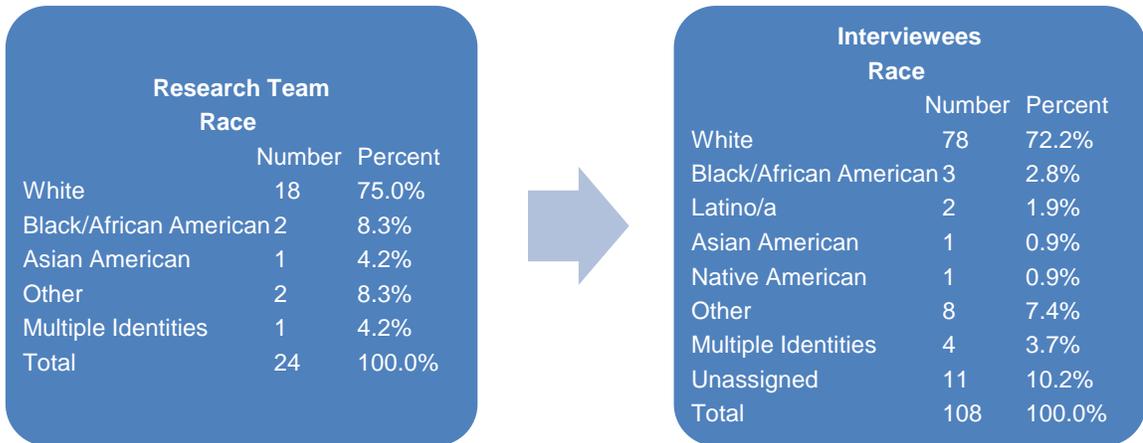


**Table 2.3: Participants' Highest Level of Education**

While the research team did interview a more diverse group than themselves, both groups are still highly educated. On the research team, 91.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher, while 64.8% of the interviewees did. This means that, while many of the study participants lack economic capital, on the whole they possess significant cultural capital. As a result, we unfortunately largely missed the stories of how artist without this cultural capital navigate the creative economy.

In terms of race and ethnicity, Franklin County and Massachusetts are considerably whiter than the nation as a whole.<sup>26</sup> The 2010 census reported that the population of Franklin County was 94.2% white, 1.1% Black, 0.3% Native American, 1.3% Asian American, with 1% reporting "other," 2.1% reporting two or more racial categories, and 3.3% reporting Hispanic origin (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:11). In our study, while the researchers did interview a more diverse group than themselves, 75.0% of the team and 72.2% of the interviewees self-reported as white.

<sup>26</sup> In the 2010 census, 80.4% of Massachusetts reported as white, while that number is 72.4% for the United States (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012: 11).



**Table 2.4: Participants’ Self-Identified Racial and Ethnic Background<sup>27</sup>**

Part of the whiteness of the population is hidden in the “other” and “multiple identities” categories, with three participants naming symbolic ethnic identities such as Irish American, or European, both of which still have the privileges of whiteness (Waters 1990). However, on the whole, the artists and artisans who participated in the study are slightly more diverse than the region.

In addition to being a largely white, educated region, the Greater Franklin County is also home to a largely aging population, with the largest single segment of the population in 2010 falling between the ages of 45-65 (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:9).

<sup>27</sup> Responses to “other:” Haitian; all; American; all of the above; tortoise and the hare mostly; French Canadian and Indian Irish; Irish American. Responses to “multiple identities:” Native American and white; Latino/a and white; Irish and white; Black or African American and white; Asian American and white.

Research Team			Interviewees		
Age Group	Number	Percent	Age Group	Number	Percent
25-44	9	37.5%	25-44	32	29.6%
45-64	12	50.0%	45-64	44	40.7%
65-74	1	4.2%	65-74	10	9.3%
Missing	2	8.3%	75 and Over	3	2.8%
Total	24	100.0%	Missing	19	17.6%
			Total	108	100.0%

**Table 2.5: Participants' Age**

This trend is also reflected in artists and artisans who participated in the project: 50.0% of the researchers and 40.7% of the interviewees are between the ages of 45 and 65. It is important that this age group and those 65-74 featured so prominently in the project. These age groups are staying active in the work force longer than in previous decades (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:10) and are often not included in the development within the creative economy, which is mostly youth-oriented (Handler 2013).

Finally, to the best of our ability, we also aimed to hear from a diverse range of artists and artisans around the axes of gender and sexuality, as we wanted to explore how these categories of difference may shape the experiences of regional artists and artisans. Because the researchers are not anonymous in this project, and deviating from the gender binary and/or deviating from heteronormativity is still stigmatized, in this section I aggregate the information, presenting statistics for participants as a whole. In terms of gender, given that the field of art has historically been male dominated, we were keen to hear the experiences of those identifying outside of this category.

All Participants		
Gender		
	Number	Percent
Male	44	33.3%
Female	75	56.8%
Multiple identities	2	1.5%
Other	2	1.5%
Missing	9	6.8%
Total	132	100.0%

**Table 2.6: Participants’ Self-Identified Gender** <sup>28</sup>

With 56.8% of participants identified as female and 33.3% of participants identified as male, four participants identified outside the gender binary: 2 identified as female and queer, one identified as two spirit, two identified as “other” without specifying what that meant to them, and 6.8 % chose not to answer.

All Participants		
Sexual Orientation		
	Number	Percent
Heterosexual	92	69.7%
Gay, Lesbian	12	9.1%
Bisexual	6	4.5%
Other	5	3.8%
Missing	17	12.9%
Total	132	100.0%

**Table 2.7: Participants’ Self-Identified Sexual Orientation**<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The question on the demographic sheet gave the following categories—male, female, queer, transgender, other—asking participants to select all that apply.

<sup>29</sup> Responses to “other:” trisexual before a monogamous marriage, queer, two spirit, mechanical/virtual.

Along the axis of sexuality, 69.7% of participants identified as heterosexual, 9.1% identified as gay or lesbian, 4.5% identified as bisexual, 3.8% identified as other, while 12.9% chose not to answer the question. The inclusion of gender-diverse individuals and individuals who leave heteronormativity behind is critical in this region. Both Franklin and Hampshire Counties are home to a more diverse population on these fronts than Massachusetts and the nation as a whole (Baumle et al. 2009). Additionally, the inclusion of a large number of women in the study helps to correct a male focus within the field of art.

Our recruitment strategy ended up creating a research team and thus interviewee pool that was more educated, on average, than the general population of the Greater Franklin County. We ended up with a highly-educated team for two reasons. First, while we did advertise in the local newspaper, we did not provide equal weight to print and digital media, increasing the likelihood that someone with Internet access and computer savvy would see the advertisement. Second, we gave recruitment presentations to groups who invited us to speak and were thus already connected to GCC leadership and/or the FACP. In hindsight, we could have increased class diversity by requesting to give recruitment presentations at a larger range of community events and by running our recruitment advertisement in the newspaper longer.

Additionally, while our team was more ethnically and racially diverse than the population, we largely missed the county's Latino population. We could have utilized Leo's connections at GCC to advertise directly to students in order to expand the age

range and increase ethnic and racial diversity of the members of the research team.<sup>30</sup>

GCC has a vibrant arts department compared to other community colleges in the state. It draws students from outside the county, leading to a student population which tends to be more racially and ethnically diverse than Franklin County.

### **Participants' Artistic Medium and Employment Status**

Any study of artists and artisans faces the challenge of how to define this population. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are no clear criteria for entry into the field of art, meaning there are no clear criteria for defining artists and artisans. As a result, any attempt to define this population has political effects. Definitions can lend more legitimacy to one type of artist over others in the contested field of cultural production, which can have symbolic and material effects (Bourdieu 1993). Definitional work is done by artists and artisans themselves, creating artistic identities to foster the view of art work as “real work” (Bain 2005) or to secure the borders of the “right way” to practice one’s craft (Bourdieu 1993). Definitional work is also done by state and private funding agencies to determine eligibility for arts-based resources (Karttunen 1998). While delimiting and defining the population of artists and artisans has real political stakes, within social science it is difficult to eschew definitions.

The most commonly used delimiter is the distinction between full-time and part-time artists, or to use the language of Jahoda et al. (2014), the distinction between “working artists” and “practicing artists.” Studies that rely on national-level data are

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<sup>30</sup> We presented at a faculty orientation at GCC with the hopes that the faculty would then share the invitation with students in their classrooms. It was a strategic move given our time constraints for recruiting but, like trickle-down economics, trickle-down information did not bear fruit.

often confined to studying only “working artists” since national-level data on “practicing artists” does not exist (for example, Jahoda et al. 2014; Markuson 2010, 2013). Other researchers limit their study to full-time artists in order to understand the challenges faced by those who make their living solely through their art/craft (for example, Baker and Faulkner 1991; Mishler 1999). Yet, this distinction can be hard to determine given the volatility of artistic professions; an artist can be full-time one year and in the next need to take on an outside job (Menger 1999). Excluding practicing artists from studies also limits the examination of the barriers that keep artists and artisans from being full-time (Lindemann 2013). Given these difficulties—the political nature of definitional work, and the slippage between working and practicing artists—the convention within studies of artists and artisans is to choose the definition best suited for the region and/or topic being studied (Karttunen 1998; Menger 1999).

Within our project, just as the artist and artisan researchers chose for themselves who they considered “regional,” they also chose who they considered to be an artist or artisan. As discussed, we, the academic researchers, did not impose a full-time/part-time distinction since we wanted to include the full range of regional artists and artisans. Creative economies are often supported through the paid and unpaid labor of both working and practicing artists (Lindemann 2013), and we were keen to understand the assets and challenges for both of these populations in the Greater Franklin County. Table 2.8 shows a breakdown of the research participants (interviewees and interviewers combined) by their economic relationship to their creative practice.

Supports Self Only With Creativity/Art		
	Number	Percent
Yes	56	44.4%
No	39	31.0%
Not Applicable	20	15.9%
Unassigned	11	8.7%
Total	126	100.0%

31

**Table 2.8: Participants’ Economic Relationship to Creative Practice**

Of the participating artists, 44.4% make their living through their art or craft.

Within this “yes” category, 10 artists, or 17.9%, had a full-time creativity-related job in addition to practicing their art/craft independently. Jobs include being full-time professors in arts or writing and working in creative industries such as graphic design or illustration. Eight artists (4.5%) held a part-time arts-related job such as managing galleries, journalism, working in a knitting store, or being an adjunct professor in arts or writing.

On the other hand, 31% of the participating artists and artisans did not support themselves solely through their creative practice. Within this “no” category, 11 (28.2%) held non-arts-related full-time jobs and 6 (15.4%) held one or more non-arts-related part-time job or a combination of arts- and non-arts-related part-time employment. Two participants (5.1%) were unemployed and 2 (5.1%) primarily supported themselves through real estate and/or renting properties.

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<sup>31</sup> While there were 132 interviews, only 126 were analyzed. In some cases the audio file was of such low quality that it could not be transcribed. In another case an artist was interviewed by two different members of the research team. I still count these as interaction points. There were 132 interactions generated in this project, 126 of which could also be analyzed as interviews.

For 15.9% of participating artists this question was not applicable: 12 (60%) of these artists/artisans were retired; 5 (25%) were full-time students; and 1 (5%) was wealthy. Finally, 2 (10%) participants, myself as one of them, did not self-identify as an artist, artisan, or creative. In these cases, the interviewer's definition of creative was more expansive than the interviewee's.<sup>32</sup>

For 8.7% of the participants, I could not determine the role of their creative practice in their economic lives. This happened in cases where the interview focused primarily on why and how an interviewee became an artist, or if the interview focused on the particulars of an artist's process or inspiration.

An important qualification, and limitation, of our research design is that these numbers do not necessarily reflect household economies. One question, "Who do you live with and how do you make ends meet?," was aimed at capturing household economies. However, as I will discuss in the following section, interviewers were given significant latitude in which questions they chose to ask. This means that this question was not asked in all interviews. Additionally, given that some interviewers had had prior relationships with the artists they were interviewing, they knew this information, so they

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<sup>32</sup> In the first case, Kim conducted her sixth interview to connect with Kenneth, 40 years her senior. He is a town elder, a dairy farmer, and beekeeper. Within the slow foods movement, which is particularly strong in western Massachusetts, beekeeping is seen as the production of artisanal foods. Thus, through the lens of the slow foods movement, Kim considered Kenneth an artist. This is a label that he does not give himself. He sees beekeeping as a form of animal husbandry. In the second case, after the formal interviewing was over, Zoe asked to interview Leo and me together. Leo self-identifies as a writer and musician, and these activities have an economic impact in his life. I have creative practices; I sing, paint, and use charcoal and pastels. While these activities are important in my life, they in no way relate to or shape my household economy.

didn't ask. Figure 2.9 provides a breakdown of how many participants live with a significant other—a partner, boyfriend/girlfriend, or spouse.

Lives with a Significant Other		
	Number	Percent
Yes	65	51.6%
No	22	17.5%
Unknown	39	31.0%
Total	126	100.0%

**Table 2.9: Participants with Shared Household Economies**

Of all participants, 51.6% live and share resources with a significant other. In many of these cases, the artist/artisan is part of a dual-career family. Sometimes the artist is the primary breadwinner and sometimes it is the partner. In households where the partner has a stable income and/or is the primary breadwinner, or in which the artist also holds a stable full-time job, there is economic stability. In cases where the artist is the primary breadwinner or in which breadwinning is shared with a partner who is either also an artist or who has an unstable income, discussions of how to make ends meet and of financial struggle were very prevalent in the interviews. Of all participants, 17.5% lived without a significant other. For the most part, these artists and artisans struggled to make ends meet, even in retirement, and particularly if they had children. Finally, in 31% of the interviews, I was not able to determine the interviewee's living situation.

Artists and artisans worked in diverse media. Figure 2.10 charts the medium for which an artist/artisan was interviewed:

Creative Medium For Which Interviewed		
	Number	Percent
Other	19	15.1%
Painter	16	12.7%
Mixed Media Visual Artist	15	12.0%
Musician	10	8.0%
Photographer	10	8.0%
Potter	10	8.0%
Singer/Songwriter	9	7.1%
Writer	7	5.6%
Performance Art	5	4.0%
Theater	4	3.2%
Poet	3	2.4%
Sculptor	3	2.4%
Unassigned/Unknown	3	2.4%
Basket Maker	2	1.6%
Illustrator	2	1.6%
Jewly Making	2	1.6%
Print Making	2	1.6%
Storyteller	2	1.6%
Weaver	2	1.6%
Total	126	100.5%

33

**Table 2.10: Participants’ Artistic Medium**

If a medium was not represented by at least two or more participants, I marked it as “other.” Figure 2.2 provides a window into what “other,” as well as some of the broader categories like “performance artists” or “mix medium visual artists,” entail.

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<sup>33</sup> The total of 100.5% is an artifact of rounding to a single decimal point, which was done to reduce clutter in the chart.



**Figure 2.2: Zooming in on the Broader Categories of Artistic Practice**

These data only represent the primary creative practice for which the artist/artisan was interviewed. However, many participants had more than one artistic practice: a writer who is also a musician; a painter who is also a quilter; a juggler who also writes and performs spoken word. Additionally, most of the artists and artisans who made their living with their art had multiple related practices: a fiddler who makes money performing, calling at contra dances, and teaching the fiddle; a rhythm bones player who also makes this instrument. For a number of the interviewees, the additional creative practices of their interviewees were discovered only through the process of interviewing. It was a pleasure to share in the interviewees' joy in these discoveries as I analyzed the data.

### **Analyzing the Research Process**

The active research process spanned eight months: three months of intensive data collection culminating in the collaborative analysis and the following five months in

which we presented findings to the community via presenting at the Creative Economy Summit II in Shelburne Falls and hosting an art show in Amherst: *Creating Multiple Realities: Phase I*. To analyze this process I draw from a myriad of primary sources: notes taken during the trainings, check-ins, and collaborative analyses, as well as transcribed audio and video from the analyses; audio field notes which were recorded after each event; email correspondence; notes from the planning meetings for the summit presentation and art show; transcribed audio field notes on these meetings; and transcribed video of the summit presentation and from the art show.<sup>34</sup>

## **Part 2: The Interviews**

### **Introducing Our Approach to Peer-Interviewing**

Above I discussed how we structured the research design to maximize the capacity of interactions among members of the research team to engender transformation. We approached the interviews from the same logic. We utilized a mix of what Roulston (2010) called “post-modern” and “transformative” approaches to interviewing. Viewing the self as fluid, we conceptualized the interview as a site for transformation for both the interviewee and the interviewer. This approach to the interview allowed us to expand the aim of the project beyond data collection; we hoped that the interactive nature of the interview would provide an opportunity to create connections among regional artists, largely isolated by the rural setting, and/or generate an empowering shift in the economic

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<sup>34</sup> Because the research team was so large we held two trainings, two check-ins, and two collaborative analyses. During each of these events one of us would take notes while the other was presenting/facilitating. Planning then facilitating each event twice was exhausting; thus, we opted for audio field notes. After each event we would reflect on the event together and we recorded these conversations.

subjectivity of participants. We were not aiming for neutral observation so much as active intervention.

The focus on creating a space for transformation within the peer interviews meant that we placed more emphasis on creating connections between interview participants than we did on collecting standardized data. We provided researchers with an interview schedule; however, researchers were encouraged to follow the stories that were of most interest to them, even if that meant deviating from or leaving behind the interview schedule.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, researchers were free to conduct their interviews using the interview form with which they were most comfortable or that seemed to best fit the situation.

These methodological decisions created very heterogeneous data—meaning there was not uniformity in the interviewing techniques used or in the questions asked. As can be seen in my discussion of who participated in the study, this created drawbacks. Lack of uniformity meant that household economies were difficult to trace. There were also three interviews in which the interviewees' artistic medium could not be determined. Here the familiarity of the interview participants left this most basic piece of information hidden. This posed a further methodological question for me: how to navigate my sociological analysis of data that was principally shaped by activist aims.

My starting point was to review the literature on peer interviews. How had other researchers resolved this tension? I discovered that academic conversation about how to conduct peer interviews, including navigating tensions between academics and

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<sup>35</sup> Please see the Appendix for the interview schedule and other materials utilized by the peer-interviewers.

community researchers, was very mature. However, discussions of how to analyze the data produced by this method are nascent. Thus, in the dissertation I analyzed the peer interviews from a constructionist perspective to draw on the interaction between participants as a strength of the data. I found that the interview form shaped the type of knowledge produced; the more conversational an interview was, the more the narrative production resembles that of a focus group. Thus, mirroring discussions in the focus group literature, I argue that analytical strategies that incorporate analysis of both the interview content and the interaction between the interview participants can deepen understanding of the unique data created in peer interviews.

Peer interviews create unique data for a variety of reasons, and in my analysis I focused on the roles performed by the participants. Garton and Copland (2010) found that interview participants evoke existing frames of interaction, for example, evoking the role of colleagues, *within* the interview frame. The additional role, or framing, based in the existing relationship between interview participants adds a new dimension to the interview. Interview participants “shift footing,” moving between the roles ascribed by the interview and the roles ascribed by their pre-existing relationship.

Peer-interview participants thus have more socially acceptable forms of interaction available to them than simply interacting from the framework of interviewee and interviewer, making the interaction between the participants a source of novel data. Because the participants are from the same lifeworld, analyzing their interaction not only provides insight into the processes of talk, which are often a focus of interactional analyses, but also provide insight into the topic and content of the interaction.

I analyzed each interview as a case to focus on the local interaction within the interview itself. My analysis specifically looked to the moments in which interview participants shifted roles, arguing that these shifts create distinct forms of data. Influenced by conversational analysis, in addition to analyzing the content of the text, I also paid attention to tonality, pauses, laughter, and other non-verbal cues. To maximize readability while representing the non-linguistic actions important to analysis, I have modified the GAT 2 transcription convention for the minimal transcript (Selting and Auer 2011). The following codification is used:

(( ... ))	Omission in transcript
(. )	Micro pause, estimated up to 0.2 seconds duration
( - )	Short estimated pause of approximately 0.2-0.5 seconds duration
[ ]	Overlapping and simultaneous talk
[ ]	
°h / h°	In-/outbreaths of approximately 0.2-0.5 seconds duration
((laughs))	Description of laughter
<<laughing>>	Laughter/crying/tone of voice/sounds accompanying speech
<<crying>>	with indication of scope
<<excitedly>>	
<< : - ) >>	Smile voice with indication of scope

I found that interviewers tended to use three interview forms: eliciting unstructured story telling; a semi-structured, journalistic interview; or a conversational form. Most interviews were semi-structured, some were conversational, and fewer elicited unstructured storytelling. In the first two forms, the interviewer took on the role of a “professional listener” (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004:13) often “doing neutrality”

(Rapley 2001).<sup>36</sup> In these forms, the interviewees did most of the talking, with interviewers interjecting only with clarifying questions or an occasional opinion. In the third form, the interviewer approached the interview as a conversation inspired by the interview schedule. Here, the audio was filled with the experiences and opinions of both interview participants. Thus, the interview forms differ in the degree of interactivity between interview participants. That is, that the forms have differing degrees of dialogue density. The degree to which the interviewer is present as a speaker shapes the type of knowledge produced.

Analyzing the dense interactional moments between the interviewer and interviewee strengthened my analysis of the interview data on two fronts. First, because both the interviewee and interviewer are from the same lifeworld being studied, examining the interaction between participants within peer interviews provided substantively relevant content for the study.

For example, Al, a woodworker, took an active approach to interviewing. He asked questions of his own design, combining the aims of the project and his personal interests. Excerpt 1 is taken from the end of an interview with his long-time friend and mosaic artist, Cynthia. Both are white and in their early fifties. Deep in conversation, the roles of interviewer and interviewee temporarily reversed, as Al responded to Cynthia's questions about the success of an annual town-wide arts event that Al helped organize:

Excerpt 1:

01 Al: When the subject comes up about how to promote ourselves, there is

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<sup>36</sup> We did not teach passive interviewing in the training. However, living in what Atkinson and Silverman (1997) call "the interview society," most interview participants were familiar with this form of interviewing as a way of talking about the self. Thus, it is no surprise that many interviewers utilized this form to some degree.

02           always a tension between upsetting what already exists, and people feeling  
03           protective of what they have. And, uh, that is a very hard thing to resolve.  
04           Even, one of the goals of this project is to sort of describe how people are  
05           making it, and, to a certain extent I feel like, well, that is proprietary  
06           information. And really ( . ) there is no such thing as a blueprint to a  
07           creative [lifestyle] because then it wouldn't be a creative lifestyle.

08   Cynthia:       [do you think]

09   Cynthia: Yeah ( . ) But do you feel proprietary more in terms of people who do  
10           what you do or with anybody? Because, I mean, it is true that if someone  
11           goes to X printmaking shop before they come to X mosaic shop you're  
12           not going to make any money because they have already spent it. But, I  
13           mean, we know that ( . ) That is reality.

14   Al:    No. Right, I think actually the reality is that the impulse towards feeling  
15           proprietary is both destructive and delusional.

16   Cynthia: Yeah.

17   Al:    And that what actually makes things work is not simply replicable by  
18           having the information at hand.

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Cynthia's question evoked a response about the tension between working together and individuals "feeling protective of what they have" (lines 01-03). This reflection on the protectiveness of other artists led Al to then note feeling "proprietary" himself (lines 04-07). Cynthia's clarifying question in lines 08-13 resulted in Al articulating what he sees as the "destructive" and "delusional" nature of proprietary thinking (lines 14-15): delusional in that a creative lifestyle is not something that can be formulaically reproduced, and destructive in that it can act as a barrier to organizing artists. This interaction was substantively rich for the research project. It brought to light complexities around organizing artists that did not emerge in the interviews based exclusively on the

interview schedule. This type of substantive contribution was key in the analyses presented in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Analyzing the interaction in the peer interviews also provided an avenue through which to assess the transformative aims of our project. This is demonstrated in the exchange between Helen and Sarah.<sup>37</sup> Helen, a potter in her early sixties, is interviewing Sarah, a photographer thirty years her junior. We meet both white women at the end of the interview, which had followed a semi-structured interview style until this point:

Excerpt 3:

- 01 Helen: Is there anything else that you want to let me know about?  
02 Sarah: °h / h° ( . ) I would just say that, I'll probably, I'm sure, as I'm driving  
03 <<laughing>home> ] be thinking about what I said,  
04 Helen: [((laughs))]  
05 Sarah: and [ << :- ) > wishing > ]there were things that [I could retract.]  
06 Helen: [((laughs))] [((laughs))]  
07 Sarah: And just to reiterate that I feel like I'm at a, sort of like, point in my life,  
08 in my work, and in working, where I'm really trying to sort things out,  
09 and make decisions. Um. So, sorry if I didn't sound very clear [((short  
10 laugh))].  
11 Helen: [No. No.] You've done really well.  
12 Sarah: <<shy laughing> Ok>  
13 Helen: This was really great, and we all have points in our lives that are not as  
14 clear as others. But I think you have articulated extremely well where  
15 you are at and why you are there.  
16 Sarah: <<whispering>Yeah>  
17 Helen: And who knows where life is going to take you.  
18 Sarah: <<whispering>Yeah>

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<sup>37</sup> Given the sensitive nature of this exchange, Helen and Sarah are pseudonyms.

- 19 Helen: It is going to be very interesting.  
20 Sarah: <<soft crying> Yeah>  
21 Helen: So, I'm just going to put a pause on this ((pauses the audio recording))

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Lines 02, 03, and 05 present glimmers of what could be Sarah's self-doubt. However, her laughter put that potential doubt in a humorous light, and Helen thus responded with laughter of her own (lines 04 and 06). However, in lines 07-09, the depth of Sarah's uncertainty comes through; she is questioning all aspects of her life and her laughter is clipped. In response, Helen immediately shifted footing from her role as interviewer to perform the role of mentor (lines 10-11); she assumed a supportive tone accompanied by reassuring words. Lines 13-20 volley between Helen's continued words of support and Sarah's increasing emotional receptivity. Finally, in line 21, Helen abandoned the role of interviewer completely, turning off the audio recorder for Sarah's privacy.

This interaction could be considered a moment of "interference" (Müller and Kenney 2014), where the dialogical aspect of the interview unexpectedly interferes with disempowering discourses and/or subjectivities. In this case, Helen interfered with Sarah's self-doubt, providing emotional support that was both comforting in the moment and had the potential to have longer-term effects on Sarah's conception of self. In this example, analyzing the interaction between the interview participants provided a window into the transformative moments in the project. Moments like this were key in the analyses presented in Chapter 6.

In this chapter I presented the specifics of our research design, including an extended discussion of PAR, peer interviews, and the guiding principles around which we

designed the project. My analysis of the peer-interview data is presented throughout Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 6 analyzes the ethnographic data collected throughout the research process, supplemented with some of the transformative moments within the peer interviews. In Chapter 6 I also assess some of our methodological decisions and highlight which facilitated change and which hindered change.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE GREATER FRANKLIN COUNTY

*[W]e have a place in Western Massachusetts, where the balance of human population to natural environment is absolutely beautiful. There's a lot of natural environment but there's enough concentration of human beings to create and maintain interesting culture. Because of the concentration of colleges and educational institutions ... there is an intellectual interest that allows artistic reflection to thrive ... you can do work that is somewhat challenging and still find an audience. You can have all the beauty of hills and trees and rivers and all of that and still carry on a cultural discourse with other human beings. There's a lot that's really beautiful about that.*

*-Court Dorsey, Playwright and Musician, interviewed by Woodworker Al Ladd*

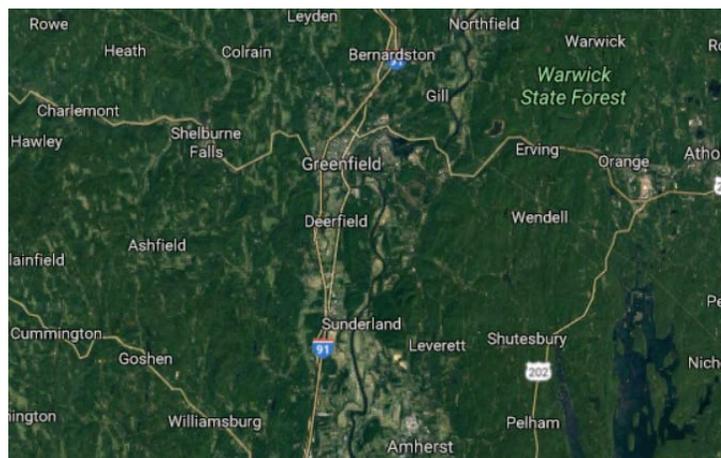
Court sums up the sentiments of a large portion of the artists and artisans interviewed in our study who stay in the region or locate here for its unique combination of natural beauty and the coming together of rural, working-class culture and the progressive tastes and politics affiliated with university culture. Set in the backdrop of the economic aftermath of industrial decline, this region also attracts artists and artisans with a lower cost of housing and studio space than neighboring counties, a setting that creates economic advantages and challenges for regional artists and artisans.

#### **A Regional Patchwork**

The Greater Franklin County can be best visualized as a patchwork quilt. It comprises many small towns, each with their own dynamics. As defined by planners, The Greater Franklin County is the 26 towns of Franklin County in addition to the towns of Amherst located in Hampshire County to the south and Athol and Phillipston located in Worcester County to the east.

The Greater Franklin County is the most rural region in the state. The region is 810 square miles with a population of 122,500, resulting in a population density of only 150 people per square mile. This is in contrast to the state average of 835 people per square mile (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:6). Roughly three quarters of the population lives within the communities of Amherst, Greenfield, Athol, Montague, Orange, and Deerfield. These towns have a unique mixture of urbanized, population-dense downtowns and rural elements such as active farms and woodlands. This means that even “city dwellers” have fast, easy access to rural settings. The remaining quarter of the population live in small communities with fewer than 5,000 people (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012:6). These towns tend to have a few blocks of downtown with the rest of the inhabitants spread out in farm or woodland settings.

The region is connected through two primary corridors, each with distinct economic histories and cultural politics. Route 2, the Mohawk Trail, runs from east to west, connecting Athol, Greenfield, and Shelburne Falls. Interstate 91 runs north to south connecting Bernardston, Greenfield, and Amherst.

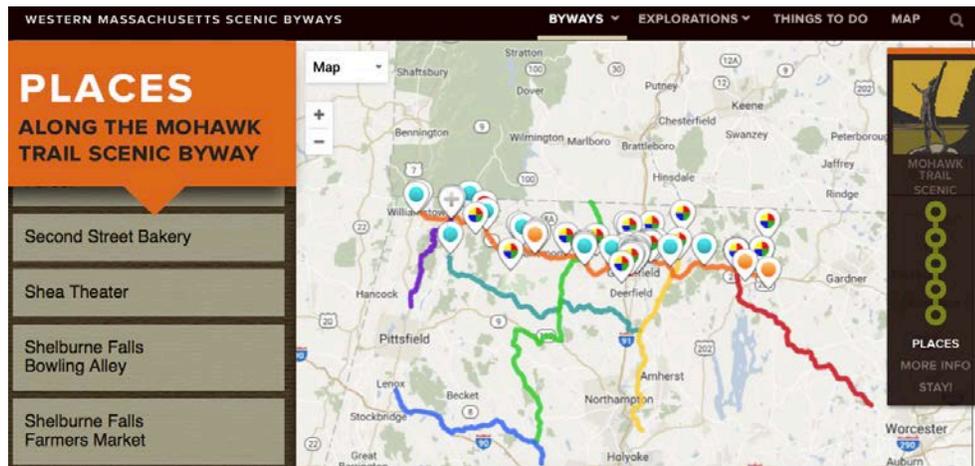


**Figure 3.1: Map of the Greater Franklin County<sup>38</sup>**

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<sup>38</sup> Source: [Google Maps](#)

The Mohawk Trail features prominently in regional tourism. Motorists leisurely drive this scenic two-lane road, which runs parallel to the Deerfield and Mill Rivers and connects many of the region’s smaller towns. Tourism hits its peak in the fall months as tourists come from around the country to drive this byway to enjoy the dramatic fall leaves. Tourism here is based around a bucolic, New England imagination. Figure 3.2 is from a state-funded website for organizing trips along the Mohawk Trail. Each town along the Byway posts its local attractions, which tend to focus around agritourism—farmers markets, u-pick farms, maple sugaring; ecotourism—river rafting, treetop zip lines, hiking; and creativity-based tourism—theaters, galleries, museums, and fairs.



**Figure 3.2: The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway<sup>39</sup>**

Many of the small towns host fall festivals, which often sell the work of regional artists and artisans. While focused around local, community celebration, these festivals have also become tourist destinations for tourists who seek “authentic” experiences.

<sup>39</sup> Source: <http://www.bywayswestmass.com/byways/mohawk-trail/>

Leaf peeping in this region is not new nor are local fall festivals. The other tourist attractions are. The focus on agritourism, ecotourism, and the creative economy stem directly from development initiatives aimed at regional recovery from deindustrialization. Deindustrialization is most strongly associated with the rust belt and the dramatic loss of the sprawling auto industry in Detroit in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, just as Massachusetts is considered to have been the home of the industrial revolution in the United States, it is also the home of the first wave of deindustrialization: the loss of small-scale manufacturing.

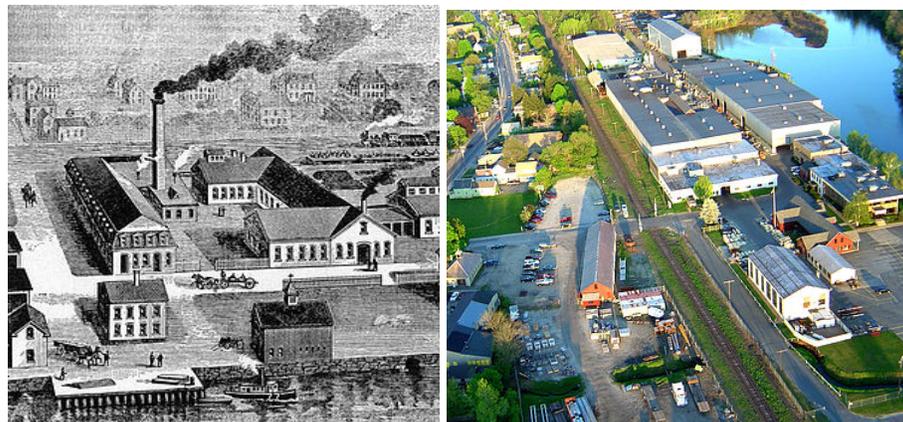
Industry, primary mills using hydroelectric power, started in the Mohawk Trail region as early as the 1790s. By the mid-1800s, many of the towns in this region began transitioning away from agricultural-based economies as the use of water-powered manufacturing grew and the railways expanded.

Using the city of Orange as an example, by the late 1840s the city had become a railroad hub on the route between Boston and Mechanicsville, New York. This connection spurred a significant expansion in industrial jobs and population and led to Orange's industrial peak in the late industrial period, roughly 1870-1915 (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2016:3-18). At this time, existing industry, which produced turbines, sewing machines, and industrial parts, expanded and the population grew by 157%, reaching slightly more than 5,000 residents.

Full reliance on industrial economic activity came a few years later but, ironically, so too did industrial decline. Deindustrialization started in Massachusetts in the 1920s and continues into the present. Manufacturing started leaving the state in general as part of a national shift from small-scale to large-scale production. A changing transportation

system had a significant impact on the Mohawk trail region specifically. Orange, for example, lost its importance as an industrial hub as the rail system was eclipsed by the highway and interstate system. Goods were being transported by truck and, with the rise in the ownership of personal vehicles, residents started commuting elsewhere for work. By 1950, rail passenger service to Orange was discontinued.

Interstate 91, the Greater Franklin County's other primary transportation corridor, was completed in late the 1960s and early 1970s twenty miles from Orange, further reducing the city's appeal to industry and new residents. The vast majority of manufacturers left the city by the time the interstate was built, with only Rodney Hunt remaining. Rodney Hunt got its start in 1840 making wooden waterwheels for the textile industry. Today, it specializes in hydraulic actuator systems, and casts and fabricates gates used in hydroelectric and wastewater management systems (Rodney Hunt 2010:7).



**Figure 3.3: Rodney Hunt Then and Now<sup>40</sup>**

In 2015, Rodney Hunt laid off most of its 200 employees, announcing that they would close. However, in 2016 their name and technology was purchased by JASH USA. This

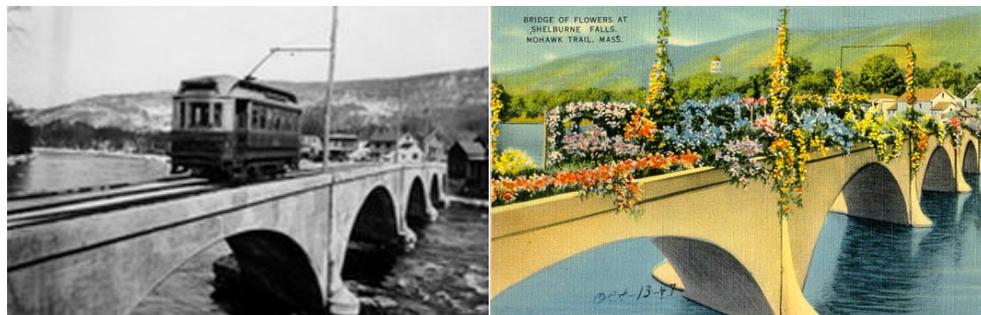
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<sup>40</sup> Source: <https://www.rodneyhunt.com/about-us>

kept the company name alive but, after 177 years in Orange, the manufacturing facilities have shut their doors (Kinney 2017) in the city.

Many of the other towns on this Mohawk Trail Corridor have had a similar trajectory. Traveling the Mohawk Trail east to west, Athol, Orange, Erving, Miller Falls, Turners Falls, Greenfield, and Shelburne Falls have all experienced varying degrees of industrial loss. This shapes the region in a few ways.

First, all of the towns have abandoned industrial spaces. Some of these spaces have been repurposed, and one of the earliest projects was in Shelburne Falls. In 1908, the Shelburne Fall and Colrain Railway built a trolley spanning the Deerfield River to carry goods too heavy for the existing bridge. Like with Orange's rail service, the expanding use of automobiles made this trolley obsolete; by 1927 the company operating the trolley went bankrupt. After two years sitting abandoned, the Shelburne Falls Women's Club sponsored a project to convert the trolley bridge into a bridge of flowers that could be crossed by foot.



**Figure 3.4 Bridge of Flowers Before and After Repurposing<sup>41</sup>**

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<sup>41</sup> Sources <http://usgwarchives.net/ma/franklin/postcards/ppcs-frank.html>, <http://www.bridgeofflowersmass.org/history>

The bridge of flowers still stands today, and gives the city a unique character, adding to its appeal for tourists. The city was also successful in transitioning buildings soon after manufacturers left. Built in 1884, the building that now houses the Salmon Falls Artists Showroom was used continually by various grain-related industries until the late '60s. By the early '70s, the building had already been converted to mixed-use office space and artists' studios. In 1984, one hundred years after the building was built, the Salmon Falls Artists Showroom opened, and the rest of the building now houses a restaurant and office spaces (Bronaccio 2016). The city has converted other spaces into galleries and artist studios, creating a vibrant downtown. Based on these successful renovations, in 2012 the city applied for and received designation as a Cultural District from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. This designation provides them with expanded access to state and federal funding for culture-related projects aimed at continuing to maintain their downtown.

Other towns were hit harder by the loss of industry and thus converting properties started much later, if at all. For example, Turners Falls started converting properties more recently. With the use of state cultural funding, one abandoned industrial complex was turned into the Great Falls Discovery Center, a cultural interpretation center that opened in 2004. Free to the public, this center offer exhibits on the Native American and industrial histories of the region, along with a network of interpretive nature trails. However, this conversion only represents a small portion of the space left abandoned in the town and in the region as a whole. Millers Falls, Erving, and Orange all have abandoned industrial spaces that have been untouched. While these properties hold potential for development, they currently create hazards. In January 2017 a fire gutted a

mill building that had stood empty since the 1990s in Turners Falls (Masciadrelli 2017) and the town of Erving paid \$500,000 to tear down and clean up the remains of an abandoned paper mill, which burned in 2012 (Spear 2016). Abandoned buildings also bring down surrounding property values. The center of Millers Falls, which has had no new development since its loss of manufacturing, was recently designated a “slum and blighted” area (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2014).

This shift away from manufacturing has also led to low wages for the region. Since 1997, Franklin County has had the lowest average wages for any county in the state (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2015). Even after its decline, manufacturing still provided the largest number of jobs per industry sector in the region’s private sector, and these jobs are the best paying. As can be seen in Table 3.1, the sectors that fill-in for lost manufacturing jobs pay significantly less.

Industry*	Franklin County			Massachusetts	United States
	Number of Employed	% of Total Employed	Average Pay per Employee	% of Total Employed	% of Total Employed
Manufacturing	3,689	18.5%	\$49,624	7.4%	9.5%
Healthcare & Social Assistance	3,538	17.8%	\$34,102	19.3%	15.7%
Retail Trade	2,946	14.8%	\$27,012	11.5%	12.7%
Accommodations & Food Services	1,934	9.7%	\$14,428	9.1%	10.5%
Education Services	1,258	6.3%	\$43,270	6.7%	3.0%

**Table 3.1: Top Five Franklin County Private Sector Industries by Employment, 2013<sup>42</sup>**

As manufacturing jobs are replaced with jobs to serve tourists, such as jobs in accommodations and food services, the average annual income per employee drops by

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<sup>42</sup> Source: Franklin Regional Council of Governments (2015).

roughly \$35,000. At the time we conducted our project, Franklin County had the 4th lowest median household income of the 14 counties in the state (U.S. Census 2010), while the county's poverty rate was 11.3 percent, compared to 10.5 percent for Massachusetts as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

The loss of manufacturing and its aftermath are part of what gave rise to the discourse of need for the region that I highlighted in the first two chapters. However, not all parts of the Greater Franklin County were so heavily rooted in industry, nor were they all similarly affected by shifting transportation trends. While industry also existed south of the Mohawk Trail, the towns in the southern part of the region have stronger agricultural roots. For example, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, one of the major employers in the town of Amherst, was founded in 1863 as an agricultural college. Additionally, several towns in the southern part of the Greater Franklin County were further connected rather than isolated by the construction of Interstate 91, the second major corridor in the region.

While the Mohawk Trail connects some the smaller towns in the region, Interstate 91 (I-91) functions as a connector between the larger towns. More or less running alongside the Connecticut River, I-91 links what is referred to as "The Valley," or the "Pioneer Valley." The Valley evokes a different regional identity than the Mohawk Trail. Here, the pastoral countryside is home to five public and private colleges and the

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<sup>43</sup> While the poverty rate is higher in Franklin County than in the rest of the state, it is still lower than the national rate of 13.8 percent (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2012).

university, which are affiliated through the Five College system.<sup>44</sup> This system widens the educational and cultural impact beyond that of each individual institution. These institutions of higher learning bring in a significant number of students and faculty from outside the region and provide a progressive, upper-middle class culture, which then coexists with the more traditional working-class local culture. In this context, culture refers to the idea that culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or "tool kit" of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct "strategies of action." This corridor is particularly important for performing artists, who can have regular gigs set up in multiple towns.

The Valley is also known as "the Happy Valley," referring to the regions' general acceptance of many lifestyles. The region has a thriving queer cultural scene, which is what drew at least two of the interviewees to the area; one artist moved here in the '70s and the other in 2007. Morning Star, a poet, singer, and one of the members of the research team, moved here thirty years ago for the regions' alternative culture. Having had trouble establishing community where she was living, she came here on the advice of friends:

They said this was a Mecca. This was an artist's Mecca. This was a healing Mecca. This was a place where unusual things are happening. You should go there.

As I will discuss throughout the chapter, the region does support thriving artistic communities. It is also home to an alternative health culture. Any healing modality can be found here and many Eastern religions can be practiced here as well. Finally, the region

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<sup>44</sup> The five colleges are the University of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, and Amherst College all located in Amherst, Smith College located in Northampton, and MountHolyoke College located in South Hadley.

is also known for social experimentation, as explained by Court, whose quote opened this chapter:

I've always thought that western Massachusetts is a little bit of a petri dish. New things happen here. It's a laboratory. It's a laboratory for the freeze movement. It was a laboratory for the anti-nuclear movement. . . . A lot of things sort of start here and move out.

Most recently, the region has been a hotbed for the buy local/organic movement. The primary organization championing local and organic foods, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), got its start in 1993. The organization aims to support and grow sustainable small-scale agriculture in the region through increasing local consumption of these products. They have been key to a regional expansion in the number of farms and consumers that participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), an economic model in which consumers pay a farm upfront for access to a share of produce/agricultural product. The aim is to support local farming by providing a reliable customer base and monetary compensation early in the season. In return, consumers have access to ultra-fresh produce and often have the opportunity to visit or spend time on the farm. CISA also created a buy-local marketing campaign, which has had national impact. As I will discuss in the following chapter, a group of artisans is aiming to expand the movement to also place value on the consumption of local arts and crafts.

Finally, the region is home to a number of communes and intentional communities, and many of the social movements here, like the local food movement, are rooted in a collectivist spirit. A number of the artists and artisans who participated in the study linked that spirit to Quakerism. Quakers first arrived in the Massachusetts Colony in 1665 and were banned by the Puritan government. After nearly twenty years of

nonviolent protest in Boston, which resulted in the death of a number of Quakers, they were allowed to live and freely practice their religion in the colony (Sigmond 2012). Since these early examples of non-violent protest, Quakers have shaped the politics of peace in the United States. Quakers were active in the abolition movement. More recently, they played a significant role in shaping the politics of the peace movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Quakers were key in introducing pre-figurative politics based on a broad vision for a non-violent society—a society based around a “non-violent social order” (Smith 1996:17). Quaker organizations such as the Movement for a New Society, which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, created non-hierarchical, collectivist organizational strategies to enact the non-violent social order in which they wished to live. These strategies were adopted more broadly within the peace movement and continue to shape Quaker practices in Massachusetts and elsewhere today.

Greenfield, the county seat of Franklin County, sits at the confluence of the Mohawk Trail and I-91. Here the distinct cultural identities of both corridors come together. Greenfield was settled in 1686 and formally incorporated in 1753. Like Orange, Greenfield grew quickly in the late 1800s around industry and the rail system. As the railroad hub of the Connecticut River Valley, the connection point for east-west and north-south rail services, Greenfield grew fast and became the largest city in Franklin County. Unlike its neighboring towns, Greenfield did not suffer a loss of manufacturing in the ‘20s. In fact, manufacturing grew significantly in the lead up to and during World War II. At the war’s peak, Greenfield Tap and Die (GTD) had more than 4,000 employees and was the largest producer of its type worldwide, while the railroad

employed 500 (Hayes Development Services 2008:2). At this point in time, Greenfield had the highest per capita income in the state.

The post-war period was the start of the decline for Greenfield's manufacturing industry. Immediately after the war, GTD employees faced layoffs, and the jobs never returned, due to a number of factors. First, GTD started producing for the auto industry, but the demand was never as high as it was during the war. Furthermore, as the domestic auto industry waned, so too did GTD's market (Ducharme 2006).

Second, in 1941 GTD workers unionized, joining the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) (Davis 2016). Unionization, however, was not enough to stave off cuts based on lack of demand. In addition, during this time, the UE was struggling to remain strong under the persecutions of McCarthyism. There was significant government and employer pressure for workers to abandon the UE. While GTD employees remained with UE, the union had been voted out of surrounding towns such as Pittsfield, Springfield, and Lynn (Davis 2016). Third, during the 1960s, other countries developed the capacity to make the precision-machined tools in which GTD specialized, providing cheaper, less regulated labor markets. Finally, as in other industries, jobs were also lost to automation (Ducharme 2006).

In addition to this loss of manufacturing, Greenfield also lost the bulk of its railroad jobs. As trucking and personal automobiles became the primary modes of transporting goods and people, rail services declined dramatically, with passenger services to Greenfield ending in 1966 (Amtrak 2016).

While the construction of I-91 further isolated towns such as Orange, it brought new opportunities to Greenfield. The interstate was built near the western edge of town,

which soon started to add new shopping centers. The opening of the I-91 corridor also led to new residential developments. Greenfield became a bedroom community for other, more expensive, towns along the interstate. In the same time period, Greenfield Community College opened, also located on this western edge. These developments were crucial for the city. However, they did not bring in jobs that paid as well as the manufacturing jobs that had been lost. The developments also shifted the town's commercial center away from the historic downtown, which was built around the railroad depot.

Mainstream commercial interests and their investments abandoned the historic downtown, leaving behind a large number of empty storefronts. In the 1980s, Greenfield's alternative culture scene started to grow, and several businesses catering to this population started moving in to the downtown's vacant storefronts. Independent businesses like a food co-op, craft centers, an outdoor equipment store, and small restaurants started appearing in the downtown, alongside the existing government offices such as the Library, City Hall, the Post Office, and the County Court House. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greenfield's historic downtown was a mix of independent businesses and government properties, peppered with abandoned storefronts and buildings.

### **Regional Creativity-Based Development**

Greenfield's partially blighted, partially vibrant downtown provided the backdrop for our project, as did the continued economic fallout from the 2008 "Great Recession." In 2010, when the project was conducted, Greenfield was two years into a long-term, state and federal government-funded downtown renovation project. Existing properties, some of which were abandoned and some of which were occupied, were purchased or

repossessed by the city to be renovated into usable spaces for business and loft apartments, while preserving the historical features of the buildings' facades.



**Figure 3.5: One Downtown Greenfield Property Before and After Renovation<sup>45</sup>**

The redevelopment project occurred in phases. The first phase was completed by the time of our research and brought a new performance space to the downtown, in addition to a number of new restaurants. These additions significantly extended the downtown's nightlife; prior to these developments, most downtown establishments closed by 7 or 8 p.m. at the latest. As can be seen in the before and after photos above, it also significantly improved the face of the downtown.

However, the possible beginnings of gentrification were also visible at this time. Two regionally-owned chains that catered to the tastes of the creative class moved into some of the renovated spaces: a high-end coffee shop and a trendy used bookstore. These businesses opened in direct competition with existing working-class venues, a diner and a

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<sup>45</sup> Sources: Left photo, Bank Row Urban Renewal Plan. Right photo, Renaissance Builders.

used bookstore, within the same block. This was not development aimed at bringing new services; clearly, these services already existed. Instead, it was development aimed at bringing in a new type of person. The second phase of development was slated to convert existing, affordable artist's studios in a green apartment building, and by 2012 this had occurred.

Given the depressed wages in the Greater Franklin County, the higher-than-average poverty rate, and the large number of abandoned spaces in the region, there was no question that development was desired. The question, however, was how to pursue this development in a manner that did not displace existing residents, including artists and artisans.

Massachusetts, like many other places, turned to the creative economy and the talented, mobile "creative class" for economic revitalization after the Great Recession. In 2008 a Creative Economy Council was created to advise the State Legislature and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development on creativity-based development. This body was tasked with the mission of developing, "a statewide strategy for the enhancement, encouragement, and growth of the creative economy in Massachusetts" (Creative Economy Council 2010:2). The discourse from the Council could have been taken straight from Richard Florida's website (Creative Economy Council 2010:1):

In this new economy, today's knowledge workers are considerably more mobile, with advances in technology, communication, and travel enabling them to live and work anywhere they prefer. This paradigm shift works in Massachusetts' favor. The Commonwealth offers a unique blend of innovative spirit, culture, and geography that can attract and retain both individual entrepreneurs and larger companies.... Here in Massachusetts, we have the arts, culture, technology and talented workers to become a leader in the creative economy. Especially in this

time of economic crisis, the creative economy represents one of the best assets the Commonwealth has to grow our way out of the recession.

The undertone was to develop existing resources to attract others, which, as discussed in the first chapter, often opens the door to gentrification. Additionally, similar to Florida's discourse, the legislature's definition of what constitutes the creative economy is very open. It is defined as (Creative Economy Council 2010:2):

without limitation the many interlocking industry sectors that center on providing creative services such as advertising, architecture or creating and promoting intellectual property products such as arts, film, computer games, multimedia, or design.

Again, as discussed in the first chapter, such broad definitions tend to place artists at a disadvantage since their economic needs differ vastly from the groups with other occupations with whom they are lumped.

The Greater Franklin County's development discourses and strategies, for the most part, do not reflect this broad approach. The region's economic struggles pre-date the Great Recession, as does the region's creativity-based economic planning. The region's first plan to grow its culture-related activities was published in 1990. This plan defined culture broadly to include the arts and the region's rural character. Its purpose was twofold: safeguard this rural character and amplify art. The definition of the region's rural character was developed based on meetings and conversations with community members (Dryansky and Donado 1990:11):

The importance of the natural environment to the appearance of the community, volunteer government, a sense of closeness with one's neighbors, local activities and events, a slower pace in everyday life and a sense of local identity and public participation by community members. . . .

The report finds that community members felt that these values and way of life had been threatened by the new development brought by the construction of I-91. The arrival of

box stores and new residential developments marred the region's vistas while the influx of residents from outside the region was changing the sense of local identity. The report also documents the specter of gentrification because of the development-related spike in land prices (Dryansky and Donado 1990:11):

[A] widespread sentiment by residents that their children, the elderly, blue collar workers, renters and young families will find it increasing difficult to afford to live in their town.

This potential exclusion of existing community members was also viewed as a challenge to the region's rural character (Dryansky and Donado 1990:11):

Since an important aspect of rural community life is a vital sense of community between generations, this is a serious problem that must be addressed by all groups seeking to help preserve the character of the county.

To tackle these issues, the report called for creating efforts to increase access to affordable housing and to encourage community-based solutions to meeting towns' development needs.

One such community-based solution was to raise community awareness of the importance of the arts in the region. At the time of the report, there was already a large number of artists and artisans living in the county. They were not, however, seen as key to the economy and the report aimed to address this (Dryansky and Donado 1990:19):

County leaders need to recognize that artists and their work are an important part of Franklin County's attractiveness as a place to live. Not only do artists provide spirit and vitality to the region but, as our research shows, they make a sizable economic contribution as well.

To raise the profile of the arts, the report suggested that business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, start promoting arts to constituents and funders; that the "arts industry" be included in the region's economic development planning; and that artists participate more in civic life to have their voices heard. The report also noted that the rise

in the cost of land and housing could be a barrier to younger artists moving to the area and called on towns to convert empty industrial spaces into affordable artist studios.

This plan set an important precedent for the region. It placed meeting community needs, as defined by community members, at the center of planning decisions. It also called on community members, including artists, to participate in regional planning and civic life. Additionally, the report highlighted a disconnect between the “community” and artists, a theme which will be further discussed below. Finally, it highlights that the concerns over gentrification, which set the scene for our study, were not new for the region, nor were calls to maintain class diversity and access to affordable housing.

Integrating arts and culture into regional planning firmly took hold twelve years later. The 2002 *Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan* was the first regional plan to actively begin marketing the region’s arts and cultural heritage to tourists. The Mohawk Trail travel website cited above was created in 2014 as part of this planning. The 2004 *Northern Tier Strategic Investments Initiative Report* commissioned by Congressman John Olver shortly followed the 2002 scenic byway report. This plan advocated for developing the region’s existing creative capacities along the Mohawk Trail. The focus was to leverage the high concentration of educational institutions to start retraining unemployed manufacturing workers for employment in the region’s existing creative industries. In the same year, the 1994 *Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress* was updated to include the creative economy as one of the region’s sectors of growth, with a focus on supporting the region’s artists and artisans. Since these plans, six additional regional development plans have been produced that incorporate creativity-based development. Please see the Appendix for a table summarizing these plans.

Comparing across plans, the creative economy is largely defined as artists and artisans. This artist- and artisan-focused “creative cluster” is seen as a way to bolster the regional economy on a number of fronts using a number of strategies. First, it is seen as a way to increase tourism and to make downtowns “livable.” Cultural training and education is seen as a way of bolstering the economy both through the jobs provided by running these institutions of learning and as an avenue through which to retool a formerly industrial, and currently underemployed or unemployed, workforce. Finally, the creative sector is seen as one of the fastest growing areas of small business development in the region.

To further grow this creative sector, the majority of the plans suggest cataloguing the scope and impact of the sector to make it easier to market cultural activities to tourists; to identify potential employment opportunities for job seekers; and to secure creativity-based funding. Other strategies mentioned across all plans include supporting the work of existing arts and cultural organizations, providing business training and networking events for artists and artisans, and creating connections between arts organizations, creative businesses, and individual artists through a regional Creative Economy Summit. All in all, these are very pro-artist/artisan plans.

Safeguards against gentrification are less clear. While nearly all plans discuss the need to revitalize downtowns and abandoned industrial districts, only three of the ten plans discuss existing economic inequality and the need to increase access to quality, affordable housing. Additionally, only four of the reports discuss creating studio, gallery, and/or performance space for artists.

Unlike creative economy strategies in other parts of the state, which lump advertisers and artists into the same category, the development strategies for the creative economy of the Greater Franklin County is artist-centric. This makes it more likely that their collective interests will be met. However, within some of the developments plans there is still a tension between pursuing downtown revitalization and maintaining the affordability that allows artists and other low-income residents to live in the area.

My own entry point into development within the creative economy was through the Fostering Art and Culture Project (FACP), the Franklin County arts organization most cited within regional development plans. The FACP was created in 2006 as a response to the recommendation made in the 2004 *Northern Tier Strategic Investments Initiative Report*. Leo Hwang, my co-coordinator for this research project, chaired the FACP through his role as Dean of Humanities at Greenfield Community College (GCC). The FACP's aim was to bring together key stakeholders in the region's creative economy: non-profit cultural institutions, individual artists, and the creative businesses working in the region. At the time of our study, the advisory committee was comprised of members from Franklin County Community Development Corporation, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Turners Falls River Culture, Shelburne Falls Area Business Association, Double Edge Theater, the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, and two independent artists, with GCC represented through Leo's chairmanship. The organization's only paid staff position, the Project Coordinator, represented the Greenfield Business Association.

Given this amalgamation of actors from business and the arts, the FACP at times had competing ideas of how to reach the mandate of supporting local artists. The

organization started with a focus on the Florida model for developing the creative economy rooted in a needs-based approach. The FACP originally devoted \$75,000 for a needs-based marketing assessment for the region's creative economy. An outside expert, a marketing firm from Boston, was hired to assess the needs of regional artists and to create marketing strategies to attract more tourists and creative industries to the region.

To serve as a counter-balance to this primary focus on needs, Leo, working with the independent artists on the FACP board, urged the organization to devote \$9,000 for a PAR-based assessment of the existing economic assets. As discussed in Chapter 2, having collaborated in the past, Leo asked me to come on board as a project co-coordinator. Together we generated the research design and secured a grant from the University of Massachusetts President's Creative Economy Fund, which brought in an additional \$32,000.

The aim of the FACP in commissioning this study was to get at the heart of what already worked for regional artists and artisans so that they could be supported rather than displaced by redevelopment initiatives. Investigating this broad question brought to light the diverse communities of artists and artisans who are living and working in this region, the diverse reasons why they are here, and the existing resources from which they draw. This investigation also helps to answer the question from the literature on artistic production (Markuson 2014; Zukin 2011) about why and how artists work within rural settings.

### **Diverse Communities of Artists and Artisans**

The region is a patchwork of towns and of diverse cultures. An artist's or artisan's location within this geographic and cultural patchwork, the answer to why he or she is

here, and the specifics of his or her artistic practice, shape his or her experiences and perspectives of the region. Participants loosely fall into three categories: those who were born and raised here and have deep connections to the region; those who moved from elsewhere but have been here for 20 or more years; and those who have more recently moved to the region either to establish a career here or to retire. As Brown-Saracino (2004) found, the local criterion used to determine who is *truly* local, or using Brown-Saracino's language, who is a "townie" or "old-timer," varies even within different towns in New England. In the Greater Franklin County, family heritage is a prominent criterion, and therefore it is what I am using to demarcate between "locals" and "transplants."

Locals have deep, longstanding family connections to the region, as is demonstrated by visual artist Virginia Baylor.<sup>46</sup> Virginia started out painting, but has been focused in clay work for the past 7 years. She also runs a gallery, supported by the revenue from the family's package store, to help increase access to the arts. When asked why she is an artist in this region, Virginia answers with the following:

I've been here all my life and I love it here [said with a smile]. Even though it's rural and sometimes not progressive, I stay because I feel attached to the land and the Connecticut River. Plus all my family and my husband's family live here and I wanted my children to have that sense of belonging to a community.

Both Virginia and her husband's families go back six generations in the region. In her late sixties at the time she was interviewed, Virginia's formative years occurred prior to the influx of progressive cultures which starting taking root in the 1970s. From this vantage point, she does not view the region as the progressive place that, as we will see below, many other artists do. This comes from her location within rather than alongside

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<sup>46</sup> Given the sensitive nature of these passages, Virginia Baylor is a pseudonym.

“local” culture. In the exchange below with her interviewer and friend, Rochleigh, various moments arise which make visible Virginia’s self-regulation in response to conservative, rural culture:

Virginia: A lot of my work turns into social statements and anti-nuclear and anti-war, um I don’t know, would you call it propaganda?

Rochleigh: A social statement.

Virginia: It’s treated as propaganda by a conservative element. I think it is so important for kids to still have both sides of a story, and so much of the time in public school and newspapers that are owned by three corporations, and just on and on and on in that vein. I think they need the freedom to view the art.

Rochleigh: Would you call yourself an art activist?

Virginia: Yes. Even if other people don’t, I do. I’m timid. Even though I’m [pause] it’s hard for me to put things out there that would hurt my family or make me look insane.

Rochleigh: By that do you mean that there are statements that you would like to make in your art that you might be a little be more cautious about putting out there for concern about your family more so than you?

Virginia: Yes.

Rochleigh: How does that make you feel?

Virginia: In a way it makes me feel, what is the word, restricted. But in another way I think I have pushed the envelope enough so that people who are in tune will grab the idea from my work. I think because of the time I was born and what continually happened with the wars and wars and wars, the Cold War, the Hot War, and whatever war.

Rochleigh: And the in-between war.

[Laughing together].

Virginia: Which maybe other generations have had the same thing, I don’t mean to whine about it, I just feel like it’s caused something in me that rebels about the culturally okay-ness of wars and releasing radionuclides and pesticides into the environment.

Virginia is an under-the-radar art activist. From this interaction with Rochleigh, Virginia reveals the negative light in which this type of art and perspective could be viewed from within her social world. Activist art can be seen as “propaganda,” which she fears could then “hurt her family” or make her “look insane.” Voicing concerns about the collateral damage of wars could be construed as “whining.” As a result, she feels restricted in how far she can push the social message of her work. She has adapted a style which pushes just enough for other like-minded souls to receive her message, with the message passing unnoticed by those who could use it against her or her family.

It is also important to highlight that her activism was born out of her experiences, not imported from “outsiders.” Above she notes that growing up amid seemingly never-ending war greatly shaped her activism. So too did experiencing the changes in the Connecticut River Valley as the region developed:

When I was born in 1942, I was born in Northfield, my grandfather owned a lot of the farmland along the Connecticut River, and we had pastureland right that went down to the river. I used to ride my pony down in the pastures and I remember the incredible number of birds, in particular bluebirds. Even eagles would be soaring over the river. That always gave me a sense of wellbeing even though things weren't always so peaceful in the family.

From a young age, being surrounded by the natural world was an important part of her life. Escaping there is part of how she survived a difficult childhood caused by her father's mental illness. Her father suffered from depression in a time and place that did not recognize or treat it as an illness. Given the crucial role of nature to her own wellbeing, she was very perceptive about environmental changes:

[O]ver the years, seeing what has happened to the river, and too much of the landscape, because route 91 went through our town, and Vermont Yankee built a nuclear plant right on the river. And just the everyday things that keep wearing away at our environment. Bringing the road [I-91] through brought a lot of gas fumes, and I think lead, into our valley until the gas was made lead-free. I

personally feel there's been a huge increase in illness and disease for the trees and plant life as well as the human life.

Living through multiple wars and experiencing first hand the environmental degradation of the region she loved made Virginia a “homegrown” activist. Even more powerful was that she came to this position from within a community in which she perceived that these attitudes could have been branded “insane.”

While Virginia loves her community, her deep connection to local culture was at odds with the type of art that she wanted to produce. However, this is not always the case for local artists. Stephen Brown plays and makes the rhythm bones, a traditional percussion instrument made of wood or bone held between the fingers and clacked together, creating a unique sound.<sup>47</sup> He learned the rhythm bones from a percussionist in the Boston area. Understanding rhythm bones as a dying skill, his teacher was eager to pass on the tradition, including teaching Steve and giving him several sets of bones, both for himself and others.

Steve performs and competes regionally and in Ireland. On his father's side, Steve's family has lived in the region for nearly 175 years. Playing the rhythm bones is one of the ways that he connects with his deep New England heritage:

I do have a real sense of being a New Englander. I think bone playing, and traditional music, and, you know both the ethnic musics of traditional Irish music and French Canadian music, and contradancing, all that stuff kind of fuels that sense of being a New Englander. You know, the winters. So in that sense, I kind of have this sense of myself as doing something that has lasted for a really long period of time in a place that has a real regional identity.

Contradance, a 17<sup>th</sup> century European folk dance, still has strong cultural resonance in the region. The “Mecca of Contra Dancing” (Ashline 2016), there are contradances held in

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<sup>47</sup> [Click here to watch Steve play and learn about the bones.](#)

Greenfield at least 2-3 nights a week and the Grange in Montague Center hosts a gender-neutral contradance one night a month. It is also common to find monthly or bi-weekly traditional Irish music jam sessions at bars in Greenfield and Turners Falls. In addition to playing regularly at these venues, Steve plays at weddings. He also performs and sells his rhythm bones at the region's annual folk festival, hosted by the New England Folk Festival Association. At the time of the interview he was starting to play in a newly established Civil War Reenactment in Winchendon, MA. Folk music, thus, has a strong following in the region and, as a committed performer, it helps deepen Steve's connection to his heritage.

Steve's family history also raises another important cultural element in the region: a Yankee ethic.

[M]y grandfather was like one of the consummate, Yankee, cantankerous, you know, old farmers. Cheap. Penny-pincher. Dump-picker. But he had to support 16 children too. That's, and you know, my father was very different from him. My father was very kind and my grandfather was not very kind. . . . But, in any event, that is that Yankee, kind of old New England flavor to my background. And I see, especially, playing the bones, you know, doing something that has been around, and has real ethnic connections. That is kind of how I perceive myself anyway.

It is, in part, this do-it-yourself Yankee spirit that underpins Steve's rhythm bone production. He originally started making the rhythm bones from wood. However, he met another folk enthusiast at the Folk Festival who offered to teach him how to process animal bones. Steve's story of how he started out processing bone is a harrowing tale: boiling raw bones in bleach water in his family's small kitchen apartment, then shaping the bones with a refrigerator motor mounted on a plywood board balanced over the bathtub. It is truly an example of Yankee spirit. It is also a story of the close-knit nature of the folk community. Steve has since refined and professionalized his technique by

learning from the few remaining regional craftsmen who know how to process bone. It is not only the playing, but also the crafting, and the community that makes all of this possible, that gives Steve such a rich connection to place.

This Yankee spirit resonates with many regional artists who are often innovating not only in terms of their art and craft but also in terms of how they can make a creative life work. Phyllis Labanowski is a visual artist, a graphic messenger, and a member of the research team who also grew up in this region. She finds much strength in this regional spirit:

[W]hat I have heard in my interviews ... [is that the] people who live here [Franklin County] just figure out how to do it. You don't have a lot of money so you grow some food. You don't have a lot of money so you hang your clothes out on the line and you let them air dry. You cut some wood for your wood stove. That Yankee ingenuity. And that for women it counts just as much as men because there's a tradition here of women who just do. Women outlive their husbands and at 80 are out there chopping wood with their flabby arms flapping in the wind. That's my role model!

For Phyllis, Yankee ingenuity is a model for how to be not only an artist, but also a woman.

Artists who have moved to the area from elsewhere experience the region differently. For Virginia, whose life is woven into the tapestry of the local culture, the region seems restrictive. Transplants who land on this tapestry do not feel these restrictions. Visual artist, art teacher, and massage therapist EveLynn Goodhind, in her late forties at the time of the interview, left her own restrictive tapestry to come here early in her adult life:

I grew up in Indiana, and this area, particularly the Valley, has a lot of open-minded people . . . and to me it feels like a very live place where people continue to seek and continue to grow and to re-create themselves in what makes sense and balance to them. And I need to be in a space that has people who are open-minded

and who are not afraid to look for answers even if they don't like them, the answers [smile in her voice].

By mentioning Indiana at the beginning of her reflection on the Valley, she makes an unspoken comparison—it didn't have the open-minded people that allow her to thrive in the Valley.

Part of what allows transplanted artists to feel so supported here is that many have formed their own progressive communities within the broader community to foster their art and, for many, a social-justice oriented lifestyle. Cris Carl is a photographer, poet, and journalist, and utilizes her art and activism as one way of connecting to and preserving her Native American heritage. She moved to Greenfield 20 years ago from Pennsylvania.

When asked what she values about the region she replied as follows:

This is a community that is [now] very nourishing to its artists. It is very respectful to its artists. And that is something that I have gotten to witness since I have been here 20 years. And I enjoy that environment. The thing about this area, it is a funny mixture, all old farmers, old Yankee farmers, and old hippies. And virtually none of my friends are from here except for maybe one or two. Everybody is a transplant. And they have created a different kind of environment from what was here even just 25 years ago.

Cris enjoys the region's mixture of cultures, but her reference point within the cultural patchwork are other progressives who have moved to the area. Through moving here, these artists have changed the region. As she notes, Greenfield has become a nourishing place for artists as the artists themselves have been changing the community.

Other interviewees note this change not only in terms of cultural shifts, but also around development. Belinda is a doll maker and I will discuss her life in more depth in Chapter 5. She moved to Millers Falls in the early 1990s and was one of the only African Americans in town. Millers is small, with only a convenience store for groceries, so

Belinda, like many others in town, spent and still spends a lot of time in Turners Falls, the largest neighboring town:

The artists really pulled Turners Falls together. I used to go to Turners Falls back in '91 and I would go to the store there, the big, [pause] Food City. And I would actually have people turn their heads, because you know, I was the only Person of Color in the area, basically, and I'd have people doing the double take. Now, it's just fantastic, and yeah! And the artists did it!

Belinda no longer feels like an outsider as a woman of color and she credits artists and the development they brought to the region for that change. She links some of the major development gains in Turners Falls to an improvement in the town's school of photography, the Hallmark Institute:

Hallmark Institute sort of punched up their curriculum and became a top photography school. People who graduate from there get *really* great jobs. So you have students coming from all over the world to go to Hallmark. Where do they eat? Where do they sleep? Where do they have fun in Turners Falls? Okay, the Rendezvous used to be one of the crappiest bars, so they redid that. And then another place on the avenue started; that woman who had the photography studio from New York. Then another person came, and then another, and all of a sudden there is Joe's Coffee shop. And then the Bakery. And things started happening, and now we have the Bar-B-Q place there. And then over on Route 2 the Wagon Wheel; that is a fabulous place to eat. . . . And that is all done in an artistic, sort of way, and low key.

Belinda outlines the classic creative economy story in relation to Turners Falls; the artists come and development follows.

Unlike other development stories, as she puts it development here has been "low key." It has not been developer driven, but has rather remained artist driven. The Rendezvous, known as the Voo, for example, is co-owned by graduates from UMass Amherst's creative writing MFA program. In addition to serving great food and an interesting lineup of mixed drinks and craft beers, they have become a regional hub for local artists. The walls display the rotating art of local artists, which can be purchased,

and their nearly nightly entertainment features local and regional bands, writers, and poets. They also host eclectic events like quiz nights, BINGO, screenings of the World Cup Soccer matches, etc., to bring in other audiences.

The Rendezvous is located on a mixed commercial and residential street. The co-owners also own the Laundromat next door. They have kept the prices at the Laundromat affordable, and the tenants of the numerous neighboring apartments regularly use it. Thus, while they are creating a venue for regional visual and performing art through the restaurant/bar, they are also providing a much-needed service to the region's low-income community. Neighboring residents may not be able to afford the bar's high-end cocktails; however, many use the Laundromat. The owners also utilized the Laundromat as an arts space. Once a year the Voo hosted a found-clothing art show at the Laundromat. Regional artists designed clothing lines from the unclaimed lost and found items from the Laundromat. Community members served as the models, showing off the various lines on a catwalk constructed over the washing machines. Artist-led changes to the community like those created at the Voo have happened in tandem with the town's revitalization projects, such as the creation of the Cultural Center discussed above. For example, the found-clothing fashion show became so popular that it is now organized by the Cultural Center and held in the town's theater—the Shea Theater—with the Laundromat continuing to supply the clothing.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> As a resident of Miller's Falls myself, the Voo, was one of my local haunts. Not just for the entertainment, but also as a space in which it was socially acceptable to sit and work with a computer for hours on end. The owners were writers. They got it. A significant portion of Chapters 2 and 6 were written at the Voo. I also relied on their competitively-priced Laundromat to wash my clothes. There were no such services in Millers.

Belinda, who lives in Millers Falls, wants to see this type of change come to her town. As discussed above, Millers has had no development after the loss of industry, and the town center has been officially designated a blighted zone. The upshot is that housing prices here are significantly cheaper than in the surrounding towns such as Amherst, Leverett, or Northampton. As Belinda goes on to say:

People can't afford those places anymore; people who work for a living, who work very hard for a living. That is why I bought a house in Millers Falls. It was something *I* could afford, and as people like that come together, there are always good people. Always artists. Always people raising their children, and they want to have a decent place. And I watched Montague Center [Turners Falls], like, a renaissance. It was a renaissance. And change is coming. It's coming. It's coming. But you know, I want it tomorrow.

While change has yet to come to Millers, Belinda helps raise another vital point. Many artists and artisans settle in the smaller towns, and the less centralized towns of the Greater Franklin County, because of their affordability. Housing is significantly less expensive in Greenfield than in Amherst or Northampton, and housing is again even more affordable in less centralized towns like Millers Falls, Erving, or Wendell.<sup>49</sup>

These cultural and development shifts in the region have created an atmosphere in which new transplants feel supported. Karen Ducey, an artisan who makes handcrafted wallets and totes, describes the region as follows:

[W]hat I really love about being out here is that there is a really strong sense of community. . . . I feel like people of different backgrounds, especially economic backgrounds, all seem to mix together out here over cultural connections whether it is the local food movement, or the local art scene, and there is a strong music scene around here.

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<sup>49</sup> Living on a graduate student income, this was also my trajectory through the Valley. I lived in Amherst for two years, in Greenfield for two years, and spent my last three years in the Valley living in Millers Falls.

These scenes, which have been slowly crafted since the '70s, have created a desirable context for artists and artisans. In the more recent wave of artist/artisan transplants, individuals came to establish creative businesses or practices, which I will discuss in Chapter 4. There are also many artists who come to the region to retire, to retreat from the bustle and high prices of big cities like New York. Michael, a painter and an illustrator, has now lived in the area for 12 years. He moved here after retiring because he had friends living here, and he loves the small town culture:

I had always lived in big cities and I discovered in Greenfield that it is very nice to leave my home and walk downtown and know people and be involved in the community. I volunteer at the Chamber of Commerce downtown and I know quite a few of the business people in town and I work with the fair every year so it is just nice where I know folks and it's just like a little hometown as opposed to an anonymous big city.

Other retirees, as will be discussed in the following section, appreciate that the region provides various outlets through which they can continue to develop their artistic skills.

In summary, the region is not only a patchwork of towns but also a patchwork of cultures. This means that artists' experiences of the region are shaped by their location within this diverse set of cultures: a local, at times empowering and at times conservative, Yankee culture; a mostly transplanted progressive culture; and the edges where they come together. Some of the artists born and raised here use their ties to the local culture as a springboard for their arts, while others find its conservatism restrictive. As artists and other progressives started moving to the area in the 1970s continuing into today, pockets or scenes of progressive culture have grown, allowing artists to exist, supported, within them. Some artists moved to the region for the affordable housing, some for higher education, some because of the region's reputation as a progressive place, and yet others to retire in a setting that provides community and cultural connections. Finally, as artists

have come, they have also played a role in the region's redevelopment; a role that became institutionalized in the region's development plans by the early 2000s.

### **Regional Supports for Artists and Artisans**

Regional artists and artisans are a mix of locals who have chosen to stay, or those who chose, for a variety of reasons, to relocate here. They find support for their creative practices in a number of ways.

### **Institutional Supports**

Artists and artisans are supported by a number of institutional supports. In 2006 Massachusetts passed healthcare reform aimed at providing near-universal health insurance coverage for state residents (Kaiser 2012), which included an expansion in MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program. Through these changes, the number of uninsured residents dropped significantly compared to the national average. In the year in which our study was conducted, the number of uninsured in Massachusetts was 6.3% compared to 18.4% for the nation as a whole. Expanded access to MassHealth has become a significant support for regional artists and artisans, which will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

The state and federal governments also provide a significant portion of the funding for the region's non-profit development agency, the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC). As manufacturing retreated from the region, the FCCDC was founded in 1979 to "maximize community control over our future economic destiny" by "stimulating a robust economy that closely fits our sense of place—our hills and valleys, and our towns and villages." The FCCDC offers a number of services such as loans, access to affordable workspaces, and specialized business training to help small

businesses take off. A number of the artists and artisans who participated in the project had taken one or more classes at the FCCDC to help them with the business aspects of their creative enterprises.

State, federal, and philanthropic support for the arts through grants and residencies are also key for regional artists and artisans. Of the agencies funding arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), the non-profit that administers state funding for the arts, was the most cited support. It is the agency that provided a significant portion of the funding for the creation of the Cultural Center in Turners Fall, that provided downtown Shelburne Falls its designation as a Cultural District, and that provided the bulk of the FACP's funding. The next chapter illustrates how funding from this organization and others directly shapes the lives of individual artists and artisans.

Artists and artisans are supported by the high concentration of educational institutions in the region. Educational institutions provide support on two crucial fronts. First, they provide job opportunities for artists and artisans who are already trained. Nearly all of the artists and artisans who supported themselves full-time through their creative practices also teach their art form in one capacity or another. For some, this means teaching art/music or hosting workshops in one of the region's public K-12 schools or in one of the many private K-12 academies. For others, it means teaching full or part-time at one of the region's institutions of higher education. In addition to the Five Colleges, GCC, and the Hallmark Institute of Photography previously discussed, Franklin County is also home to Conway School of Landscape Design. Most study participants who worked in higher education were adjunct faculty members at one or more regional institution. Very few held full-time, tenured appointments.

The institutions of higher education, principally GCC and UMass, also play an important role for artists seeking a formal education or continuing education in the arts. One young performing artist, who chose to remain anonymous in the study, grew up in this region and GCC provided the foundation for her artistic career:

Greenfield Community College saved my life. Not that my life was going to end, but it is an incredible resource. GCC is amazing and the arts program there is just amazing. So many brilliant people have come out of GCC. That was a huge part of my formation as an artist. . . . I got an Associate's in Studio Arts and Photography from there. And they have a consortium with MassArt now. So you can get a degree from MassArt by taking classes at GCC.

GCC opened the door for this young artist, who was in the midst of finishing her MFA at a prestigious art school in New York City at the time of the interview. GCC's vision is to "strengthen our community" and it certainly has strengthened the artist and artisan community. Through its partnership with MassArt, the Massachusetts College of Art and Design located in Boston, GCC consistently supports local artists in pursuing education beyond their associate's degree. Several study participants started their education at GCC before continuing on to UMass Amherst. More GCC graduates are accepted into UMass Amherst than from any other community college. For some it was GCC's affordability that put a college education within their reach, crucial for a region with higher than average poverty rates in the state. For others, it was affordability coupled with the opportunity to build the academic skills necessary to enter into a four-year institution, skills that they did not have prior to GCC.

GCC also plays a large role in continuing education, providing a source of art training for any member of the community. Numerous artists and artisans who participated in the study have taken multiple arts classes at GCC, allowing them to expand into new genres or to deepen their proficiency within their existing medium. Ellen

Blanchette is one such artist. Ellen has been an artist all of her life, but was only able to pursue her photography full-time once she retired. She moved from New York City to Greenfield post-retirement for its affordability and rural setting. When asked what she likes most about living in the region, one of the things she notes is the ability to get what she needs artistically:

First of all, [the region is] a smorgasbord. It's like, 'what do I want to do now? I've done this. I'm getting a little bored with that, and so what else can I do as an artist to grow myself?' There are just so many choices. It's really wonderful. The community college offers absolutely wonderful courses that you can go and take for a while and as a senior I get a discount there.

Ellen already had a Bachelor's Degree in Art and an MFA in Creative Writing, and wanted to continue to grow her capacities. Primarily supporting herself as a part-time photojournalist for the *Montague Reporter*, a Turners Falls-based newspaper, and through Social Security, the senior discount provide by the college was essential for her.

### **Artists Supporting Artists Informally and Formally**

Another aspect that Ellen values about the region are the people, specifically other artists. Artists supporting other artists are one of the principle regional assets noted by artists and artisans in the study. This support can be material or emotional, and for Ellen it was both:

Ellen: Diane Clancy, who pulled me into the Artists of Franklin County, helped me. The first time I ever displayed my work was in the artist's window exhibit. I had photographs all over my house that just sat in drawers. There are people that I knew in NYC that were friends of mine for twenty years that never knew I was an artist.

Rochleigh: Oh my goodness.

Ellen: Because my artwork stayed in portfolios. It wasn't up on my walls. It wasn't on display. It seemed irrelevant to my life, and I just did it for myself for my own pleasure. . . . It was mostly my son and his friends that were encouraging me to do more with it. But I worked in the

commercial world, and I didn't see a place in it for me either. I worked in advertising for a while. They looked at me and said, 'Sure, I'll look at your pictures.' and 'It's nice to have a hobby' They don't even look. They assume your work is just going to be ordinary because the people they work with are professionals and if you were any good you'd already be a professional.

In this excerpt Ellen explains that she had never shown her photography until moving to Greenfield. Her interviewer, Rochleigh, who has only known Ellen through her art, is surprised to learn this. Ellen goes on to share that her work in advertising made her hesitant to identify as a photographer. In that climate, she was discouraged from even showing her work to her peers.

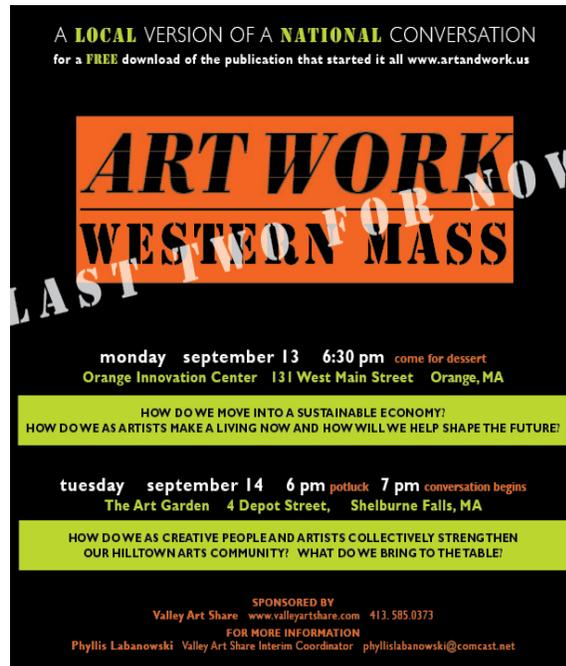
Being accepted without question by artists in Greenfield provided her with the emotional support she needed to take the step to publicly display her work. Fellow artist Diane Clancy not only provided encouragement, she also provided exhibition space. Diane coordinates the artists' window exhibitions. To help increase the exposure for local artists, she worked with businesses in the historic downtown who agreed to display the work of artists in their storefronts, for free, on a rotating basis.

Diane, a painter and arts activist, was also interviewed for the project. In addition to organizing the window exhibits, Diane was one of the independent artists on the FACP board who advocated for our study, along with Leo. Like many other regional artists, she sees supporting artists as part of her own creative practice:

[T]o have a creative economy that's really vibrant and supporting and sustaining artists, then I've gotta put some energy towards building that. Otherwise, how was it gonna happen? I couldn't expect everybody else to go do it for me. . . . [A]s an activist—that's my mindset—if I want something, I don't sit there and say, 'Oh, somebody should go do this.' I've gotta go do it.

In addition to her activist work, she also uses her web design skills to provide artists with affordable websites to market their work. For example, Diane designed Ellen's webpage.

The region is awash with artists working together informally and formally to support the creative economy. Shortly before our project, the Northampton-based non-profits C<sub>3</sub> and the Valley Art Share hosted talks around Hampshire and Franklin Counties to facilitate conversations based around questions of art and work (see Figure 3.6).

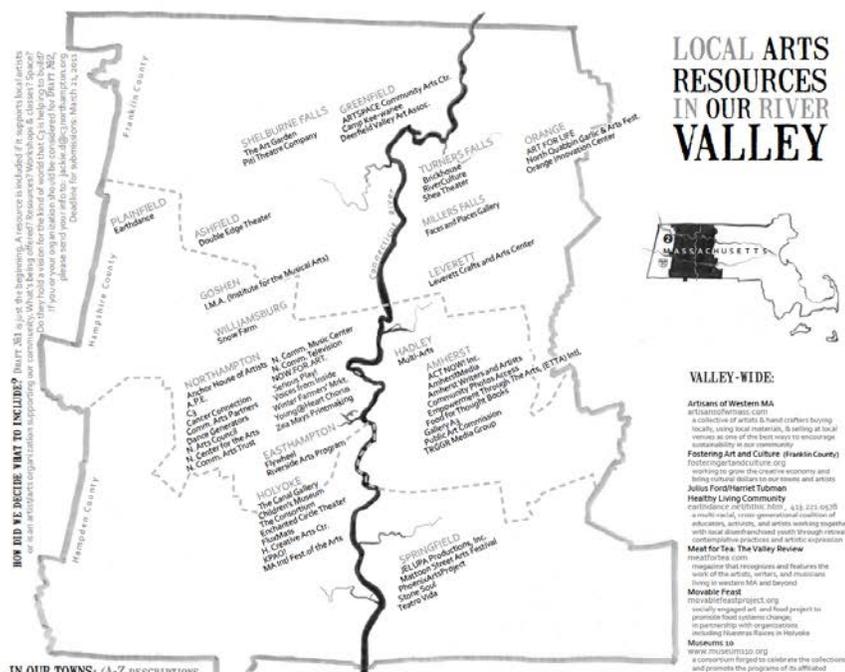


**Figure 3.6: Flyer Advertising Great Franklin County Art Work Conversations**

Phyllis Labanowski, one of the Art Work facilitators, was a member of our research team.<sup>50</sup> As an outcome of the talks, Phyllis designed a map of the existing resources available to regional artists (Figure 3.7).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Phyllis was in the process of graphically compiling the findings from the Art as Work conversations at the same time that she was conducting interviews as a member of our research team, thus she brought a beautiful cross-pollination to her interviews and our discussions as a research team.



# LOCAL ARTS RESOURCES IN OUR RIVER VALLEY



**HOW DID WE DECIDE WHAT TO INCLUDE?** March 2011 is just the beginning. A resource is included if it suggests local artists or organizations. We are looking for information on organizations, individuals, and events. Do they hold a vision for the kind of world that they're helping to build? If you're not sure, please contact us. We'll be glad to help. Deadline for submissions: March 15, 2012.

## IN OUR TOWNS: (A-Z DESCRIPTIONS OF MAP CONTENT)

- ACT NOW INC.**  
actnowonline.org, 413-295-3475  
Builds confidence and motivation in young people, primarily adolescent girls through improvisation and scene-making.
- AnchorMedia**  
anchormedia.com, 413-209-1300  
Provides media access to local residents who want to express their thoughts on social, political, and environmental issues. Also provides digital media expression, also provides digital media expression.
- Anchor Writers and Artists**  
anchorwriters.com, 413-553-3307  
Supports established and emerging writers, from the classical to the contemporary, through workshops, readings, and events.
- Anchor House of Arts**  
anchorhouseofarts.org, 413-584-4323  
Expands the careers and skills of artists living with mental illness, from a multidisciplinary, arts, crafts, and community arts program to public talks & events, and connects artists for resources.
- A.P.E. LO**  
ape-lo.org, 413-550-5553  
Supports contemporary artists working in all disciplines, by promoting and supporting the spaces in which they create, perform and exhibit their work.
- ART FOR LIFE**  
artforlife.org, 413-527-4433  
Art for community connection for art, theater and for community theater in the Quabbin Region.
- The Art Gardens**  
theartgardens.com, 413-835-2282  
A nurturing, non-political and non-ideological environment where all ages and experiences can engage in the creative process and the supportive and nurturing of ideas.
- ARTSPACE Community Arts Center**  
artspace.org, 413-772-5811  
Offering programs, instruction, and advocacy for art in education and in the community.
- Backhouse**  
backhousecommunity.org, 413-803-9576  
Provides community space and resources to mortgage residents for community film project, creative writing, music.
- C3 (a creative community collective)**  
c3northampton.org, 413-555-0273  
Collection of volunteers that generates and supports creative, innovative, and engaging programming in an underutilized space.
- Camp Kee-wanee**  
campkeewanee.org, 413-773-8819  
An inclusive summer day camp with an emphasis on the arts and the best of all that summer offers.
- The Canal Gallery**  
thecanalgallery.com, 413-522-4844  
A nonprofit gallery of contemporary art located in the historic industrial district in Holyoke.
- CANOE CONNECTION**  
canoeconnection.org, 413-588-1643  
Non-profit community organization offering free support, therapy, and creative workshops to people with cancer, their friends & family.
- Children's Museum at Holyoke**  
childrensmuseum.org, 413-528-4300  
Children and adults learn together about art, science and the world around them through hands-on exhibits.
- Community Arts Partners**  
communityartspartners.org, 413-348-5288  
Expanding the presence of the arts in the community and in the schools through projects that create, display and celebrate the arts.
- Community Photo Access**  
communityphotoaccess.com, 413-935-5022  
Promotes digital photography and digital literacy in photography and web-based programs.
- The Corporation**  
thecorporation.org, 413-535-3495  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Dance Generators**  
dancgenerators.com, 413-535-3495  
A performance company whose dancers open up to new ideas, committed to creating work that is vital and challenging.
- Deerfield Valley Art Association**  
deerfieldvalleyart.org, 413-528-0227  
High quality original theater and space for performance, training, research and cultural exchange between artists and their communities.
- Double Edge Theater**  
doubleedgetheater.org, 413-528-0227  
High quality original theater and space for performance, training, research and cultural exchange between artists and their communities.
- Earthdance**  
earthdance.net, 413-631-8828  
A workshop, residency, and retreat center provides a framework of dance, movement, & interdisciplinary arts & writing.
- ETIA (Employment Through The Arts)**  
etia-northampton.com, 413-538-3212  
Inclusive program providing arts opportunities for the enrichment and empowerment of people of all abilities.
- Enchanted Circle Theater**  
enchantedcircletheater.com, 413-534-5789  
Non-profit, professional educational theater company dedicated to engaging, enhancing and inspiring learning through the arts.
- Faces and Places Gallery**  
facesandplacesgallery.com, 413-473-3393  
A gallery of art in photography and a space for gathering and music.
- FluxMass**  
fluxmass.org, 413-527-9500  
A nonprofit organization that provides a venue for innovative work and conversations that engage community about the visual arts.
- Food for Thought Books**  
foodforthoughtbooks.com, 413-535-5434  
A monthly run, bookstore, series of displays by local artists & local food & beverage vendors, workshops, screenings, lectures with artists.
- Gallery A+**  
gallerya.com, 413-268-4350  
A nonprofit, contemporary gallery providing a venue for innovative work and conversations that engage community about the visual arts.
- Holyoke Creative Arts Center**  
holyokearts.org, 413-532-1093  
An adult learning center since 1948 dedicated to classroom instruction of many local arts and crafts of local generations.
- I.M.A. (Institute for the Musical Arts)**  
ima.org, 413-540-3076  
A non-profit training, performing and recording facility supporting women and girls in music & music-related businesses, summer camps.
- ILLUJA Productions, Inc.**  
illuja.com, 413-527-4433  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Leverett Crafts and Arts Center**  
leverettcrafts.org, 413-548-9078  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Madison Street Arts Festival**  
madisonstreetartsfestival.org, 413-735-0529  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- MA International Festival of the Arts**  
mainternational.org, 413-545-0500  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Multi-Arts**  
multiarts.org, 413-976-7933  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Northampton Arts Council**  
northamptonarts.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Northampton Community Arts Trust, Inc.**  
northamptoncommunityarts.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Northampton Community Music Center**  
northamptonmusic.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Northampton Community Performance**  
northamptoncommunityperformance.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- NOVOR ART**  
novorart.com, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Orange Innovation Center**  
orangeinnovationcenter.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Pat Theater Company**  
pattheater.com, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Public Art Commission**  
publicartcommission.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- RiverCult**  
rivercult.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Riverside Industries: Riverside Arts Program**  
riversideindustries.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Serious Play Theater Ensemble**  
seriousplaytheater.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Sea Theater**  
seatheater.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Snow Farm**  
snowfarm.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Stone Soul**  
stonesoul.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Teatro Vida**  
teatrovida.com, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- TRGG Media Group**  
trggmedia.com, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Voices from Inside**  
voicesfrominside.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Winter Farmer Market**  
winterfarmermarket.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Young@Heart Church**  
youngatheartchurch.org, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.
- Zee Mays Printmaking**  
zeemaysprintmaking.com, 413-577-1288  
A nonprofit organization that provides leadership and employment skills, small grants, and programmatic support to artists and entrepreneurs.

Figure 3.7: Local Arts Resources<sup>52</sup>

The map makes visible the variety of arts organizations which artists tend to run and from which they can draw support.

<sup>52</sup> A free copy of the map can be accessed [here](#).

## **Regional Inspiration: Natural Beauty and Access to Fine Arts**

Another feature of the region important to regional artists is the natural beauty.

Visual artist Ruby Rice grew up in Western Massachusetts and the connection to nature afforded by the region is crucial for her work. “I appreciate the beauty on our land. . . . It give me expanse. I realize that I am not alone, not separate from the natural world. That’s key in my work.” Painter Beverly Phelps, who was also born and raised regionally, finds inspiration in the region’s natural beauty. “It inspires me. Everywhere I look it is so youthful. I love the river running through it. For me that is very important to have flowing water.” Beverly also values the region for its access to Fine Arts and Culture. In addition to the high concentration of educational institutions discussed above, there are also a number of fine art museums and the cultural venues opened by regional artists.

Beverly: It is rural enough to feed the artistic soul. And there is so much in the area, from an artistic point of view, that it is difficult to decide where to go.

Jerilyn: What are your favorite cultural things to do?

Beverly: Right now we're doing a lot of activities at the Rendezvous. We like the music there and we tend to meet friends there. I like the energy of the artists in Turner's Falls and there seems to be a lot of energy there to bring more cultural activities to the area. . . . We always have done theater and movies. My husband has a string band so we do a lot of activities with that; a lot of historical and cultural programs.

Beverly illustrates that regional artists and artisans enjoy the region’s cultural institutions not only as part of their own art, but also as part of their leisure activities.

There are a variety of aspects of this region that make it supportive for artists and artisans. The state and region provide a number of institutional supports: access to affordable healthcare, access to small business training, access to grants, and the large number of educational institutions provide sources of employment and opportunities for

degree seekers or those interested in continuing education. A general collectivist spirit among artists and artisans facilitates the entry of new artists, and the large number of arts organizations support artists at any point in their careers. This spirit derives, in part, from the progressive, activist values that are so strong in the region. It is also a response to the difficulties of making a living creatively. As I further develop in Chapter 4, artists and artisans work together for mutual support. The rural, natural beauty of the region also serves as inspiration for many artists, as does the region's cultural venues.

Coming full circle, The Greater Franklin County is a patchwork of towns, each with their own cultural and economic dynamics. These towns share a rural, agrarian, and industrial heritage that continues to shape the region's economy today. The Mohawk Trail portion of the region was hardest hit by the loss of small-scale manufacturing. Its departure has left the region with numerous vacant industrial properties, which hold long-term development potential and immediate risk. The departure of manufacturing also depressed wages for the region, creating a desire for new development strategies.

The potential to utilize the cultural sector in development was first introduced regionally in 1990. One aim was to increase community participation in development planning in order to foreground and protect the region's rural character. This eventually led to development plans aimed at preserving and marketing the region's heritage through cultural-, agri-, and ecotourism.

A second aim of this plan was to help the broader community view the arts as a viable economic sector for development. This aim came to fruition around 2004. Since then, art and culture have been central to the region's development plans. Holding fairly true to the vision of the original plan, the creativity-based development planning for the

region is based around the unique characteristics of the Greater Franklin County. This means that supporting artists and artisans and maintaining the region's rural heritage are at the center of most development. This marks a relatively bottom-up approach to cultivating the region's creative economy. The arts and culture were already strong in the region, and artists and artisans were already changing the face of the region before the popularity of Richard Florida. The popularity of creativity-based development simply allowed the region to connect what they were already doing to new funding opportunities.

Some of the region's artists and artisans were born and raised here and some are transplants. Some came here because of the region's reputation for being an accepting, socially-engaged place, some because of affordable housing, and yet others were looking for a quiet place to retire. Regardless of why they are here, they all make use of the region's unique combination of assets to some degree: institutional supports; a large number of artist and artisan organizations and artists supporting artists; and access to natural and cultural amenities.

The next chapter brings a number of the themes presented here to life through a detailed examination of the economic lives and values of three regional artists and artisans: Court Dorsey, Cynthia Fisher, and Lou Leelyn. All three have varying degrees of experience with grants and working with educational institutions. Lou and Court illustrate how some of the region's progressive values are made material through artistic practice. Court's creative practices make novel use of Quaker non-violence techniques and Lou's creative practice pushed the primarily food-based local movement to also include artistic and artisanal goods. Finally, Cynthia illustrates the importance of access to state funded healthcare, as well as access to training for small businesses.

## CHAPTER 4

### ARTISTIC VALUES AND ECONOMIC PRACTICES

*I am in the camp that believes artists don't choose their path; it chooses them. The more aligned I became with understanding that as my being, the more difficult it became to make choices that were more practical than being what I am. And it became progressively more and more impractical and difficult to manage, on a worldly, material plane, while it simultaneously became more fulfilling, more expansive in self-wisdom, awareness.*

--Visual artist Karen Dolmanisth being interviewed by writer Daniel Mahoney

Like Karen, many of the artists and artisans living and working in the Greater Franklin County have chosen to foreground their creative practices over the pursuit of material gains. Producing art for art's sake is a strong motivating logic within the field of artistic production (Bourdieu 1993). Within the socially-conscious context of the Greater Franklin County, other non-market values such as sustainability, social justice, and bringing art into the schools also shape the decisions of artists and artisans. These values, rather than a market logic, are the organizing principle of their lives. Ultimately, this leaves most artists and artisans striving to find a balance between their organizing logic, be it art for art's sake, social justice, or individual freedom, and meeting their material needs. Regional artists tend to strike this balance by drawing on multiple economic strategies that span both the formal and informal economy.

While all of the artist and artisans interviewed for the study were balancing between multiple logics through both formal and informal economic strategies, there is no recipe for how this is done. Each interviewee was motivated by his or her logic and used a unique matrix of practices to support both art and material need. Thus, in this chapter, my aim is not to present an exhaustive list of all the values which motivate artists

nor of the informal economic practices that they use. Rather, through the use of three vignettes, I illustrate the driving force of artists and artisans' non-market logics, some of the difficulties that can arise in balancing non-market logics with meeting material need, and some of the innovative practices used to attain this balance.

I also illustrate the importance of looking to the role of place in understanding artistic lives. The rural character of the area shapes the strategies and practices available to regional artists and artisans. Therefore, the chapter also provides a window into rural artistic lives, a view that is not afforded by the current literature.

### **Court Dorsey: A Close Look at a Non-Market Logic**

Court is a playwright, theater performer, and musician. He is white and was in his early sixties at the time of his interview. Court grew up in Chicago and has always had an interest in theater and music. In high school he was in rock-and-roll bands, drama club, and theater. In college he majored in theater and minored in voice, while playing in a folk duo outside of his formal studies.

His mother was an opera singer and Court had a vocal teacher who encouraged him to also pursue a career as a professional opera singer. However, coming of age during the Vietnam War shaped his artistic path in a different direction:

[B]y the time I got into college the Vietnam War was still going on and I was aware that political decisions were being made that I felt were not in my best interests and certainly not in the best interests of the people we were attacking...

Court devoted much of his time in college trying to understand whose interests were served by war, as well as doing "philosophical and philanthropic work to try to answer this kind of malady." The malady, as he came to see it, was created by "a kind of self-interest that had gone awry," which occurred, in part, as the pace of technological

advance, “outstrip[ped] our ability to maintain a moral balance in the use of that technology.”

He also came to view this kind of modality, or “way of being,” with its focus on centralization and the use of technology, as leading to the creation of modern cities:

You take a whole bunch of people, you cram them all into a small area, you bring in tons of resources, you burn it all, and out of that comes a kind of influence that everyone else has to just lay down in front of. So to *go* to a city and try to get to the top of that heap didn’t make sense to me. . . .

His desire to be part of something other than this led him to choose a life outside of a major city. It also led him to choose an artistic path outside that of opera singer:

[T]o me, in the sixties when the hippies were in the streets resisting the war, to go off and be singing Puccini or Wagner or something was so far from what was going on around me that it just didn’t have any interest.

Court was thus looking for a way to live and produce art that was connected to the important political and ethical issues of the world around him:

[M]y question became, ‘Well, what is a more sane way to live? What is a more sane concentration of population? How can human beings be a little bit closer to nature? Still have human villages but villages that are not dominating nature but in balance with it. And, how can the arts survive in *that* kind of environment?’

Court eventually found this balance in rural western Massachusetts, and he came here by way of his activism in 1977. He was in his late twenties at the time.

He was connected to a “collective/cooperative/food/art center” called Juicy John Pink’s, located in DeKalb, Illinois, just outside of Chicago. Here, Court was part of a theater troupe and participated in a self-study macro-analysis seminar developed by the Quaker, Philadelphia-based peace organization, Movement for a New Society (MNS). MNS’s goals were to build a decentralized network of informed peace activists, trained in non-violent direct action, with an equal focus on personal growth and collective decision

making (Cornell 2011). Each week Court's self-study group would read and discuss an article on a particular topic. They were deeply moved by the unit on nuclear power. As a result, they decided to mobilize themselves as an affinity group to the Clamshell Alliance, a group who was organizing a non-violent occupation at the construction site of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire:

We aborted the seminar, created a performance piece about nuclear power, formed The Crumbs of Bliss affinity group, packed ourselves into two old beaters, and headed east to join the Occupation (Dorsey 2007).<sup>53</sup>

The occupation, comprising affinity groups like Court's from around the country, utilized the non-violent resistance and collective decision-making tools from MNS. All of the protesters were eventually arrested and held at the Somersworth National Guard Armory for two weeks. This was a rich, and formative moment in Court's life, and he describes the time in the armory as follows:

It was an amazing all-expense paid conference of organizers, activists and artists, all networking and getting an unforgettable education in direct action and civil disobedience (Dorsey 2007).

There was also a lot of cultural exchange in the armory, with a nightly talent show during which Court and his group performed.

Later that summer, Court and his then girlfriend, another member of the Crumbs of Bliss Affinity Group, came back to New Hampshire for the hearings stemming from their arrests. They connected with other activists/musicians who had participated in the occupation and formed a band, Bright Morning Star. The formation of the band had a significant impact on Court's life:

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<sup>53</sup> Court's detailed account of this time in his life can be found here, on the [Clamshell Alliance's website](#). All quotes referencing "Dorsey 2007" are from this blog.

Bright Morning Star spent the next twelve years touring the U.S. and Canada in a blue and white 1962 GMC school bus playing concerts sponsored by the burgeoning anti-nuke movement (Dorsey 2007).

Two of the band members owned a home with some land in western Massachusetts. This property became the band's home base, with Court living in the school bus, parked on the land, between tours.

The band stopped touring in the late eighties, yet Court stayed in the region. Franklin County provided him with that rural setting he was looking for as a young man; "You can have all the beauty of hills and trees and rivers and still carry on cultural discourse with other human beings." As he goes on to say, Franklin County is "user-friendly" for artists:

Franklin County, the valley, is a pretty user-friendly place for artists. I mean artists are respected here. There's a level of intelligence that allows people to want to consume things of beauty, things of intelligence. Maybe because of the educational level. Maybe because of the number of colleges that are around. Maybe because the colleges are fairly *wealthy* colleges and the people that come here come from a *class* of people that have come to expect they can consume beautiful things and that they *deserve* to consume beautiful things. But then there's also so many idealistic people that there's a lot of appreciation for and market for people who are using their skills to lift up the less advantaged.

Court finds two markets for his work in the region. There is a market here for bourgeois art and social art. Court does not specifically produce art to meet bourgeois tastes.

However, a significant portion of the upper middle class in the valley is comprised of intellectuals. For this population, social art is a component of their bourgeois taste.

Since settling in the region, Court has directed his energies toward theater, only playing music if it is for charity or political events. His theatrical work has a spiritual base that revolves around two themes. First, he addresses social and environmental injustices:

[When] left to my own devices I very often think, ‘So what is the social situation we live in? Who is being harmed? What inequities are there? What’s causing harm to the environment, and how can the arts address some of those issues?’

His work also addresses themes of personal liberation:

[W]e have certain limitations in the way we look at the world, about things that we take for granted, about things we think [are] possible, about what we think is true. And when we get to the edges of that, or where we ourselves are limited by our own identity, our own pains, our own wounds, our own, you know, conditioning. Art wants to challenge those limits so we can grow and evolve and become capable of greater vision, greater feeling, and greater passion.

Finally, for Court, personal liberation and the broader social and environmental injustices are inseparable:

So on the one hand, the work has to do with expanding personal capacities or understanding better the human spirit. On the other hand, we are socially constrained, and human beings, different classes of people, different races of people, people of different genders, are constrained by social conditions as well. In order to reach full individual freedom and expression, you need to sometimes expand social constraints and that’s more of the political side of the work. For me, they balance out pretty well.

Throughout Court’s career, he has been motivated not by art for art’s sake, but rather art in the pursuit of liberation and full realization of the human spirit. However, his material needs still have to be met, and to do this Court relies on a matrix of economic practices.

Early in his career, even before the Seabrook Occupation, Court had a chance encounter with the founder of the Universal Life Church, which shaped Court’s approach to balancing one’s life passion and one’s need to put food on the table:

So we picked up this hitchhiker who had founded the Universal Life Church and asked, ‘How did you ever come up with this idea?’ He said, ‘I learned one thing in my life and you’ll learn it too if you want to get along,’ because we were young and he was old. ‘If you want to do what you like to do in life, you have to learn to make your living with your left foot. For me, what I wanted to do was to spiritually empower people so I started a church in which everyone can be a minister. And how do I make my living with my left foot? I charge them \$5 each.’ [Laughing with one strong clap] So, I think there’s something about surviving as

an artist, especially in a rural culture, that has to do with if you want to do what you want to do in life, you've got to learn to make your living with your left foot.

Making your living with the left foot entails maintaining your life's passion on one hand and leveraging it as a way to make an honest living with the other. "Making a living with his left foot" has been a guiding principle in Court's economic life. Court's driving passion is producing art for the liberation of the human spirit. The right foot represents this. The left foot represents what opportunities he has "for survival in a capitalistic society that has to do with making money." His strategy is to find the balance, or "middle path," that allows him to follow his passion while earning enough to pay the bills.

Making money with his left foot requires flexibility, and knowledge of how to navigate the rural characteristics of the region.

[I]f I was in New York and was lucky, and believe me very few people in New York are this lucky, I might *luck* myself into one of very few situations to perform the thing [his theater piece] eight times a week for an extended period of time and make a decent living out of it. It's hard to do that here.

Even though the Greater Franklin County has the cultural diversity to support a theater scene, it does not have a population to support multiple performances of the same piece. Thus, Court had to get creative with his left foot. When he was younger, one strategy was to tour with the band; "touring around rural areas where people will pay you a fee to come in and do it." However, since leaving the road behind, Court has cultivated the skill of casting his net wide. As he puts it:

In a rural area, you can do a little bit of each thing and market it and put together a patchwork that enables you to survive by being more of a Renaissance person.

Court's patchwork is impressive and draws on skills from both his formal education in theater and voice and the conflict resolution skills that he acquired through his activism:

I have a number of different things that I do that all add up to a living wage for me: I do some work in the colleges as a director or actor. . . . I also have a performing life although not a great percentage of my income comes from performance. Well, that's not exactly true because maybe 10% of a year's income might have come from this play. So, 10% isn't nothing for one project. Also, I'm a mediator, conflict resolution worker, and so I do make some money through mediations and facilitations. And then I developed a process that mixes conflict resolution with theater and over the past fifteen years this conflict resolution theater—working in schools, working in community centers, lock-ups, and other places—also has been a portion of my income. So there's a mix of conflict resolution and theater projects.

While it can vary from year to year, Court's right foot brings in about ten percent of his income with his left foot making up the remaining ninety percent. Court is adamant about carving out time for writing, producing, and acting in his own plays; the right foot as he defines it. However, he also views the creativity required for his left foot as part of his creative practice; "it becomes part of my artist evolution to respond to what's popping." This flexibility, and flexibility on the part of community, has allowed his work to flourish. Here he describes how he came to teach at a regional tech school:

[I]t wasn't like it was a job slot available that I had to apply for. It was more like, 'Wow, that's what you're doing? We want it and we'll pay you to do it. We'll write the grants for you. . . .' They paid me because part of it was gang prevention money. Then it went through a phase of being drug prevention money. Then it went through a phase of being pregnancy prevention money. Then it went through a long phase of being a job readiness advisor. The line item said, 'Teaching respect for authority.' That's what they were paying me under. So, in other words, 'What you are giving to our kids is so valuable that we will give you the money to do it and we'll call it whatever we need to call it.'

In this case, Court developed a way to make money with his left foot by developing curriculum to teach conflict resolution skills. These were skills that the school valued enough to take a creative, grant-based approach to funding his work. Court directly attributes this type of flexibility to the dynamics of a rural economy:

The local community is able to be a little more flexible in what it does because it has to be. It can't find the people it needs to what it needs to do exactly. More experimentation can take place.

He contrasts this with having a career in a city where one has to be very specialized in order to get to the top of the ladder, or to "the top of the heap," to use his earlier description of urban life. By living and working in a rural area, Court can direct part of his creativity to reading community needs and creating a left-foot response. He describes it as "a facility to design a response to particular needs" that goes outside of what would be defined as "This is what I do and you can buy it or sell it."

This requires a taking a broad perspective on one's art:

You can't be too narrow-minded. 'How wide is your love?' Do you love to make the thing, or the process of making the thing? Other people's experience of making things like it, or the joy in their faces when they see it, or the joy in their faces when they make it? Now, where in that area are you able to scooch out a few bucks? Spend a little time in that area, too, while you're doing your preferred side of it, without resentment, because it's all part of it, too.

Thus, Court is able to support himself by not narrowly defining the practice of his art. He views the "showing *how* to do" what he does "as an *aspect*" of what he does.

I love the practice of this art form. Some of the time I'm doing it. Some of the time I'm showing other people how to do it, and when I'm showing other people how to do it, that's when I'm doing a lot of left-foot scooping.

However, while he takes pleasure in the left-foot, money-making activities, he is also careful to maintain a balance which allows him to pursue his right-foot activities:

When I get a gig at one of the colleges, they pay me well to come and direct. But a lot of the directing I do nobody is paying me well to do it. Now, if I went to a college and became paid well *all* the time to do it, I'd be struggling to find time to do my own art. Finding that balance for yourself is part of the art.

Court actively chooses not to engage in full-time work, even when it is well paid and related to his art, in order to hold that space for his personal art.

He is able to take this stance in relationship to full-time work for various reasons. First, he lives very simply and looks for overlaps between his art—his business—and his living expenses. For example, because he works with youth, he needs to stay up-to-date with mainstream culture:

If I'm going to go into a school to talk to them [students] about what's going on around them related to conflict resolution, and they start talking about TV shows, and I know nothing about them, I'm at a disadvantage. So I need to keep myself educated.

Keeping up-to-date with pop culture while living in a rural area requires Dish-TV. He is then able to count this expense as a business cost. Additionally, Court does not have a family to support. As he notes, it would be difficult to live the way he lives if he had children. Finally, his ability to forgo full-time work is also based on his ability to get part-time gigs due to his name recognition. At the time of this interview, he had been working in the region for thirty-three years. Work often comes to him.

*Postscript:* Driving home from work in the fall of 2013, I heard Court's voice come across the airwaves of National Public Radio (NPR).<sup>54</sup> Margot Adler was interviewing him about his newest theater piece, "Project Unspeakable," which was being read by the Convergence Theater Collective in New York City. The project is a play adaptation of a book about the assassination of John F. Kennedy (JFK), which Court extended through the use of historical documents to also cover the assassinations of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. The project commenced in 2013, timed around the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of JFK. In keeping with

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<sup>54</sup> Listen to or read a transcript of the interview [here](#).

Court's social justice values, the aim of the project was to utilize discussion of the assassinations to spark deeper reflection on American society as a whole:

[O]ur purpose is to leave the audience with a compelling desire to find out what really happened and why, to reflect on the implications of what happened then for the problems and crises we face today, and to consider why it is that we, as individuals and a society, have become so tolerant of, so unwilling to looking into or even speak about "the Unspeakable" (Project Unspeakable Website).

While Court was the primary scriptwriter, a collective of activist writers and actors organized and run the project, which was funded by private donations. The aim is to encourage as many public and private readings and performances of the play as possible. To this end, Court created four free versions of the script that range from 130 minutes to 20 minutes in length. These scripts are available on the project's website with each version tailored toward use in different types of community settings. At the time of that NPR interview, shortly after the project was launched, there had already been twenty readings held nationwide. The project's aim was to continue to hold readings throughout the country through 2015 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X. As of 2016, readings were still being scheduled.

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Court channeled his early passions for theater and music into a self-made, eclectic career that includes directing, acting, writing screenplays, teaching, conflict resolution, and singing. This career has centered not on producing art for art's sake, but rather around producing art as a vehicle for the liberation of the human spirit. Court's decision to settle in a rural area was also shaped by this aim. He wanted to live a more balanced, sustainable life as part of a solution to modern social and environmental injustices, which he views as inseparable from the pursuit of spiritual liberation.

Over the thirty-plus years that Court has been living in the region, he has found a balance between pursuing his art and making a living that is shaped by this regional, rural context. As discussed in Chapter 3, one segment of the region's population has a strong social and environmental justice focus. This has allowed Court to find support for his work. Court has also been particularly adept at modifying his art and related services to the needs of the rural community, as illustrated by his creation of a curriculum that brings conflict resolution skills to youth via theater. Thus, Court illustrates how one's career and related economic decisions are shaped by one's driving logic, and how the related economic practices are shaped by place.

Cynthia extends this discussion. She is motivated by a different ethic and is the primary breadwinner for a family of four. Her life illustrates the financial challenges and related stresses of the balancing act between the left and right foot.

**Cynthia Fisher: the Challenges of Meeting Material Need**<sup>55</sup>

Cynthia is a mosaic artist. She is white and was in her mid-fifties at the time of her interview. Her long-time friend, Al Ladd, interviewed her. Al, also white and in his mid-fifties, chose to interview artists and artisans, like himself, who had been able to support themselves fully through their art (Al also interviewed Court). However, while both Court and Cynthia have supported themselves entirely through their art, there are striking differences.

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<sup>55</sup> [Click here](#) to view and/or purchase Cynthia's art.

In contrast to Court, Cynthia's path to full-time artist was not direct. Rather, it happened in stages, which started with letting go of beliefs about the unfeasibility of art as a career:

I started out in sciences. I graduated with high honors, and I am really proud of that. I could have had a career with that and done art just as an avocation, which is how I started out. I was always really creative and I loved making things, but I never thought that one could make a living doing that.

Originally trained as a wildlife biologist and gainfully employed by the National Forest Service, Cynthia changed course after meeting her husband, Markus. When Markus heard Cynthia's "life-long dream to illustrate children's books," he encouraged her to make her dream a reality by joining him in attending art school. Meeting Markus shifted her frame from art as avocation to art as vocation. Cynthia described this moment with Markus with much excitement in her voice, but she quickly moved on to recount what she left behind to pursue illustration:

I was going from working full-time and having a regular paycheck, and stability, and security and all of that sort of stuff, to not really knowing, but knowing that it seemed like the right thing to do.

In order to pursue her dream, she actively made the decision to let go of her economic stability and security. This stability not only took the form of immediate benefits and a regular paycheck but also the long-term security that came with the career ladder of government work.

After two years at a prestigious art school in Boston, Cynthia, in her early thirties, embarked on a career as a children's book illustrator. She and Markus lived in Western Mass, and she would travel to New York with her portfolio to secure employment. As she describes, it was not easy:

[T]hat was hard, too; starting to build up a portfolio and keeping on trying to get work, but over the course of my career I illustrated about thirty-five books, and did okay.

With hard work she established a steady income as an artist. However, after about ten years as an illustrator, Cynthia reached a plateau in her work. While she enjoyed the creative aspect of deciding how to illustrate a manuscript, the process of illustration became repetitive for her: “I got to where I could have done it in my sleep if I had to.” As she goes on to elaborate, “I was not really growing anymore artistically and that is a total contrast, a total contrast, I feel like, to what my life is like now [as a mosaic artist].”

Thus, like her earlier decision to leave the Forest Service for art school, Cynthia decided to leave her career as an illustrator to embark on a new artistic medium—mosaics. And, as before, she was giving up security:

I don't make *nearly* the money I used to make when I was an illustrator . . . [however] I feel really lucky that I made a decision to go over to mosaics because my life is so much more enriching and fulfilling and demanding in so many ways.

Part of this fulfillment comes from switching media. However, it also comes from her move out of the work dynamics of the illustration industry:

One of the rich aspects of your life [as an independent artist] is that you are responsible for so many different things—all aspects. You are not just an artist; it is a business too. And when I was an illustrator I had agents who would get work, and it was like all I had to do was wait for the phone to ring, and it just was not demanding enough. I mean I was capable of doing much more than I ever did. . . .

While artists often dislike the business aspects of art, Cynthia has come to view the business challenges of her artistic self-employment as part of the richness of her life. Thus, as a mosaic artist she has to work harder than she did as an illustrator and it is exactly that which she loves.

Cynthia has been motivated throughout her life not by financial security, nor a love for art in and of itself, but rather the challenge of making a creative life work. The challenge requires constant growth not only in her artistic capabilities but also in her business acumen.

Like Court, Cynthia is not originally from the region, but after thirty-plus years living here, she has a deep love and appreciation of the area:

*I love it here.* Absolutely love it. And barely a day goes by that I don't appreciate my lifestyle, and what my life has become, and a great deal of that is that where we live is so beautiful. I always find time to just go out and enjoy the natural area here, and that is a really important part of who I am. It also really contributes to my artwork.

Access to the natural world is crucial for Cynthia. She is an avid cyclist and runner and she makes sure that she spends time on one of these activities "every single day." As she puts it, this outdoor physical activity has "almost equal priority" for her wellbeing as doing her art. Being in nature also provides inspiration for her work; she has a line of nature-inspired work and a line capturing the changing seasons, "To Everything There is a Season."

Both Cynthia and her husband Markus are artists. At roughly the same time that Cynthia moved to making mosaics, Markus embarked on a career in professional photography, which he supplements with carpentry. Cynthia is the primary breadwinner. Their choice to live creatively means that their lives and the lives of their two children look different from the lives of similarly-educated professionals:

Sometimes I think, 'Did I do the right thing? I have a college degree. I do not make a lot of money.' But we own our own home. We do not have any debt and that is the key. And we are really lucky there that we can afford to do that. Because I know that everybody is not in that kind of position. We don't spend a lot of money; we don't have a lot of money to spend. But it's kinda like, you don't need money to have a good life.

Cynthia and Markus make less money than many others who also have bachelors' degrees. Part of their ability to live on less is, as she notes, based on the fact that they own their home. Prior to their marriage, Markus owned a one-room cabin in western Massachusetts that he had added on to over time. He and Cynthia then continued to add on to the home after they became a couple. They did the work themselves, with Cynthia learning the carpentry skills in practice. It is this do-it-yourself mentality and the skill to do so that partially undergirds their ability to not "spend a lot of money." In addition to doing as much of the home construction and repairs as they can, they also garden for a portion of their food supply and chop their own firewood.

Their ability to not spend is also undergirded by fierce frugality:

Truly, the key to our existence is that we don't spend a lot of money. To the point where I will always be, well, Marcus jokes, 'You could be rich and still have the same attitude.' And I'm sure he is right.

This means that in addition to doing as much as they can on their own, they also find ways to save on the elements of life that they cannot.

[E]ven being as low income as we are, we did two home exchanges so we went to Europe with the kids and that had a big impact on them. . . . I, we, found as many opportunities as we could that were affordable

They were able to maintain elements of a middle-class lifestyle through looking for alternatives such as traveling to Europe through a home exchange. For clothing, they do 99.9% of their shopping at Goodwill, to the extent that their teenagers have finally been "converted" to buying used. Living in a rural area, their only option for high-speed Internet is satellite, which, at \$100.00 per month, they cannot afford. Thus, to work online they have adopted the practice of taking their laptop to places in town with free

Wi-Fi. However, not all elements of a middle-class life can be substituted, and that means that money is always a struggle.

Their financial struggle was obvious throughout the interview, but in the excerpt below it is most poignant. Al was reflecting back the triumph that he sees in Cynthia's life. While she started her response in concordance, reaffirming her commitment to a rich life, she trailed off to then start talking about her financial fears:

Al: The decisions that you made as a family thirty years ago, turned out to be the most important of all, really. That you can make a change in medium, making it harder to make a certain amount of dollars per week, but you are happier for it.

Cynthia: Yeah, absolutely. And that is kind of a cool life lesson, in terms of the richness of your life is *way* more important than the dollars at the end of the day. I feel so lucky that I have discovered something that I love so much. And we are not rolling in the dough, and we are downright poor in the financial scheme of things but [pause]. And at some point we're going to have two kids in college and that is pretty scary, because, like I said, I do feel pressure that we have to be making more money because *we do*. Even though [daughter's name] got lots of scholarships, we still pay a big chunk of it too.

With one child in a private, liberal arts college and their second child approaching college age, their expenses are on the rise, adding additional pressure.

Another cost which is hard to substitute is health care. Because both Cynthia and her husband are self-employed artists, their annual family income can vary significantly from year to year. This means that before Massachusetts implemented its 2006 health care reform, their access to health care was in constant flux:

Our family has always been on the brink of qualifying for MassHealth [Massachusetts' Medicaid program] some years, and some years not, and we would go from great coverage to nothing and it would go back and forth and back and forth.

During these years of flux they made sure that the kids always had health insurance, but as Cynthia puts it, “Markus and I would be on our own,” meaning without health insurance:

And I was like, ‘That is the gamble we are going to have to take,’ and if something catastrophic would have happened we would have been in *big trouble*. But that was our gamble.

This gamble with their health care was a significant stressor for her and her husband. It left them without affordable access to even routine care and an accident or catastrophe could have created significant financial hardship. Access to state-based health insurance is yet another reason she loves being an artist in Massachusetts.

Cynthia and her husband illustrate the risks and financial stress that many artists and artisans are willing to face in order to organize their life around their own motivating values. Choosing to organize around art or, in the case of Cynthia, living a creative, rich life means that economic stability is *not* the center of decision making. This leaves Cynthia and other regional artists and artisans balancing between their motivating logic and meeting material needs. This balance is struck through a mix of formal and informal economic practices that benefit both Cynthia and her family and the broader community.

As mentioned above, Cynthia is the primary breadwinner for the family, and has been making her living as a mosaic artist by always maintaining several, simultaneous “baskets or income streams:”

I teach, I do residencies, I apply for public art projects, I do the private commission work, and then I create my own personal work to sell. So I have like five different avenues where money can come in.

Prior to the 2008 economic downturn, her primary basket was privately commissioned pieces: residential commissions, which can be as small as house numbers or as large as

major installation pieces such as customized mantles and bathtubs; and architectural commissions, often for public spaces such as hospitals or schools. However, commissioned work “took a complete nosedive” during the downturn; inconveniently, as she and her husband were getting ready to send their oldest child to college. The downturn, thus, required that Cynthia turn her creativity to modifying her income streams.

One strategy was to rethink her approach to teaching. While the economic downturn had diminished the ability of customers to commission work, they were still willing to pay to learn the craft themselves. Thus, Cynthia took teaching into her own hands. Rather than teaching for craft centers, she started teaching two-day mosaic workshops out of her own studio. Choosing self-employment required that she spend more time maintaining an active and updated website to promote the events, which also included driving to town for high-speed Internet access. However it allowed her to earn significantly more money through teaching. “Instead of getting paid 20 bucks an hour, I charge essentially the same kind of prices that they [the craft centers] charge, but I get it all.” Incorporating teaching into her self-employment meant that 100 percent of the proceeds was hers.

Teaching workshops out of her studio also had an economic ripple effect in the community. Most of her workshop participants were from out of town, meaning that they needed places to sleep and eat. As Al put it, her workshops are a “clear case of bringing in revenue to the local community beyond what you are attaining for yourself.” And Cynthia is active in this process. For example, the mosaic workshop information page on her website contained a link to the Airbnb rental rooms of one her artist friends.

Cynthia developed an additional and more laborious income strategy that also benefited the broader community—a public art project for Shelburne Falls. While she had done public art in other parts of Massachusetts and in others states, she had never been commissioned to do a project in her own town. “Instead of just waiting for opportunities to come to me, I was kind of like creating my own opportunity,” and to this end she presented a proposal for a public art project to the local governing body. “I told them what I wanted to do and that they were off the hook—they didn't have to worry about funding. I was going to do grant writing to cover all of it.” The town council accepted her proposal, and from planning to finish the project took 1.5 years. The project was her way of sharing her love of the region and it included ten 3' X 3' mosaic panels, one for each of the hill towns in the western part of Franklin County, and two larger panels with cross-cutting themes: the Deerfield River, and a portrait of Native American life.<sup>56</sup>

Cynthia’s project was ambitious and required a lot of support from the broader community. She started by making connections. She first secured the enthusiastic support of the superintendent of schools. This allowed her to work with kids in the area schools to design and tile the mosaics. Next, because grant funding is hard to secure as an individual, independent artist, she acquired the support of the Shelburne Falls Civic Beautification Association. The organization acted as her 501(c)(3) sponsor, allowing her to apply for grants available for nonprofits. The grant writing process turned out to be the most significant challenge:

It [grant writing] is really hard when you are self-employed because you don't get paid for grant writing, and you cannot just write it into the budget that this is the grant writing portion. So you're just doing it. . . . If you have a regular job and you're on salary, then grant writing is part of your job.

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<sup>56</sup> [View the mosaics here.](#)

For independent artists, the time-consuming work of grant writing is uncompensated. And for someone like Cynthia, who was grant writing for the first time, this process can be very lengthy. She invested a significant amount of time both researching and writing the grant proposals. However, grant writing is not only unpaid, it is also highly speculative; there is no guarantee that funding will come through, and this speculation is a significant stressor.

I was writing grants starting in July and I wasn't gonna find out until the end of December whether I was getting any of them. And, here, meanwhile, I'm having to make all the connections to make the project happen, investing all of this time not really knowing [if the project will happen]. And I had so many times that at two o'clock in the morning, I would wake up in the middle of the night I was like, 'Oh man, is this gonna work?'" I then, I even got to a point where I really felt committed, that I had to do something no matter what. So, if I made next to nothing, I still was gonna do it.

Cynthia applied for fifty of sixty available grants, receiving six for a grand total of \$23,000. This was \$12,000 short of her goal, which meant that some [most?] of her labor was donated:

I did all the work I said I was gonna do, but the personal compensation in the monetary realm was not there. But it has been a *fantastic* project in so many ways. The money is the least of my worries.

What started as a hope of supporting her family and community, ended up as a donation of her time and talents. However, she focused on the positive, non-monetary benefits for the community and herself.

Cynthia's community-based mosaic project truly brought various sectors of the community together to make art. It was not only a project for the community but also by the community. Third graders from seven area elementary schools determined what

should be featured in the mosaic for each of the ten towns based on information presented by Cynthia:

Third graders have a unit on the local area . . . so I tied the project in with the curriculum by giving the history of the area. It was fascinating; I learned a ton doing it, which I also love about doing these kind of projects. So the kids learned about the area, and then they came up with the idea of what should be included in each of the town mosaics. So, again . . . the whole reason for the project is . . . appreciating the local area. That was just so, so fun.

Through this interaction both Cynthia and area youth learned more about the area, while at the same time the third graders could take ownership of the content presented in the mosaics.

Cynthia designed the mosaics based on what the children wanted in each panel. She then went back to the schools. Elementary students nipped and laid the tiles and middle school and high school art students finished the mosaics. Simultaneously, she organized students at the technical high school to build the frames for the mosaics. She also held two community events at the Senior Center at which the two larger mosaics were completed. She then contacted local businesses to house the finished projects on their storefronts. Thus, her project design allowed for community members from various layers of the community to take ownership of the project. Finally, the community at large enjoyed the art, even if they did not participate:

When people see the mosaics they recognize the different elements and it is really, really cool, you know, seeing people appreciate, you know, like, 'Oh, there's the library' or 'There's Ashfield lake' or 'Oh, I know where that is.' That kind of stuff; it has been really neat.

Cynthia did not receive any monetary compensation from the Shelburne Falls mural project. However, having her appreciation for the region reflected back to her through the community ultimately made the project a success.

*Postscript:* In her interview, Cynthia discussed her desire to seek out more opportunities to participate in public art to broaden class-based access to mosaics:

I would love to do more public art, and a big reason is that mosaics are expensive and mostly wealth people can afford them. And I am really grateful for wealthy people who have that money, but I would really like more people to be able to appreciate mosaics.

Since the interview, Cynthia has been able to make this desire come to fruition through applying for publicly-commissioned work. She has worked in concert with community members in neighboring cities such as Greenfield, in states such as Florida, and has worked abroad five times with four projects in Guatemala and one in Chile. She has also increased the scope of her teaching, providing workshops around the county. Finally, she has expanded her repertoire of services to include consulting and restorations, and her work has been featured in six different books on the art of mosaics.

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Cynthia is emblematic of the hidden economic practices and often undervalued contributions of the artists and artisans of the Greater Franklin County, artists committed to working for and in the community as an integral part of making their living. Cynthia makes her economic decisions based on a broad understanding of quality of life.

First, she is motivated by the desire to live a rich, creative life. This led her to incrementally step away from a life organized around financial security. She first left a benefited job with the Forest Service, becoming a commercial illustrator. She then left the financial security of commercial work to pursue self-employment as a mosaic artist. She loves her life—she is able to organize her time around her art, family, and outdoor activities as she chooses, all while living in a region she loves.

Cynthia, like many artists and artisans, actively made the choice to have less money in order to live the life she wanted to live. She supports her family through maintaining a diverse range of income streams, self-provisioning, and living frugally. However, this has left her and her family more exposed to financial risk, which has created stress around decisions such as health care and sending her children to college.

Cynthia is also committed to contributing to a higher quality of life for her broader community. When she learned that the Shelburne Falls mosaic project did not receive enough funding to cover her labor costs, she could have scrapped the project, but she didn't. Her commitment to share her love of the region and the time that she had already invested in the project made her willing to see it through to its end. Teaching workshops out of her studio also brings in out-of-town guests who then contribute to regional economy through lodging and eating. Finally, committed to increasing the number of people who have access to mosaic art, she regularly seeks out community-based mosaic projects in which community members work with her to create the art being installed in their community.

### **Lou Leelyn: Artists Supporting Artists**

As Cynthia demonstrates, being a full-time artist can lead to significant financial challenges. Lou Leelyn illustrates how artists and artisans work together to meet these challenges. Lou is an eco-artist who makes art from post-consumer, non-recyclable waste. Specifically, she makes yarns and fabrics from plastic bags, which she then forms into purses, bags, glasses cases, wallets, etc.<sup>57</sup> She is white and was in her early thirties at

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<sup>57</sup> [Click here](#) to view Lou's work.

the time of this interview. Like Cynthia, Lou did not initially view her craft as something she could pursue professionally:

Art was something that had always been drilled into my brain as something that ‘must be a hobby.’ I grew up upper-middle-class, where college was not an option—you just went. [And you had to pursue] a degree with business and/or something that would move you forward. The art and music were just something that you did to enrich your soul but you couldn’t do it as a career.

Lou originally set her sights on nursing as the occupation that would “move her forward.” Living with her wife and daughter in San Diego, Lou had worked many years at a long-term care facility, crafting only for her pleasure. However, after a friend commented that she wanted one of the items that Lou had made, Lou realized that her crafting could become a source of income.

Lou was raised from the perspective that “you are nothing unless you go to college.” Therefore, she started selling her work at small craft fairs in San Diego only to support herself as she started working on the prerequisite courses for her nursing degree:

So, I had thought that this quote unquote small business that I was nurturing at the time, I just thought it would just be something that was income that would nurture my creativity but keep me on track to be in school and support me through school.

Two years after starting to sell her work, she and her family moved to western Massachusetts. While in San Diego, Lou worked full time to support the family as her wife finished her law degree. When her wife graduated with her law degree, it was time for Lou to pursue her four-year degree in nursing.

She chose to come to UMass for her degree for three reasons. First, both her and her wife had family on the east coast. Second, as a same-sex couple, she and her wife chose to move to “a state that would support our family.” They specifically came to the area imagining that they would live in Northampton, given its reputation as a community

that embraces same-sex families. Finally, Lou looked forward to being nourished in the academic scene of the five colleges.

However, they did not end up choosing Northampton nor did Lou pursue her degree. They chose Franklin County based on its rural beauty and on their ability to live connected to their food source, to “b[e] close to food and where it is grown, understanding the earth around us and farms.” This connection to food and care for the environment made Lou feel at home:

[I]t wasn't until I arrived and I saw someone carrying a reusable bag at the grocery store that I knew, 'Okay, we are here.' Because I was that nut that got looked at in San Diego, 'You want to use your own bags?'

Not only was Lou using her own bag, she was making the bags. The green-friendly culture of western Massachusetts, thus, not only provided a feeling of belonging, it also provided an extensive market for Lou's upcycled products. It was this success that eventually led her away from a nursing degree.

Savvy about keeping down the cost of college, Lou did not want to pay out-of-state tuition. She set her mind toward making a living with her art for a year while she established residency, planning to apply to UMass the following year. New to the area, she utilized selling as a way to also make social connections, and she found that farmers' markets were the best venue for her:

Living close to the farms and tasting what an actual tomato tasted like, I fell in love with that [food culture] at the same time [that I was establishing myself as an artist], so then farmers' markets just seemed to be the kind of venue that I wanted to be at. I hadn't signed up for craft fairs yet, mostly because I did not have very much inventory. So the market was the way to be like, 'Okay, I just moved here and I need to integrate socially. I need to find people who want to buy my things, and I want to be around the culture of food.'

Thus, she started out by having a booth at any farmers' market at which it cost less than thirty dollars to sell.

Getting started was rough; in her words, "a gamble." By paying to have a booth, she was spending money to make money with no guaranteed returns. It was also a difficult time for her wife, who had moved her independent consulting practice across the country. Neither could support the other financially during this time as they were both "grasping at straws as to how to make this work." As she recounts, "It was the starving artist and the starving attorney looking for clients and looking for customers." However, they found the struggle worth it, as they loved the natural beauty and the culture of the Valley. After ten years together, living in various places around the country, they discovered Franklin County "is *exactly* the community that we have been looking for."

Lou started to find her foothold through the Greenfield Farmers' market. This is a well-established, lively farmers' market. With live music, dancing, and "food-truck like" food booths, it is as social as it is a functional place to purchase fresh local produce, meats, cheeses, and breads. Here Lou decided to specialize in five products in order to master her quality control and branding. She credits her ability to view the art process through a business lens to a number of years during which she managed a restaurant. She viewed her creative business as "an accumulation of everything I'd ever learned." But she didn't stop with what she already knew:

I just kept adding on, whether it be by creating a better business card or making a product that more people want. . . . I made the art that I wanted to make but I modified it in the slightest way to match what people were really looking for. So my passion is my tote bags. [With the tote bags] I can do my graphic arts and collage so I feel that my tote bags are my art. But, I applied that art to things like wallets, coupon holders, and other functional items because I can then put my name, and my art and my style, on something that is being used every day.

Thus, like Court and Cynthia, Lou's success was in great part due to her willingness to be flexible and to innovate. It was also about being in the right place at the right time.

Lou's art is driven by an environmental imperative. She has a passion for utilizing her art as a vehicle for educating the broader public about the dangers of plastic waste. As she says on her Etsy page, she is "vehemently advocating for the reduction and responsible use of plastic bags." Her aim is not just to create a beautiful object, but also to create objects that provoke reflection on the users' consumption habits. She intentionally chooses to make items like wallets and glasses cases so that the user would interact with the art daily. They could *reflect* daily.

As she was establishing herself in the region, "'go green' had just hit," allowing her to grow her business along with the rise in environmental awareness.

Because I'm playing with green and the environment, I can throw my net out very, very wide. I teach workshops and I go to schools. . . . Last fall I went to over 15 schools. And I have done either lunchtime or afterschool programs with them or actually go into their art class and we make things. We make collages with the plastic.

However, her teaching is not limited to schools. She also hosts workshops at regional libraries and for civic organizations. This work is paid for by cultural grants and it is a significant portion of her income:

I continually apply for grants within each town or city or village. . . . I was able to schedule at least three workshops a month and that is huge because for a three-hour workshop I charge \$200. . . . I bring all of the materials and everyone gets to make a wallet. And we talk about where trash goes and what is happening with it. There is a whole 'send the message home part,' but there is also a 'let's get down to it and make something' part.

These grant-funded workshops thus filled in her income from sales, which by this point had also expanded beyond farmers' markets to include craft fairs and online sales through

Etsy. She also started hosting private workshops and/or parties paid for by the participants themselves:

I do birthday parties, which seems kind of silly, but it is so much fun. I just did a birthday party with five 14-year-olds. They saved up their trash for a month. And I'm kind of stubborn in a way, because I won't do these events unless we are talking about the environment with them. . . . Each of the girls made a tote bag. They got to design it, got to create the raw material, and got to use their own trash, and it was really good for them. And I got to make some money.

Securing these types of events required a lot of legwork on Lou's part, spanning the art and green social circles:

[I]n the first two years I talked to everybody that I possibly could. Anybody who I could link on to who was in the arts or who was thinking about the environment or who was thinking about establishing a green club at their school. The opportunities are endless if you keep your ears open about people doing what you are doing.

This type of networking, matched with her high-quality product and successful branding, paid off:

In only two years I had my business established and I was making money. I was known throughout the community. I had been sought out by persons who wanted my work. I had been sought out by gift stores and larger stores who wanted my work.

In fact, Zoe, the artisan interviewing Lou, was stunned to learn that at the time of the interview Lou and her family had only been living in the area for three years, given that Lou is such an active and known member of the artisan community.

It was, in fact, through the artisan community that Zoe and Lou had first met. Lou loves the freedom of self-employment:

I think that the allure of working for yourself, no matter what business you are in, is you coming up with the game plan and seeing it through. It is for yourself. It is not because somebody assigned you a job or a project. You are not constantly under the eye of somebody else. If I fail it is something that I have done wrong and I need to look at that again critically, and I may have to move forward differently. I don't have somebody saying you did that wrong, and now do it my

way. The allure of it is that you just keep creating your path and you are in charge of that path.

Like Cynthia, Lou thrives on the autonomy and challenge of making a creative business work. And in a very short time she had established herself in the region. However, as she talked with other artists and artisans at craft fairs, she learned that many artisans struggle with how to move from creating art to having a creative business. Lou had applied a business acumen accumulated in other fields toward her art, but not all artists and artisans have such skills. She wanted to see a place where regional artisans could pool their collective knowledge to support one another in making a living from their art or craft. Thus, she and several other artisans created a support organization called Artisans of Western Massachusetts (AWM).

The organization served two primary purposes. The first piece is “changing the artists’ mind” by providing support for all aspects of a creative business, like web design, marketing, etc., which may seem overwhelming for artisans just starting out:

AWM provided a more comfortable way for someone who has never done any of [the business aspects] to come in and gain confidence. And say, ‘This can be done. Here I have to my right people who are just starting, and to my left I have businesses that are established.’

AWM meets this aim through a number of avenues which are linked through the organization’s website. Members have their products or services listed on the website, providing advertising, while an “upcoming events” section helps keep artisans apprised of opportunities to network and sell. There is also a running blog in which members are regularly interviewed. The interviews provide a spotlight on the artisan’s work and tips for fellow artisans. For example, routine questions include, “How do you promote your business?”; “Any advice for the newbie artisan?”; and “During tight times, how do you

run your business more efficiently?” Finally, the blog lists which members will be showing at each craft fair. This allows members to find each other to network at the fair and provides a guide to consumers, tapping into AWM’s second aim.

The second aspect of AWM is to reach consumers. Lou wanted to better understand who buys from local artisans:

I was getting people to buy my wallets. So, people wanted to carry around my art in a back pocket and put their library card in it, and I thought that was so flattering. And then I thought, ‘Well, how did people come to buy my wallet instead of heading over to Wal-Mart and buying a wallet there?’ It’s cheaper there. . . . Why did they want to carry my wallet?

But it is not only understanding who currently buys but also how to enlarge that base:

Now that you can get your art out there, now that you have marketed yourself, how do you convince someone that buying your art is better? Better for everyone: for the environment and for their pocketbook, inevitably; for our pocketbook; for the Valley's pocketbook; for our town's pocketbook.

In this respect, AWM draws on the model of the local food movement. They highlight the economic circuits of consumption to encourage consumers to keep their dollars circulating locally:

You’re inevitably going to buy your sister a birthday present. You're going to get your parents a wedding anniversary gift, or make them one. That money needs to be spent, eventually. How do you switch that, to keep it in the local creative economy? And that is what I think about before I go to bed. And that is why CSA [community-supported agriculture] was so productive in getting people to shop in the farmers’ markets. Because they constantly hammered home that that two dollars you are spending for the four red onions is much better spent, and is worth more, if you spend down the street.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> CSA is an economic model in which consumers pay a farm upfront for access to a share of produce/agricultural product. The aim is to support local farming by providing a reliable customer base and monetary compensation early in the season. In return, consumers have access to ultra-fresh produce and often have the opportunity to visit or spend time on the farm.

Thus, at the same time that AWM expends resources supporting artists, they also expend resources to shift consumption patterns by doing outreach to educate consumers that buying local supports local artists/artisans and their families. To increase the number of people purchasing locally made arts and crafts, the organization maintains a list of artisans organized by product type, location, and by occasion (e.g. baby, wedding shower, anniversary); hosts and sponsors a number of regional craft fairs throughout the year; and maintains a listing of the brick and mortar stores and galleries that carry products of AWM members.

Finally, drawing these two aims together—empowering artisans and encouraging a shift in consumption—Lou hopes to be part of a change in how artists and artists are valued by their communities as a whole:

We [artists and artisans] feed the economy just as much as a movie theater, or a restaurant, or a local paper shop, or a gas station or drugstore. Our money is being spent. As artists we buy materials. We use electricity to create our goods. We use machines that have been purchased here. We gather supplies. We eat at restaurants while we are working. We support other artists. All of our money is cycling here.

The contribution goes beyond what artists spend. They also bring people into the community:

One of a city's favorite things to have is a convention center, because convention centers bring in people. They bring money in to the city . . . [so] it is something that cities vie for. 'How can we get the national conference on Rubik's cube research to come to our city because there are five thousand people coming in?' So the same works with craft shows, and I don't think people acknowledge that. . . . People *come* to the arts and crafts scene. And how much money do they bring? *A lot*. Do they just spend it on the arts right there? No. They are buying gas. They are going to the convenience store. They are staying at a bed and breakfast. They are coming to eat dinner at the restaurant nearby. *We* bring people.

Lou makes the case for recognizing the ways in which artists contribute economically as both consumers and producers. By making comparisons with gas stations, movie theaters,

and convention centers, which are considered to have economic benefit without question, she is making visible a cultural bias and undervaluation of artists:

It is seen that we are trying to only live our own creative dream and, if we actually got a *real job* and if we actually got a job from nine to five with a W-2, then we would be contributing to society and making things move forward. I do not think we are a subculture at *all*, and I think we are nurturing the economy in more ways than anyone can even look at or imagine right now.

As Zoe, who is also a former psychoanalyst, points out, this is exactly the belief that Lou had to overcome in order to pursue an artistic career. It is the story that she was told as a child, as were many of the other artists and artisans who participated in this study. It also points to a feeling of undervaluation that many artists in the study noted.

*Postscript:* In the spring of 2016, Lou retired the production side of her business:

I spent 2015 reflecting on my business model and direction. As hard as I have worked, it is time to turn the corner and I am ready to see what is next for me. Birthing a creative business from scratch and keeping it viable and sustainable is harder than anything I've tried yet. I'm so proud of how much I've accomplished but the truth is that Lou's Upcycles cannot sustain itself or create a viable living wage for me, or those I've dreamed of hiring. Like I always say, 'I'm just one woman with two hands,' and working 60-plus hours a week and traveling nearly every weekend in pursuit of my goals is something I just can't commit to any longer (Lou's Upcycles 2016).<sup>59</sup>

She was proud of the work she had accomplished and the number of people she had met, inspired, and been inspired by through her eco-art. However, producing and selling her art had become unsustainable. Creating her products was very labor intensive, and she had to travel to shows to sell her products. Taken together, she was working too many hours for too little financial reward. She has since sold all of her stock. Her business now thrives on a busy workshop schedule. This allows her to continue sharing her passion for

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<sup>59</sup> Read the rest of her [statement here](#).

art and environmental education while bringing in income without the long hours.

Additionally, after eight years of organizing artists and artisans in western Massachusetts, on April 30, 2017, Artisans of Western Massachusetts dissolved.<sup>60</sup>

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Lou illustrates the tenacity of artists in following their vision in the face of family pressure to do otherwise. While her wife and daughter were supportive, her father did not support her move to the arts until he saw that she could support herself. She was motivated in her creative business by the freedom of self-employment and the deep desire to change consumption habits that lead to plastic waste.

Lou took the most pleasure in making tote bags—it is where she could fully unleash her creative self. However, needing to support herself and her family meant that she created various product lines and she drew on and expanded her previous business skills to successfully brand and market herself. Upon recognizing that many of her peers lacked the skills necessary to make a business work, she became one of the founding members of AWM: an artist organization that utilized a collective strategy to meet the challenges of making a creative business work.

Finally, Lou illustrates that place matters for one's art making. Her creative business took off when she moved from San Diego, which did not have a green-friendly culture, to western Massachusetts, which did. In the Greater Franklin County there was a market for her products and enough people interested in learning how to reduce their ecological footprint to populate multiple workshops a week, a number of workshops that

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<sup>60</sup> I do not know what happened. I learned that they dissolved only when I found that the link to their website did not work. However, it is very common for arts organizations to fold in the region, given limited financial resources.

continues to this day, ten years later. Additionally, Lou gained her footing selling at farmers' markets. Steeped in the politics of the region's well-developed local food culture, she then transferred those politics to arts and crafts, building a movement with other artists to value local art. This movement had momentum for eight years.

### **Diverse Economies of Artists and Artisans**

Court, Cynthia, and Lou illustrate that artists and artisans living and working in the Greater Franklin County organize their lives, including economic decisions, around a range of values not typically associated with the economy. All three are self-employed entrepreneurs. However, their decisions do not revolve around maximizing profit by following "rational" economic self-interest. The logic of the field of art is distinct from the logic of capitalist market economies (Bourdieu 1993; Caves 2000; Eikhof and Haunschild 2006, 2007). However, this analysis also illustrates that "art for art's sake" does not capture the depth of the values shaping the decisions of many artists. The artists in this chapter produced art motivated by a number of values—liberation of the human spirit, living a rich and creative life, and producing art that challenges consumption patterns. These values connect the pursuit of art to broader questions about the quality of life for themselves, their communities, and the social/environmental world more broadly. As a result, understanding their economic lives necessitates utilizing a theory of economy that encompasses this diversity.

The diverse economy framework, developed in economic geography, provides the flexibility for reading values and practices that fall outside of the logic of capitalism as economic. The framework utilizes an intentionally weak theory of economy. "Little more than description" (Gibson-Graham 2006:8), weak theory supplies a set of loosely-related

categories whose exact configuration we cannot know ahead of time, but which rather take shape in context. From this perspective, the economy does not exist outside the myriad ways in which it is enacted in place. What the economy is in a particular locality and how it is enacted becomes an empirical question to answer rather than an *a priori* assumption of an all-encompassing capitalist system.

Through utilizing this weak theory of economy, the motivating values of artists and artisans are not read through a capitalist lens rendering them “un-economic” or “irrational.” Rather, I read them as different values around which to organize economic lives. The artists’ decisions and practices are logical based on their values. It was rational for Court to choose part-time employment over full-time employment from the perspective that he wants to maximize the time he can devote to making his own, liberating art. It was logical for Cynthia to walk away from careers that provided more financial stability in order for her to prioritize her overall quality of life.

Additionally, the diverse economy framework takes a very broad approach to the study of economic practices. Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003) and Gibson-Graham (1996) extend feminist economists’ attention to non-paid labor. They argue that economic activity—activity that supports individuals and communities—is much more than just paid and unpaid labor within a capitalist market economy. It encompasses *all* forms of labor: wage; non-wage, or alternative, paid labor; and unpaid labor (Gibson-Graham 2006). It also encompasses all forms of transactions: market transactions based in profit logic; alternative market transactions in which exchange is based on broader social motives such as fair-trade; and non-market (Gibson-Graham 2006). It encompasses all forms of enterprise. Enterprises are defined broadly to incorporate all types of

“production units”—businesses, government institutions, farms, households, etc.—that generate and distribute wealth (Gibson-Graham 2006:59-60). Finally, it also encompasses property relations and finance (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). Cataloging diverse practices draws attention to economic practices like barter or unpaid labor, which are often excluded from economic analyses.

The diverse economies framework also puts capitalism in its place by decoupling economy from capitalism. Gibson-Graham (1996) define capitalism as a particular form of labor relationship that exists within the space we call economy. Capitalism occurs in relationships where an individual sells his or her labor and the right to the surplus created by that labor in exchange for a wage (Resnick and Wolff 1987). Conceptualizing capitalism as a form of social relationship rather than an always-already-constituted economic system is a significant departure from classical Marxian analyses. Moving away from a system-based definition allows researchers and community members to look to the “radical diversity of economic relations” (Gibson-Graham 2006:60) or practices which exist in a particular locality. Highlighting this diversity of practices is a political move aimed at providing a foundation to foster different, more equitable economies.<sup>61</sup>

Gibson-Graham (2006) breakdown Resnick and Wolff’s (1987) definition of capitalist relations even further, creating the category “alternative capitalist.” In both capitalist and alternative capitalist enterprises, employees exchange their surplus labor for a wage. What differs is the distribution of the surplus. In capitalist enterprises the

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<sup>61</sup> While on its face this simple act of defining capitalism seems mundane, one is hard pressed to find capitalism defined in most social scientific literature. In the instances where it is defined, there is still considerable ambiguity as to how to define core concepts such as “class.” For a lucid discussion of the challenges in operationalizing concepts core to the Marxian tradition, see Manza and McCarthy (2011).

appropriated surplus is directed toward further expansion, management, and shareholders. In alternative capitalist enterprises, this is not the case. For example, non-profits fall in this category because the appropriated surplus cannot legally be kept as profit. State enterprises also fall into the category alternative capitalist because the surplus is distributed for public benefit.

The economic practices of Court, Cynthia, and Lou provide a glimpse into some of the various types of economic activity that occur in Franklin County’s creative economy. Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 plot the economic activity noted in each of their interviews and their postscripts. The categories in this table are taken from Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy (2013). They are intentionally open-ended in order to include the largest range of economic diversity.

<b>TRANS-ACTIONS</b>	<b>LABOR</b>	<b>ENTERPRISE</b>	<b>PROPERTY</b>	<b>FINANCE</b>
MARKET  Box office ticket sales	WAGE  Contracted by regional colleges to direct plays  Contracted by regional technical school to teach conflict resolution classes	CAPITALIST	PRIVATE  Lived on a friend’s privately-owned land <sup>62</sup>  Directing/uti-lizing space at private colleges	MAIN-STREAM MARKET
ALTERNATIVE MARKET	ALTERNATIVE PAID	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST	ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE	ALTERNATIVE MARKET

<sup>62</sup> Court did not own this land. However, his ability to squat here without fear of removal was dependent on his friends’ private, legal ownership of the land.

	Self-employed	Working for/in state-owned entities such as public schools, prisons, and community centers	Renting practice space at the Grange  Conducting conflict-resolution/uti-lizing space in public schools, community centers, and prisons	
NON-MARKET	UNPAID  <i>Gifting labor:</i> Performs music at charity events and/or political rallies	NON-CAPITALIST  “Project Un-speakable” was developed and run collaboratively	OPEN ACCESS  The script for “Project Un-speakable” is freely available on the project’s website	NON-MARKET  <i>State appropriations:</i> Wages for teaching at the Technical School received through public grants  Founding for “Project Un-speakable” provided by donation

**Table 4.1: Court’s Economic Activity (continued from previous page)**

<b>TRANS-ACTIONS</b>	<b>LABOR</b>	<b>ENTERPRISE</b>	<b>PROPERTY</b>	<b>FINANCE</b>
MARKET  Purchasing materials to make her mosaics  Selling her work	WAGE  Receiving a wage for teaching, consulting, and restoration work	CAPITALIST  Contracting with craft centers  Contracting with businesses	PRIVATE  Owns home and studio  Storeowners allowed the mosaics from the Shelburne	MAIN-STREAM MARKET

			Falls community project to be hung on their storefronts  Commissioned work in private homes and businesses	
ALTERNATIVE MARKET  Purchasing clothing at the Goodwill	ALTERNATIVE PAID  Self-employed	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST  <i>Nonprofit:</i> Regional 501c3 allowed her to affiliate in order to apply for grants available to non-profits; contracting with nonprofits  <i>State entities:</i> contracting with municipalities	ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE  Commissioned work in non-profit or publicly-owned spaces	ALTERNATIVE MARKET
NON-MARKET  <i>Barter:</i> House exchange to travel abroad  <i>State appropriations:</i> Health insurance provided by MassHealth	UNPAID  <i>Self-provisioning labor:</i> gardening; do-it-yourself home repairs & additions; chopping wood  <i>Gifted labor:</i> for Shelburne Falls	NON-CAPITALIST	OPEN ACCESS	NON-MARKET  Shelburne Falls community art project funded by grants from private foundations

	community art project; advertising the rental room of a fellow artist on her website			
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**Table 4.2: Cynthia’s Economic Activity (continued from previous page)**

<b>TRANSACTIONS MARKET</b>	<b>LABOR WAGE</b>	<b>ENTERPRISE CAPITALIST</b>	<b>PROPERTY PRIVATE</b>	<b>FINANCE MAIN-STREAM MARKET</b>
Paying fees to Etsy for online sales  Selling her products online		Affiliation with Etsy	Operates out of a home studio  Utilizes space in private homes for teaching	
<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE PAID</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVE MARKET</b>
Paying entrance fees to sell at craft fairs and farmers’ markets  Selling at craft fairs and farmers’ markets	Self-employed	Teaching workshops at regional community spaces, schools and in private homes	Utilizes space in public schools, libraries, and community centers for teaching	
<b>NON-MARKET</b>	<b>UNPAID</b>	<b>NON-CAPITALIST</b>	<b>OPEN ACCESS</b>	<b>NON-MARKET</b>
The raw material for her art, non-recyclable plastic, is donated by individuals	<i>Self-provisioning labor:</i> creating the fabric for her art by	Founding member and active participant of the artisans’ collective, Artisans of		<i>State appropriations:</i> workshops funded through community cultural grants

	ironing plastic  <i>Gifted labor:</i> volunteering her time and talents to Artisans of Western Massachusetts	Western Massachusetts		
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**Table 4.3: Lou’s Economic Activity (continued from previous page)**

A number of similarities occur across their activity, activity that is tied to the characteristics of the region itself. First, the importance of the state is evident across multiple areas of economic activity: access to health insurance, use of space, and funding. The 2006 expansion of MassHealth was crucial for artists and artisans living in Massachusetts. Cynthia, like many of the interviewees, went from either no health care or sporadic care, to steady, affordable care. Additionally, state-run properties are also important. They are Cynthia’s canvas, while for Court and Lou they provide a space in which to teach. Finally, Lou and Court have relied on state-sponsored grants. While Lou received culture-related grants, Court’s wages were based primarily on health- and wellness-related grants like pregnancy prevention or drug prevention. He is not the only one. For example, another interviewee, a juggler, made his livelihood by developing a traveling show that he and a fellow performer presented at school assemblies, utilizing art and humor to teach kids about making healthy decisions.

Donation also played an important role. All three donate their labor in one form or another. Again, this was common for the other study participants as well. Artists and artisans regularly give back to their communities through a donated labor, such as free

performances and donated art, often sold in charity auctions. In addition to donating to the community, Court and Lou in part relied on donations. Court relied on donations for the financial support necessary to develop the script for “Project Unspeakable,” which he then made freely available, and Lou for the raw material of her art, post-consumer plastic bags.

Additionally, Lou and Cynthia support their art making through having at-home studios, which was common among interviewees. Access to space is a crucial aspect of art/craft making. Space is necessary to produce and show one’s visual art and to practice and perform. The Greater Franklin County has a relatively low cost of land, housing, and rental space. While access to space is not what attracted Lou, Cynthia, or Court to the area, it did attract many of the other interviewees. It brings in artists from out of state and from surrounding towns. While many artists discussed moving to the area after comparing the cost of housing and studio space between Franklin County and New York City, others came to Franklin County from surrounding towns such as Amherst and Northampton. The lower cost of owning or accessing space allows more artists in the region to own or rent spaces in which to produce their art/craft.

This access to space and land also affects the practices of self-provisioning. For example, Cynthia self-provisions through vegetable gardening. For some artists, self-provisioning also includes small-scale animal husbandry, for example, raising ducks, chickens, goats, or a few cattle, which can provide a food source and supplemental income when the surplus is sold.

Agricultural-based self-provisioning is tied to the region on two fronts. First, it is rural. In cities, the land available for gardening can be quite limited. Animal husbandry is

not only limited by the availability of land but also by city ordinances against such practices. This means that in rural areas artists can attain a higher quality of life living on a limited income than in a city. They can access housing and property for less and have fewer regulations about how that land is used. Both facilitate the ability to supplement a limited income with self-provisioning. Second, returning to the region's cultural patchwork, self-provisioning is also tied to the Yankee spirit of the region: the self-reliance and ingenuity discussed in Chapter 3.

Court and Lou both participate in collective, non-capitalist enterprises with other artists: Lou through founding and participating in the AWM and Court through "Project Unspeakable." Participating in collective activities with other artists and artisans was common for many of the interview participants. For example, a group of oil painters meets weekly in a church basement in Bernardston to support one another in continuing to paint. They also purchase art supplies together in bulk to bring down the individual cost to each painter. In Shelburne Falls, Lea Banks, a seasoned poet, organized a monthly poetry reading at a local café to give up-and-coming poets a place to share their work. In Wendell a group of artists and artisans run a non-profit coffee house. It provides the community with a social gathering place and entertainment. It provides regional artists and artisans a venue in which to perform, and all the proceeds go to local environmental and service organizations. These activities are all part of the communal spirit among artists discussed in Chapter 3.

Finally, Court, Cynthia, and Lou all utilized a combination of local and non-local markets, selling/performing both at home and further afield, supplemented with teaching. Tapping multiple markets was a strategy used by nearly all interviewees who sell their

work or who perform as part of their income stream. As highlighted throughout the last two chapters, the Greater Franklin County supports artists in a myriad of ways—inspirational natural beauty, affordable housing, land, and studio space, and a diverse culture. However, the region’s low population density means that the local market alone is not sufficient to support artists and artisans. All of the regional artists and artisans who are able to support themselves with their art/craft have, at a minimum, an active web presence and/or name recognition that allows them to earn a living beyond the region’s boundaries. Additionally, most full-time regional artists and artisans, though not all, also supplement sales with teaching their art in some capacity: workshops, private lessons, etc.

The importance of the state, donation, affordable access to work and living space, self-provisioning, collective organization, access to multiple markets, and teaching opportunities became visible through this diverse economies assessment of the economic activities of Court, Cynthia, and Lou. This assessment also highlights the multi-faceted role of artists and artisans in their communities: they are producers, consumers, teachers, organizers, and volunteers. Finally, the assessment makes clear the place-based specificity of economic activity. The rural nature of the Greater Franklin County makes workspace, land, and housing more affordable. This allows for more property ownership among artists and more latitude in how they use that land. The diverse cultural of the region is also particularly supportive of social art.

All three of the artists presented in this chapter organize their lives around non-market logics. These logics then have to be balanced with meeting material needs. They each balanced between their right and left foot using a matrix of economic strategies that

span a diverse economy. For all three artists, market exchange and capitalist enterprise comprised a small portion of their overall economic activity. The state, on the other hand, played a more significant role by supporting artists' projects through cultural and health and welfare grants, by commissioning public art, through providing access to affordable health insurance, and by providing the venues—schools, libraries, prisons, community centers—in which artists work. Court, Cynthia, and Lou's economic practices are fairly representative of the full-time artists and artisans in the study who did not hold full- or part-time arts-based jobs. Additionally, many of the practices and values of the artists highlighted here are place specific. These findings have significant implications for how artists and artisans can best be supported, which will be a focus of Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 5

### INEQUALITIES WITHIN THE FIELD OF ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

*[T]here aren't that many books out there, but I've snagged them if the title says 'Artist in Society' and then there will a chapter where the guys said, 'Then for women it's really crazy, but there's no time for that in this book.'*

*-Karen Dolmanisth, visual artist, being interviewed by writer Dan Mahoney*

A man writing about how there is no time to talk about what it is like to be a woman in the field of art exemplifies the need for this chapter. Chapter 4 explored the diverse values and practices that shape artistic lives in the Greater Franklin County. This chapter explores how class, race, gender, and parental status shape those same lives. What are some of the processes through which group-based inequalities manifest in the field of artistic production? What are strategies used by artists and artisans to persist and thrive as creatives in the face of inequalities?

The field of artistic production is different from other conventionally-professional fields and conventionally-commercial fields. As discussed in Chapter 1, barriers of entry into the field of artistic production are much lower than professional fields such as medicine or law, which require years of schooling. Barriers are also lower than starting most commercial businesses where significant capital is needed. If these well-documented processes of exclusion are not shaping inequalities in the field of artistic cultural production, what are? And why do inequalities persist even when the field is known for inclusiveness and celebrating diversity?

One answer is the extreme variation within the field of artistic production, which leads to extreme variation in income. The lack of barriers of entry to the field, or a

mandated professionalizing process like formal education, means that there is variation among artists and artisans in terms of ability and knowledge of how to make a living as a creative. Additionally, there is extreme variation in artistic and artisanal media. Some are more commercially lucrative than others, some are more prestigious than others, and some have more job opportunities. Finally, even within the same medium there is extreme income variation; the difference between a musician who has “made it” and one who has not is astounding.

Inequalities in the field also extend beyond income. In the field of artistic production the elements of prestige, reputation, and evaluation often matter more than in others fields. Additionally, the ability of some artists and artisans to pursue art full time, even when it is not financially lucrative, creates inequalities.

Taken all together, there are extreme differences among artists and artisans at the individual level. One’s medium, skill, prestige, and available time and resources can vary widely. As a result, there is more income inequality in the arts labor market than in other fields that require similar levels of human capital (Menger 1999). These field-specific inequalities also interact with group-based inequalities. With the exception of a few subfields, artistic occupations have tended to exclude based on race, gender, and class. However, my review of the sociological literature on artists and cultural production found that intersectional inequalities are very rarely discussed, pointing to a significant gap in an academic understanding of the challenges faced by diverse artists and possible supports for artists and artisans from groups historically excluded from the arts.

## **An Uneven Playing Field**

The lack of discussion within sociology is not for lack of inequality within artistic occupations. This section draws on research conducted by arts organizations: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP). I also draw from the work of Jahoda et al. (2014), a study conducted by BFAMFAPhD, a collective of artists, designers, technologists, organizers, and educators who challenge the current political economy of art.

Within the artistic field, access and outcomes vary by race, class, and gender. Studies of full-time artists find this occupational group to have equal numbers of men and women, but beyond that it tends to be less socioeconomically and demographically diverse than the American workforce as a whole (NEA 2011). Artists as self-identified in the U.S. Census tend to be White and have completed more years of schooling than the national average. However, disparities along the axes of race, class, and gender exist even among artists who have completed formal arts training. Significantly, women and people of color who have graduated from art schools are less likely than White men to remain as artists in the workforce (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project 2013; Jahoda 2014).

Gender and race not only affect who persists as an artist but also one's field and income. Artistic fields tend to be segregated by gender with movement toward parity in some, but not all, fields. Men largely dominate higher-paying fields such as architecture, producing, and directing. The field of dance and choreography has remained female dominated; yet, women are becoming writers at rates equal to men. In the unequal field of artistic production, 45% of male graduates compared to 12% of female graduates report earning \$50,000 or more per year (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project 2013:9).

Despite the entry of women into a wider number of artistic fields, on average women still earn 81 cents for every dollar earned by a man working in the same field (NEA 2011), a wage gap that persists even for younger cohorts in the arts (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project 2013).

Race and ethnicity also affect one's field, with non-white artists underrepresented as writers and authors, though, like women, they are highly concentrated in the field of dance and choreography (NEA 2011). However, the relationship between race, ethnicity and income is unclear, as it has been under-studied. For example, one of the few studies to explore the relationship between income, race, and ethnicity, the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (2013), did not find significant disparities in income based on race. However, they found that Black artists were slightly more likely than White, Hispanic, or Asian counterparts to hold more than one job. It could be that Black artists are holding multiple jobs in order to reach income parity with other racial groups.

In addition to shaping one's field within art and income, race and gender also influence the experience of artists more broadly. For example, in art schools Black and Hispanic students take longer to complete their degrees and report lower levels of satisfaction with the sense of belonging and being encouraged to take risks. Women and students of color also report less satisfaction than White male counterparts with their opportunity to network while in school. Graduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to report that their social networks assisted in their careers, while students of color report that the networks they do establish were quite influential in their success in artistic occupations. The SNAAP study also finds that graduating with school debt decreases the likelihood that Black and Hispanic alumni will persist in artistic

careers. However, graduating with debt does not affect the likelihood that White alumni will persist in the arts. Additionally, having had a private art lesson at some point in their lives benefits Black alumni more than White. Thus we see that the same factors—networking, having private lessons in childhood, graduating with debt—affect artists from different backgrounds in different ways. It is thus impossible to accurately discuss the experiences of artists without also taking into consideration the variation in experiences based on one’s social location.

Bourdieu (1993) provides the most robust work on class differences in the field of art. His study of the history of writers and artists in France finds that the interaction between economic, social, and cultural capital shape artistic careers (Bourdieu 1993:68):

[E]conomic capital provides the conditions for freedom from economic necessity, a private income [*la rente*] being one of the best substitutes for sales [*la vente*].”

As such he found that wealthy writers could “concentrate almost exclusively on their art,” while “the least well-off writers resign themselves more readily to ‘industrial literature,’ in which writing becomes a job like any other” (Bourdieu 1993:68). Economic capital also:

provides the guarantees [*assurances*] which can be the basis of self-assurance, audacity and indifference to profit—dispositions which, together with the flair associated with possession of a large social capital and the corresponding familiarity with the field, i.e. the art of sensing the new hierarchies and the new structures of the chances of profit, point towards the outposts, the most exposed positions of the avant-garde, and toward the riskiest investments, which are also, however, very often the most profitable symbolically, and in the long run, at least for the earliest investors.

Economic capital provides the economic assurance that can then shape an artist’s disposition toward profit, providing the self-assurance needed to be indifferent to money. This allows artists from the upper classes an embodied *and* economic freedom to pursue

avant-garde art, which is the most risky of all art forms, but is also the form that has the largest symbolic and financial pay offs if one is successful. This passage also illustrates the role of social capital.

Social capital has various definitions and uses within the field of sociology. For Bourdieu, it refers to actual or potential resources available, based on durable networks or relationships; “membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu 1997). Artists from upper classes are more likely to be part of networks which provide the resources, including knowledge, to successfully participate in the artistic fringes.

Finally, cultural capital, which can take the form of embodied dispositions, cultural goods, or credentials and qualifications, also shapes artistic careers (Bourdieu 1997). The passage above highlights the relationship between economic and cultural capital. Artists from wealthy backgrounds have the economic freedom to confidently take an indifferent stance toward earning a living from their art. As we will see in the interviews presented below, artists and artisans from poor or working-class backgrounds have a very different embodied relationship to money. In these families would-be-artists are socialized to foreground the ability to earn a living and to avoid economic risk. Thus, when artists come from class backgrounds where access to family-based economic capital cannot be assumed, they either choose secure paths, such as the example of “industrial literature” from Bourdieu's research, pursue art on the side while maintaining full employment, or, if they choose to undertake an avant-garde career, they have to

reprogram their embodied disposition toward money while also facing great economic risk.

Taken together, race, class, and gender all shape artistic careers differently, and as I will develop below, so too does having children. Yet, none of these social categories are static nor do they work in isolation. They work in ever-shifting concert.

In this chapter, I explore two sides of group-based inequalities. Because discussions of intersectional inequalities are lacking in the sociology of artistic production, I trace these inequalities in the lives of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County. What are some of the challenges that artists face based on coming from working class backgrounds, being an artist of color, being a woman artist, and being a parent? I find that intersectional inequalities shape embodied dispositions toward the arts, access to resources such as education, cultural and economic capital, and the time available to devote to art. I also find that race- and gender-based cultural norms play a role in shaping the social and family pressures that artists face.

Through the use of vignettes, I simultaneously illustrate these challenges and how artists transcend them to pursue art on their own terms. All of the artists and artisans highlighted in this chapter face group-based challenges in their artistic lives. Concurrently they persist. For some this means pursuing art full time even if it leads to extreme financial instability. For others it means pursuing art on the side while earning a living in another field. Yet for others, primarily mothers, it meant pursuing art primarily after their children left the home. Irrespective of which of these paths they take, all of the artists and artisans have succeeded in maintaining art and/or creativity as an integral part of their identity.

## Class Background

### **Robin Parsons**

Eager to make use of the opportunity to meet and network with other regional artists, Robin was one of the first artists to apply to be part of the research team. In fact, by the time Robin joined the research team, making use of all available opportunities to grow as an artist was an integral part of his *modus operandi*. However, Robin had a long, hard road to get to this point in his life. From a working class background, Robin had been taught, early on, that art was not important nor was it a viable career:

Robin: [M]y family is very working class. My dad was a car mechanic, and my mom was a nurse. And I was the oldest of four kids and in some ways, you know, there have been times where I've kinda like scratched my head – how did I get born into this family? You know, this person who loves opera!

Abby: Mmhmm.

Robin: This person who loves art of all kinds and who is just, you know, who is attracted by, you know, poetry. My shelves are filled with poetry, you know, Dickens literature and, you know [pause] I love reading and I think in some ways my family didn't know what to do with me.

Abby: Mmmm.

Robin: I was kind of precocious as a kid and there was a piano in the house and I started teaching myself how to play piano. And, um, and, you know, I never got piano lessons except for six months and the money ran out and they told me I had to stop piano lessons. And eventually [pause] I mean, I reconciled with my mother around this, but eventually what happened is my mother gave away the piano.

Abby: Mmmm.

Robin: Because, you know, it made too much noise in the house when I played it. And she said I could go down to our church, which was in downtown Northampton, which was about a three and half or four mile bike ride. . . .

Abby: Mmmm.

Robin: . . . if I wanted to play the piano, I could go play down there.

Abby: And how old were you then, Robin?

Robin: I was, like, 12. And I wasn't very good at speaking up for myself. I mean, there was a part of me [pause] there is a part of me that's always, like, I blame myself for not saying, 'Wait – I'm not done with it yet!'

Abby: Mmmm.

Robin: And, you know, it's kind of like I had to reclaim creativity for myself. And, you know, also when I started going to school at GCC, I started out studying art and music, you know. That was my passion. [. . .] And so I started studying music and one day my mother asked me, you know, what I wanted to be. You know, what I was hoping to become career-wise. I told her I wanted to be an artist and a musician. And she immediately discouraged me from that. And, you know, 'cause her concern being working class was, 'Will I be able to make money? Will I be able to support myself?' And I was very susceptible to her opinions at that time. I very much wanted to please her. So I didn't stop the music classes; I did stop the art classes. And I studied piano while I was at GCC [. . .]

Robin: And and so then I started taking psychology and sociology classes and I started getting A's. And I thought, oh – well this is good. And so, you know, another time when she asked me I said, 'Well, I want to become a family and marriage counselor.'

Abby: Ah.

Robin: So I started studying to become, you know, that kind of thing.

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This passage from Robin's interview highlights several elements about his working-class background. First, Robin was interested in poetry and opera and learning the piano, all of which are considered important in middle- and upper-class families as part of the process of cultivating cultural capital. In his working-class home, however, there was only money for six months of piano lessons. Yet more striking, the piano was considered noise in his household, and Robin's love of poetry and opera marked him as different rather than cultured.

Thus, Robin learned as an adolescent that art was not something of value for his family. When he embarked on his college career, he learned that art was not only of no value but that it was also considered dangerous; that a career in art would undermine his ability to make money and support himself. Robin learned this lesson so well that after finishing community college he left art behind and went on to receive his bachelor's degree in sociology. He then worked for more than a decade in social services, first in his native New England, then in San Francisco.

However, *living* this lesson came at a significant toll to Robin's mental health; he reached a point where he was not sure that he wanted to continue to live. Looking back at that time, from his vantage point twenty years later, Robin describes the years closed off from his creativity as hell:

In order to feel like I'm alive, I have to do creative things. If I don't, I know where I'm gonna go. You know, because I've been there. I don't know if you've ever heard of this but there's a [pause] there's a saying that religion is for people who don't want to go to Hell and spirituality is for people who've been to Hell and don't want to go back.

Reopening his creative self saved his life. The twenty years since his return to creativity are filled with moments of serendipity which Robin links to his spiritual imperative to be creative:

Robin: [...] And it just seems like... I guess, for me, this certainly describes what the spiritual imperative, to me, is that...is that ever since I really began to focus my life on creativity, all of these things started coming to me. You know, like, I remember one time I was talking with a friend. We were talking about opera. And he looked at me and he said, 'You know Robin, have you ever been to the opera?' And I said, 'Oh, no – I've never been to the opera; it's really expensive. I mean, it's like, the cheapest ticket's like 50 bucks and I never have 50 bucks.' You know. And he just looked at me, he said, 'I don't know, Robin, this seems like an area of deprivation for you.'

[Laughing together]

Abby: Yeah!

Robin: ‘You know, every time you talk about music or opera or anything, your face just lights up! You know, you’re just, like, you become totally enthusiastic.’ You know, and I say, ‘Well – okay.’ You know. And it was just a little while after that that I happened to be talking about this – this conversation with a different friend – and he says, ‘Oh – well don’t you know about standing room at the opera? The tickets are only like eight dollars!’

ABBY: Oh!

[Laughing together]

Robin: I was like, ‘What!’ And I went to every opera production that season and the next year and the next year.

This passage represents one of the many examples from Robin’s life where “things started coming to him” once he embraced his creativity. It also highlights the depth of his love for opera. He was a fan of opera since childhood but did not actually attend an opera until much later in life. It also illustrates that, while Robin rejected the working-class socialization to leave art behind, he chose to embrace art in a way that was economically practical. To this day, Robin continues to connect to his creativity while also maintaining a steady, non-arts related income. It was this joyful, vibrant Robin who was such a vital part of our research team:

Robin: And now, now what . . . I want to envision myself as an old man with a smile on my face as opposed to a snarl or a grimace. You know? I mean, the person I was as a social worker, I was headed to being someone with a lot of regrets. And now . . . now, you know, I don’t feel like I have a lot of regrets for my life. I don’t feel like I’m going to have a lot of regrets. You know, because I can say I’ve sung in *La Bohème*. I’ve sung *Marriage of Figaro*. You know, I’ve sung in Brahms’ *German Requiem* on Davies Symphony Hall Stage. That was the first big concert that I ever sang in. And, you know, that was *Davies Symphony Hall Stage*. At the end of it, you know, at the end of the concert, it was like I was walking 6 feet off the ground. . . .

[Laughing together]

Robin: And, you know, even if I never make millions of dollars, um, I feel like I have a rich life already. I still want to do things, you know. I still want to do things to feel that sense of peak life experience. And now I know I probably won't stop myself.

Robin did not stop himself from his next peak artistic experience. As I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, several months after this interview Robin showed his visual art for the first time in the art show hosted by our research team. Robin's mother, who has since embraced her son's creative soul, was there for the opening of the show and was, in fact, the only visitor to buy art at the show.

Working-class family expectations shaped Robin's pursuit of creativity. He suffered a higher emotional cost than artists from class backgrounds that support creativity. At the same time, in the face of these difficulties, he demonstrated extraordinary personal strength, which ultimately allowed him to pursue a creative, artistic life on his own terms.

### **Karen Dolmanisth <sup>63</sup>**

Karen's life is a testament to her active resistance to class pressures to prioritize economic security over art. She is a visual artist in sculpture, drawing, and time-based works. She is a single mother who was in her mid-fifties at the time of the interview, and is also from a working-class background:

I'm from a lower middle background and there's sort of a family upbringing that everyone works, gets a job, and supports themselves, men and women. That is achieved through hard work and education.

Unlike Robin, Karen was not dissuaded from art. Her grandfather was an illustrator so art was not considered outside the realm of possibility for her family. However, while her

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<sup>63</sup> [Click here to follow Karen's work.](#)

family supported art, it was supported to the extent that it could be tied to hard work and a steady living. As she says, "practical."

Knowing that she wanted to pursue art, but that her family could not afford to send her to college, Karen worked hard and secured a competitive scholarship to attend art school in New York City. From the beginning, she planned for a practical career, which she achieved.

Karen: I decided I'd be a freelance artist in New York and learn the tools to do that. That was practical and it stayed practical. I did freelance in New York. I supported myself. I also wanted to make enough money to give back to my mom and dad, because there was a 'not enough money' mantra.

Dan: Um, hum.

Karen: So following art kind of sucked because I couldn't...

Dan: [chuckles]

Karen: If I did art, and didn't, like, kick-in in some way, they were still going to be crabby about money the rest of our lives. You know, struggling.

Dan: Right.

Karen: Which resulted in crabbiness [laugh in her voice].

Dan: [chuckles]

Karen: And, so I made a practical decision that if I went to the right school in New York, that could train me to be able to freelance, that I could support myself and help my family with the money I made. And I, I fell in love with art in the closet, fine art, during my twenties and late teens in New York. It was the '70s and I was exposed to things that my background didn't expose me to. The New York art world in the '70s [...].

Daniel: You said art in the closet.

Karen: Fine art. I really became a lover of the world of fine art, but I closeted it. It was like my secret love. . . . I didn't have the middle-class automatic critique, like 'that sucks, a monkey can do that.' I loved it all. I loved it. It was so me, although I had a lot to get through, to kind of become part of it.

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Much of what Karen had to “get through” before she could become part of the world of fine art directly links to her class background. As we see in the passage above, Karen’s working class habitus shaped her engagement with the world of art. She was raised to consider art as a practical endeavor that could support her and allow her to financially assist her parents. Thus, she approached fine art as something to keep hidden, as something that could tempt her away from the practical life that she was expected to lead.

While her class background organized her route to art, through her art Karen began to transcend her class dispositions. The longer Karen was in the art world, the harder it became for her to strike a balance between making art for a living, being practical, and making art as part of her calling. She describes her need to do art as a force nearly external to her:

It would be far more practical and less humbling and humiliating to be a woman at my age with a kid if I could make better practical choices, like really give the art up.

However, as she articulates:

I am in the camp that believes artists don’t choose their path; it chooses them. The more aligned I became with understanding that as my being, the more difficult it became to make choices that were more practical than being what I am. And it became progressively more and more impractical and difficult to manage, on a worldly, material plane, while it simultaneously became more fulfilling, more expansive in self-wisdom, awareness.

Here we see the very real tension between the logic of art for the sake of art and meeting material needs. She goes on to say, “It has gotten more and more further from a potential middle class life as I’ve been more and more owning that I am not an artist by identity or ego or role or job. I’m an artistic being. . . .” Thus, as Karen continues her transition away

from art as job, she gets further away from the middle-class lifestyle she had been raised to desire.

Coming from a working-class background, Karen had to overcome a double pressure to pursue commercial art rather than art for art's sake; she was raised against taking risks and she was expected to send money back to her parents. Additionally, when she falls on hard times economically, she has no family-based safety net, making her less competitive than artists that do have economic support from family. As she describes:

[Artists with trust funds] create an illusion about art making. Poetry, choreography, dance, music: as if the ones who aren't doing great work, successfully, it's because they're not good. When actually, they may not have enough money to make good art even with their abilities and dedication.

Karen, like any artist without an economic safety net, has to balance the amount of time spent on art-making with the time spent meeting material needs. This balancing act, which for Karen, is tipped in favor of following creativity, has forced her to move four times as her artistic neighborhoods gentrified. She and many of the other interviewees in the project moved to the Greater Franklin County because of its affordability and she has been living here for the past twelve years.

Once settled in Western Massachusetts, she continued to move, keeping a fixed studio space while transitioning between various housing arrangements. Given her very limited income, she first rented a home, taking on roommates to split living costs. She then lived with a partner who owned his own home. He paid for housing costs while Karen covered the costs of raising her son and producing her art.

At the time of the interview, she and her partner had separated and she and her son were homeless. They were receiving state support through a homeless program and receiving food stamps. However, her cultural and social capital led to a temporary living

arrangement. She posted her need for affordable housing on Facebook and a wealthy family responded, providing her temporary board in a vacant vacation home in exchange for art. Recognizing that the relative privilege afforded by her cultural capital is the only thing keeping her and her son out of the shelter system, she volunteers, working with other homeless women who don't share her cultural buffer.

Karen's class background does not affect her artistic career in isolation; it is compounded by gender expectations and the responsibility of single parenting. Without economic supports, Karen struggles to provide for her son, again placing her at a competitive disadvantage with artists who do not have children or with artists who can pay for childcare and/or have a partner to share parenting responsibilities. She also struggles with the social expectations derived from normative mothering, norms which expect her to prioritize her role of mother over her role as artist:

I'm like the artist who'll have a studio before I'd have a home. It's like so hard because I'm a mom and that's not allowed. [The social norm is that] you cannot keep making art and raising a kid if you're poor.

Karen actively resists cultural pressure to prioritize mothering over art. However, this resistance is not without an emotional toll. Karen clearly struggles with the social stigma of her choices as she trails off after voicing her departure from normative mothering; “[The creative process], that's my biggest treasure. It's my wealth. My son, I'm supposed to say, but he is. . . .”

Taken all together, these intersections impede Karen's ability to compete as an artist. For example, cultural entrepreneurship is the fad within the creative economy discourse; however, Karen explicitly outlines that her status as a poor mother makes the self-crafting and marketing required by entrepreneurial endeavors nearly impossible:

I'm too busy making ends meet: raising a kid; developing my art, 'cause I haven't done my best work. My work doesn't come close to what I am capable of. I'm really scraping by to just keep making it. I don't have time to promote. I don't have time to package. I don't have time to get *slick*. I don't have time to do my writing about what I do with a *spin on it*. I don't have time to specialize. You know, the stuff just comes out and if there's an invitation just give me a place and a date. I show up; you get my work.

Thus, we see that even when Karen aims to organize her life around art, the economic instability caused by this arrangement leaves her scrambling to “make ends meet.”

Ironically, the decision to foreground art can create so much economic instability that the artist ends up spending more time securing and worrying about money than creating, let alone marketing, their art.

The experiences of Robin and Karen make visible how class background can significantly impact trajectories in the arts. Middle-class children are often raised to appreciate art as part of cultivating cultural capital, and their families spend economic capital, in the form of private lessons or attending cultural events, to bring this cultural capital into being. Working-class families have a different set of priorities for their children. Instilling a drive for economic stability trumps cultivating cultural capital. While it manifested differently for Robin and for Karen, both viewed pursuing creativity as a dangerous deviation from their embodied economic imperative. Thus, for children from working-class backgrounds, leading an artistic life may require a rejection of past beliefs, which is not only emotionally difficult but can also cause strife with their families.

As Karen's interview illustrates, class background not only affects how one is raised to relate to art, but also available economic resources. In contrast to peers who were supported in their art by family trust funds, Karen started her career by supporting

her parents. It is a reversal of the economic relationship between parents and children in middle-class families. Thus, her choice to pursue art in her own way not only left her without a safety net, but also left her parents without one. Her financial difficulties were then compounded by raising a child on her own.

This combination of economic pressures and the need to overcome early socialization makes pursuing artistic careers much more difficult for those from poor or working class backgrounds. What makes the stories of Robin and Karen so powerful, however, is their ability to transcend class-based dispositions, crafting creativity-centered lives on their own terms.

### **Marked Race**

Artists of color have to actively transcend more than class. While Robin and Karen have had significant struggles around their artistic practice, as White artists, they have been able to circulate within art worlds unnoticed in terms of their race. This is not the case for artists and artisans from marked racial groups. Artists from marked racial categories faced racial discrimination throughout their lives, affecting their ability to pursue and/or maintain artistic careers in various ways.

### **Rochleigh Z. Whole**

Rochleigh knew that she wanted to be an artist from the age of six:

[M]y mother took me on my sixth birthday to see the ‘Wizard of Oz’ at the St. Louis opera house. And I just fell in love. I said, ‘I’m supposed to be on stage doing that.’

However, as an African-American woman growing up in the racially divided city of St. Louis in the fifties and sixties, she experienced considerable pressure early on from her parents not to pursue art as a career:

[I knew] even at six years old. And, of course, you know, being a child at that time, and trying to explain [this to my parents]; there was still pressure on me to make sure that the foundation of my life was, you know, my academics and that I would be able to graduate and go to college.

Rochleigh's mother held multiple advanced degrees and cultivated Rochleigh's cultural capital. Rochleigh grew up attending theater and had access to private music and dance lessons. She also attended a private Catholic school which afforded her an opportunity to take drama and thespian classes and to travel to New York to visit the city's theater scene. However, class expectations are historically situated and interact with race. Thus, her parents' hesitation about her pursuit of a career in art stemmed not from their immediate class standing, as it did for Robin and Karen's parents, but rather from the complications of race at that point in time:

I was definitely discouraged from pursuing a career as a professional artist by one parent. The other parent said, 'Well, I am not going to totally discourage you from doing that, but I would suggest that you get a college degree so that you can make money and take care of yourself when you are not making money as an artist [...] And being a woman of color, you know a woman of African descent [pause] my father was a very practical man. My mother was highly educated: she had two bachelors, two masters and a doctorate degree. My father was a fireman. So they were very practical in the sense of 'You need to have your education,' as many African-American parents are, and [art], that's something you can do that is cute on the side.

While her parents discouraged Rochleigh from pursuing art as a career, she had teachers along the way who encouraged her love for the theater. The same high school drama teacher who took Rochleigh's class to New York City also helped Rochleigh secure a scholarship to study speech education and theater at a private college in Jefferson City, Missouri.

In her first year of college, Rochleigh decided that she wanted to marry her high school sweetheart. She returned home to St. Louis, they got married, and she had two

children, as she says, “right in a row.” She then decided to go back to college to pursue her career in theater, continuing with speech education on the side.

Zoe, who is also an artist and a mother, was interviewing Rochleigh. She asked, with awe in her voice, how Rochleigh managed this. They then laugh together, signaling that both women appreciate that going back to school with children was not an easy task:

Zoe: How did you straddle the going back to school and being a mom?

[Laughing together]

Rochleigh: ... my husband at that time was in his second year in college and I was just completing my first year. And I was fortunate enough that my grandmother . . . offered to move in with me and my husband and my children, to take care of the children and to help while I was in school. I was in two schools; I was in a community college and I was in SIU at the same time, trying to move forward. I didn't have any problems because my grandmother was there. She cooked, she cleaned, and she took care of my kids. Specifically so that my husband would not have any complaints about those things being handled while I was in school.

Now with a family of her own, Rochleigh had the additional pressures of normative gender roles: it was her place to cook, clean, and care for the children. Drawing on the strength of intergenerational cohabitation, her grandmother provided significant support by performing this gender-specific labor. Rochleigh's husband had no “complaints” because this arrangement did not require that he pick up the slack. There was no slack. Rochleigh's grandmother gave her the gift of subverting her gender duties without subverting the gender roles within the family.

In addition to the support from her grandmother, her professors also supported Rochleigh:

Rochleigh: I had the opportunity to work for the Illinois Arts Council as a free street-theater director, through a contact with one of my teachers. And she also helped me in encouraging me to do this challenging one-woman show while I was in my junior year, which, obviously, was extremely challenging and terrifying, being on stage all by myself playing seven characters.

Zoe: Oh my god.

Rochleigh: But she kept saying, 'You can do this. You can do this.' And I was like, 'Oh my goodness. I don't know if I can do it.' But I worked on it and building that confidence gave me a tremendous amount of confidence to do many things. So the feedback from Sister Paulette in high school and then my teachers that were in undergraduate school helped me to understand that I had the skills and the talent to be successful in that field, in that work, if I desired.

While Rochleigh received encouragement from her grandmother and her teachers, and allowed that support to grow her belief in her skills and abilities, her father and husband remained prominent dissenters:

... My husband did not want me to pursue my career as an actress. He was constantly discouraging me, and saying, 'You shouldn't do this. You can't do that.' And 'Forget about that. You can teach, but being a professional actress is unheard of.' And my father was saying to me, 'That is something for white people; that's not for you. It's not going to happen.' So I was very rebellious and very determined to prove to him that I don't care what he said, that I was going to do it.

Here we see the convergence of gender- and race-based pressures. Rochleigh's husband tried to deter her from acting so that she could focus on being a mother. At the same time, her father aimed to dissuade her from acting because he did not view acting as a profession for African Americans. However, Rochleigh strongly pushed back, first showing her father that she "didn't care what he said," and then divorcing the husband who would not support her in who she wanted to be:

Rochleigh: I knew our relationship, our marriage, was not going to last because...

Zoe: That's who you are.

Rochleigh: That's who I am and he kept, you know, really deterring me from being who I am, and who I was at the time. And that was while I was encouraging him to do what he wanted to do. And the marriage began to just [pause] deteriorate, because I felt like I wasn't supported in who I wanted to be, and I wasn't interested in being just some mother, you know, that took care of kids and

stayed at home and this and that. It was just not who I am. So after six years of marriage . . . we ended up getting a divorce.

Rochleigh defined herself through the lens of artist rather than the lens of normative mothering, and she wanted a partner who would see her in the same way:

Shortly after [the divorce] I met someone who was a musician and I worked as their manager for about two years and then we both left and went to New York. And [pause] where I was able to pursue my career and study with some outstanding acting teachers in New York.

Rochleigh was able to pursue her career in New York. Throughout the course of her life, she balanced conventional careers and parenting with theater. While she was not a full-time performer she still performed across the country from the Lincoln Center to the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. In addition, her experiences as an African-American woman have shaped how she approaches her creativity:

I have written a lot of my own performances that have been based on issues that are of importance to me—issues around race and around social injustices for women. My artist statement is to offer the talents of my own hands on the altar of human service, because I feel that as an artist it is my responsibility to be of service, through my art, in helping to raise consciousness on this planet.

This drive to serve and raise consciousness shaped her performing career, and now shapes her career in visual arts.<sup>64</sup> At the time of the research project she was still fairly new to the area. She had moved here in retirement, like so many others, because of the region's reputation as an artists' haven.

Rochleigh's interview highlights the pressures of race- and gender-based expectations as they occur in families, and her own incredible force and determination in pursuing her artistic careers anyway. Moonlight's interview shifts the focus to the challenges at the intersection of race, gender, and class for artists in society at large.

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<sup>64</sup> [Click here to view or purchase Rochleigh's work.](#)

## Moonlight Davis

Moonlight is a nature photographer and singer. He performs soul and gospel with his wife and adult children. As an African-American man in his mid-sixties, who recently received his college degree, Moonlight faced and continues to face challenges based on class and race. Raised in a poor, rough neighborhood in Philadelphia, Moonlight learned self-sufficiency and resiliency at an early age. With limited options given the intersection of his class background and racism, Moonlight first turned his resiliency to making a living and then toward raising his children:

Moonlight: [S]o if you want to know who I was before I went to college, before you met me, I was Mr. Everything. I was a bank teller; I was a janitor; I was a welfare counselor; I had a caseload. I drove tractor-trailers; I ran drugs [pause]. I was available to try and make money. And for a long time, I made money without a formal education, because I was willing to be resilient in whatever it was I did.

Abby: Um hm.

Moonlight: Since a little bit of an education, I've limited my work to more legal things with the purpose of staying out of jail and, even at that, I was put in jail for six months without a trial, without a counselor, just locked up for six months in a Birmingham, Alabama, jail because I urinated behind a tree in the center of a park at 3:00 in the morning.

Leo: Sheesh!

Moonlight: Well, that wasn't the reason why, Leo. Let me tell you the reason why. When I come out from urinating in the park, some 6'8" cop said, 'Come here, boy.' From Philadelphia, I turned around to see what boy he was talking about. So he says, 'Oh, you one of them smarty, uppity niggers.' I said, 'Who, me?' And that's where I landed up, in jail. So maybe it wasn't for urinating and just for being a smart-alecky.

Leo: So what changed?

Moonlight: I had three children, and I didn't want to lose them. And the responsibility of my three kids was thrown on me, thrust on me because their mother was no good. And I moved here into the Northampton area, and I started trying to make my life better. And eighteen years ago I met Morning Star [his current wife]. And I changed my life even more after that. I did some men's work,

I've done a lot of men's work about recognizing who I was and, in spite of the fact that I was trying to do better, three of my kids have been in and out of jail. I can't [pause] I couldn't do anything to stop that, and Lord, I tried. . . .

Moonlight had limited career options because of a lack of education. Even as he worked to make a better life, first by leaving behind illegal activities, then by moving, and finally by remarrying and doing men's work, he and his children have still faced a racially- and class-biased justice system. Moonlight goes on to explain that his son received a ten-year sentence for a first time offense:

And why for ten years? Because I didn't have \$2,000 or \$3,000 to get a good lawyer to get him out. . . . I support him. I went up and brought him clothes, and I visited him once a month, and I brought his kids up to see him, and [pause] I even got him, in this past year, to be moved to Northampton County Jail for his last year. It's labor. It's labor to do this, you know. But I did what I did, so these are the things that artists do that most people don't know about. In spite of the fact that you have art and you have all this drive to do art, you still have all this life that you have to live around you.

All of these significant race- and class-based challenges that Moonlight has so resiliently faced shape the context in which he produces his art. While these challenges create time and emotional constrictions, they did not stop him from continuing.

To further open his opportunities, Moonlight, with the support of his wife, decided to get his college degree. As discussed in Chapter 3, GCC is a nurturing place for learners of any age to further their education. This is where Moonlight got his start. GCC was an affordable way to pursue his degree and helped him build the academic skills necessary to succeed at UMass. Moonlight finished his degree at UMass, working on campus to help offset the costs. As part of his coursework at UMass, he curated an art show at the University's Malcolm X Cultural Center. Moved by the power of this experience, he decided that he wanted to make art more accessible as a tool for change in his new hometown, Millers Falls.

Moonlight originally moved to the Greater Franklin County because his mother was living in Millers Falls. He stays because she is now buried here. He considers Millers his home, his community, and he is committed to its revitalization. As its name suggests, it is a former mill town, which produced paper and hand tools. Millers is small, with just over 1,000, predominantly white, inhabitants. Its only major intersection, its downtown, has been designated as a “slum and blighted” area (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2014). It was here, at this intersection, that Moonlight aimed to make an intervention through opening an art gallery:

. . . a lot of the local people came in [to the gallery], and some man, who was sort of ignorant, cried, because he had never been to any kind of a gallery before in his life. None. So that sort of changed me some and so, after that, a benefactor who was not yet a benefactor said, ‘This community needs you, Moonlight. This community needs you to do what you do right here, right on this corner. Don’t quit it.’ And I said, ‘But I don’t have no money to keep this up.’ And she said, ‘Don’t worry about it. I’ll cover you for a few months.’

Moonlight’s patron paid for his gallery expenses for a full year, after which he took over the costs.

So that’s how I got here, and the why I’m still here is because there are several things going on in my head. I have no home; I still rent. I have no money in the bank; I haven’t saved anything. I have a college education and I don’t know what to do with it. At 64 years old, I don’t know who will hire me. And I’m just trying to say, both to myself and to everyone else around me, that I’m worth something; that I am actually worth something. And people gotta hear that. . . .

Moonlight’s Faces and Places Gallery played an important role in the community by bringing art to a working-class population which had no previous contact with art, while also proving to Moonlight that he is worth something even as he struggles with uncertainty. Moonlight also viewed the gallery as a way to build community among the few businesses downtown:

I'm taking my gallery and saying to the library, to the bar, to the brewery, to the community, 'Is there some kind of workable way that we could communicate and work together?' [pause] and sort of build the community up; that's what I'm trying to do.

Additionally, Moonlight utilized the gallery as a way to bring diversity to the town by hosting jazz greats like Charles Neville and organizing two concerts from a band visiting from Cuba. "My intention is to have such a diverse stable of cultural events going on here, until I'm going to shockwave this whole place."

At the same time that he was so committed to bringing culture to the community and building connections, he was facing racial discrimination from his landlord and the tenants who lived in the apartments above his gallery:

African-American men in ignorant communities [like Millers Falls] take a lot of abuse. And I'm so sorry that I have to say it like that, but it is true. [pause] So if somebody takes something I say the wrong way, really take it the wrong way, I get pounded.

Moonlight then goes on to describe being verbally "pounded" by another tenant, who interrupted Moonlight's conversation with his landlord about the lack of heat in his gallery. Moonlight had been paying rent but not receiving the heat that was to be included in that rent. His neighbor, eavesdropping on the conversation, colorfully told him to stop complaining and pay.

Therefore, to succeed in his desire to be a gallery owner and improve the community, Moonlight had to navigate these injustices in a way that allowed for building bridges in the face of hate. It is not an easy task. It required him to draw on his significant well of personal attributes and personal strength:

[M]ost of it is because of my charisma, my people capital, my communicational capital, has turned all these people that hated me or didn't like me or didn't understand me, turned them around so that we have a relationship now, all of us. Sometimes it's sort of touchy, but it's a relationship.

And it had an impact in the community:

Moonlight: I think this is what this woman [his patron] was trying to say to me. The place didn't have any culture, any class, and the only thing that they were good for, most of them, was going in the bar, bendin' their elbow drinkin'. . . .

Moonlight goes on to describe that the same man who cried when he came into

Moonlight's gallery started a fight at the bar across from the gallery, knocking a man out:

And if that wasn't enough, nobody in the bar called the cops or the ambulance. They just picked him up off the floor, and some woman brought him home. They didn't know whether he had a concussion, they didn't know what was wrong with him. But that's the kind of mentality the bar has. Well, because much of what I said went to heart, I said to them straight out, I said, 'If you hada did that to me, I would have your ass in court right now.' And so they ran to the man's house to see if he was alright, and they took the man that did this, and they won't allow him back in the bar. But if I had not spoke up. . . .

Abby: They would've done nothing.

Moonlight: Nothing. So I do stand for something in the community, and I am a mirror to them. I am a mirror to every bad habit that they have. If I catch it, I'm a mirror to it. . . .

By staying in the community, Moonlight encouraged community members to see their actions from a different perspective, influencing them to act in new ways while also modeling an alternative:

[T]he gallery, that's the out front. The inside is the charisma of the person that is in the guts of it, that you can come in and feel warm and comfortable and fuzzy with. Someone that you feel that is human enough that you can [connect with]. You don't have to buy anything. You can just come in and talk. Be out of the cold.

However, navigating daily racism requires constant work on his part:

I just let it go. And when I [pause] when these things, when I face these things every day in the street, one way or the other, I have to deal with them on the spot. My outer crust is a little bit hard, but I'm not quick to anger, or I'm not quick to judge. What I'm quick to do is make my armor stronger and try and find a way to deal with these issues when they come up.

While Moonlight continues resiliently, the constant struggle to thrive as an artist compounded with daily racism takes its toll:

So if you say, ‘Jesus, Moonlight, I’m really glad that I see you just constantly going.’ It’s because, in the back of my head, I keep ask the question. I don’t have a mom. I’ve never had a dad. I don’t have a rich uncle that would give me any money, or an aunt. I don’t believe I have anyone that cares about me unless I present the need for someone to care about me in the first place. These are all part of being an artist.... And it relates back to what you wanted in the first place. What resources are in the community? Well, I’ll tell you, there’s a lot of resources in the community. But if you don’t go out lookin’ for them, they don’t come to you and say, ‘Hey, I wanna help you!’ They don’t come do that. So what do you do? You go out and you find them and you say, ‘You wanna help me, don’t you? Come on, help me.’

Despite Moonlight’s continued efforts to secure resources from the community, Faces and Places closed its doors in the spring of 2011, just a few months after this interview was recorded. However, Moonlight continues in his kind and giving spirit to produce photography and perform music with his wife and sons, both regionally and further afield.<sup>65</sup> Moonlight’s community has recently given back the love and the joy they have received from him. In the fall of 2016, for his seventieth birthday, Moonlight was gifted a top-of-the line MacBook Pro paid for by donations from his friends, family, and colleagues who wanted to affirm, “Yes, Moonlight, you are worth something.”

Moonlight’s experiences illustrate the way in which struggles related to one’s class background, in this case lack of access to higher education, and lack of a financial safety net, can be compounded by racism. For him, and then his sons, it is a racism that views Black men as dangerous, as a group that needs extra policing and vigilance. This creates a context in which Moonlight faces day-to-day racism from the very community

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<sup>65</sup> [Click here to learn how to attend Moonlight and Morning Star’s performances.](#)

he strives to support. The incarceration of his son also had a significant time and emotional toll on Moonlight, affecting his art making.

Moonlight is impressive. At the same time that he deals with these struggles, he remains a beacon of love, for whom there is much love in return. He is deeply committed to art and being an artist even when it does not always provide a monetary pay off. He has actively forged his own artistic path.

Rochleigh and Moonlight's interviews illustrate how race intersects with class and gender to shape artistic trajectories. Rochleigh's interview highlights that class expectations and goals for children vary based on race, such that we cannot understand the effects of class without also looking at race. Both Rochleigh and Moonlight's experiences point to the importance of gender as well. Rochleigh, like Karen, pushed back forcefully against normative mothering in order to pursue her creativity. Moonlight has had to navigate the effects of racism based on negative stereotypes about Black men. He also pushes back, but has to do so carefully, without responding in anger, which could then be interpreted to reinforce the stereotype. These daily encounters with racism, and the emotional work involved in navigating them, takes a toll, as do encounters with an unjust judicial system and navigating the incarceration of his son.

While these challenges shape Rochleigh and Moonlight's creative trajectories, they do not prevent them from full-heartedly pursuing art. Rochleigh and Moonlight illustrate the power of knowing one's own self, and being true to that self despite structural pressures.

## Gender

The artists discussed so far have illustrated that gender matters. For Karen and Rochleigh, gender expectations around parenting created an additional set of pressures. For Moonlight, stereotypes about Black men and ensuing discrimination negatively affected his art making. Robin and Moonlight illustrate that we cannot presume that all male artists receive equal treatment or have equal access to resources within the artistic world. However, for the artists and artisans participating in this study, gender was much more salient for women.<sup>66</sup> Thus, in this section I draw on the experiences of a number of women to further illustrate the gendered nature of the artist field and the strength of women to push back against those pressures, becoming artist on their own terms.

Breaking into the field of art was particularly challenging for older artists. Born in the thirties, Deborah was raised in a time when women were expected to be mothers rather than to pursue careers:

I applied to and was accepted into the Fine Arts College and ended up winning the senior painting prize at graduation [from college] and having exhibited with faculty before graduation and juried shows and had paintings in New York. This is 1954 when I graduated. In those days most women did not think of careers. I married at the end of that summer after graduation, had four children, and essentially spent my life as a wife and mother until sometime in the sixties. And anyway, I went through a divorce, went to graduate school to support myself and my children, and ended up teaching English.

While Deborah had an interest and talent in art, raising a family and, after her divorce, financially supporting her family, kept her from pursuing art until the mid-nineties:

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<sup>66</sup> Gender is not binary; however, my discussion is because of the data. On the demographic form participants had the option to choose from a range of gender options and/or to fill in their own preference. However, the vast majority of participants identified as either “man” or “woman.” The two participants who chose “other” on their demographic form, then discussed gender in terms of a binary within their interviews.

So I go on a journey and I end up going to New York City at sixty-two years of age, with \$2,000 in my pocket, a place to live for thirty days, and I enrolled at the National Academy.

While her artistic career was delayed until retirement, she lived the bohemian life in New York, honing her craft until she moved to Shelburne Falls, where she continues to paint.<sup>67</sup>

Born two decades later, Mary was looking to art as a way to craft a life outside of the motherhood norm:

I actually grew up in the town Andrew Wyeth lives in, so he was our local boy. I had this very romantic idea of what being an artist was, and it had very big gaps of what was really involved, but I think I felt the combination of the actual skill and pleasure of doing stuff and some idea of that as an identity that seemed like it had room in it for other things that were different from the identity of my mother and all the mothers of my friends. In the '50s, it's not like you got a lot of glimpses of alternative options. As vague as my notion of what being an artist was, it seemed like an alternative identity, a female identity, and it beats being a nun. It wasn't my background. I saw Audrey Hepburn in that movie. It's funny the way those things, once you get a hold of it, you are sort of collecting evidence or collecting experiences or something that adds on to that even although what you're adding on to is pretty amorphous and doesn't really have a very firm foundation.

Mary was raised in a town that took pride in their hometown artist. As sketchy as her understanding of this profession was, it still gave her a glimpse of a possible way of performing an alternative female identity in a time when "mother" was still the most salient identity for women. While an artistic identity already existed for men, Mary had to draw together an amorphous collection of evidence and experiences to craft such an identity for herself.<sup>68</sup>

Yet another twenty years later, women artists were still struggling to find their place in the profession, and finding that working in a male-dominated field could create

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<sup>67</sup> Deborah's work is regularly shown at the [Shelburne Falls Co-op](#).

<sup>68</sup> [Click here to view or purchase Mary's work](#).

the conditions for sexual exploitation. For Phyllis this exploitation was part of her decision to delay going to art school:

Phyllis: [W]ell, I went to art school right out of high school and I dropped out. It was 1976 and feminists hadn't broken through the glass ceiling of art and in my art school, these young women were sleeping with gallery owners and that's how they got in. . . . That was a pathway, you know.

Rejecting sexual exploitation as her pathway into the art world, Phyllis spent many years as a social justice educator before returning to art school in her early fifties.<sup>69</sup>

Another participant noted the possibility for sexual exploitation embedded in the patron relationship. She argued that for women artists, a lack of money and the resulting need to rely on patrons or benefactors could create an exploitative situation where sexual favors might be expected in exchange for patronage. While men are not exempted from sexual exploitation, the male dominance of the field makes it more likely for women.

There is also significant cultural devaluation of women's artistic activities. As discussed in the introduction, artistic fields dominated by women, such as dance and choreography, are some of the lowest-paying fields. Additionally, because women artists are more likely than their male counterparts to be balancing their art with caregiving responsibilities, they are more likely to be considered part-time artists or hobbyists versus "real" artists. This societal devaluation can lead women artists to undervalue their work. Gabriella illustrates this point when discussing a mill fire in which artists lost everything in their studios:

[T]he male artists had insurance, and they made out like bandits with their insurance. And the women did not have any insurance and lost everything – including, you know, like a \$10,000 weaving [pause] loom, a loom. But anyway it was a very interesting thing, and I was speaking to a curator back then who

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<sup>69</sup> [Click here to follow or purchase Phyllis' social justice infused art.](#)

showed my work a lot. And she said that she found that quite frequently, that women artists were not insuring their work.

Here we see a literal lack of valuation on the part of women artists, which can, in events such as this mill fire, lead to a loss of everything.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, as in the general population, women artists tended to be balancing more caregiving responsibilities than their male counterparts. Sandra aims to portray this multiplicity of roles through her art:

It's been a lifelong hope and dream to . . . make art that explains what it's like to be a woman. And what it's like to be needed by your family, your husband, your mother, and your everyone [laughing a bit here] but still trying to pursue making some art.

As Sandra succinctly captures, women artists often feel needed by everyone. She herself gave the first thirty years of her life to her husband and children. As she makes clear, however, “everyone” also includes parents. In fact, only women artists discussed providing care to aging parents.

When asked about her volunteer work, a routine interview question, Ruby describes caring for her ninety-year-old mother, “loving her up every day. Caring for her, making sure she's eating, etc.” While it takes time from her day, it is also proving to be very rewarding as they have become closer and are currently producing a book together; Ruby is illustrating her mother's poetry.<sup>71</sup>

Mary, who outlined crafting an alternative female identity above, describes that having aging parents creates a “low hum of worry and obligation” that “takes a lot of time and attention” even when while they are living in a care facility:

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<sup>70</sup> [Click here to view or purchase Gabriella's work.](#)

<sup>71</sup> [Click here to follow Ruby's work or find out how to visit her gallery.](#)

Mary: The calls come in [from the care facility] and there's a lot of little things. They're not close by so I can't just run there and deal with stuff. I don't know if that would be easier or harder. You just do what you do.

Jeanne: That's right. You just do what you do where you are.

Mary: Right.

Jeanne: And that's just the way things are. Because you're not the only one.

Mary: Right. My sister is in Boston. My brother who was the one who was close by died in April.

Jeanne: Wow.

Mary: He was the one who could run over. On the other hand, he was the son, so [smile coming into her voice]

Jeanne: Yeah [said with a laugh].

Mary: Did he do that?

[laughing together]

Mary: Did he know what to do? No.

Jeanne: No.

Mary: No. He didn't.

Jeanne: Funny.

Mary: Brothers [laughing].

Jeanne: Yeah, That's weird. I was talking to somebody about that and it's very strange. How it's [pause], well, anyway.

Mary: They just pay attention in a different way or. . . .

[laughing together]

Mary: . . . Don't pay attention.

Jeanne: Or don't have a clue.

This exchange between Mary and Jeanne is telling. Both in their early sixties, their shared “common sense” is that only women, at least in their generation, take on the extra duties of parental care.

Women’s experiences in the field of art are shaped by broader gender norms in which women are expected to be caregivers first and have a profession second. Breaking into the male dominated field of art required breaking out of gender norms. For Deborah, who graduated from college in the mid-fifties, it was not common for women to pursue a career. For Mary and Rochleigh, who came of age twenty years later, it was more acceptable for women to have professions; however, becoming *artists* required crafting a female artistic identity and pushing back against gender norms that expected them to be mothers first and foremost. And, even as the art world has opened to an increasing number of women artists, women still face the risk of sexual exploitation.

Once within the field, women artists are still devalued, leading some to, at times, devalue their own work. Part of this devaluation is connected to devaluation of “part-time” artists. Given that women still tend to balance more caregiving responsibilities than men, women often delay becoming artists until later in life, truncating their artistic careers, or they pursue art on the side. However, the need to pursue art on the side due to family responsibilities is not unique to women.

### **Parenting**

Parenting adds an additional set of financial pressures and time constraints for both men and women artists. Parents were more likely than their non-parent counterparts to pursue art on the side or, as Deborah’s interview illustrated above, delay pursuing art until retirement.

Given gendered caregiving expectations, it is no surprise that more women than men delayed or paused their artistic careers when their children were little in order to provide care. However, some fathers also pursue art on the side in order to be breadwinners. This is the case of Steve, the bones player we met in Chapter 3:

I'm a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state of Massachusetts. I have a master's degree in rehab counseling. And, I've been working for the state of Massachusetts for 23 years. . . . I mean, music was *always* an attraction, but it was *never* anything that I could make a living at or that I was [pause] put myself in a position to be able to support myself. The thing too was that I got married at a relatively early age, you know, I was 20, Jennifer was 19. And Jeremy was born, my oldest son, when I was 21, and so I didn't really have the luxury of not working or trying to put energies into figuring out how to support myself, I just had to go to work. Whatever I could possibly do. And once I realized that I wanted to work in human services, I was going to school at night and working during the day. And that went on for a long time. But, you know, it's a relatively good situation now where I'm ready to retire.

Steve plays and makes the folk instrument, the bones, but, given his family responsibilities, he never tried to make a living only from his music.<sup>72</sup> He has had to continue working until retirement age because his oldest son has Down syndrome:

Steve: I mean I will be a parent my entire life. I am sixty years old. I get my son's breakfast for him every morning. I do various aspects of his self-care. Jeremy, who has Down syndrome, is 39 years old. I will take that role, that most people only experience for the first 5 or 10 years of a child's life, I will have it for my entire life. As long as he is alive. And I value that tremendously.

Steve's caregiving and financial responsibilities of parenting are for life. Even for parents with children who don't have special needs, the financial responsibility can extend to cover sending children to college. Sue, a hand weaver and traditional felt maker, has maintained a full-time career outside of her craft her whole life both because of her working class roots and her need to support a family:

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<sup>72</sup> [Click here to watch Steve play and learn about the bones.](#)

Cheryl: So where do you see yourself, looking into the future? Are you going to continue with a full-time job?

Sue: I'm going to have to continue with a full-time job for a couple of more years because my kids are in college and I have to continue with that.

Sue knows where she wants her art to go, but for the next several years she will have to keep working full time outside of her art to support her kids, even though they no longer live at home.<sup>73</sup>

Single parents have significant difficulty continuing artistic careers while actively parenting. For single parents, both men and women, the pause in their art often extends at least until the children have moved out of their home. Roger is a singer/songwriter and describes coming to the hard reality that he would need to put a music career on hold once he became a single dad:

Heather: So how do you take care of two kids and be a musician? How did you [pause] how did you do that and make enough money to live?

Roger: Yeah. I didn't. It was very hard. We were broke a lot.

Heather: Yeah.

Roger: I remember at one point, uh, the [pause] we had a fireplace for heat. You know, we were using a stove, a wood stove, 'cause we couldn't afford oil heat. And I remember reading stories to my kids in their bedroom. And it was [pause], I could see my breath....

Heather: Wow.

Roger: . . .In their bedroom. And I said, jeez, I am so poor that I can't afford to keep their bedroom warm. So that was sad.

Heather: Yeah.

Roger: So one time my father said to me [pause] he said, 'You need to get [pause] to make more money. You can't do this. You're depriving your children of the basic things.'

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<sup>73</sup> [Click here to follow or purchase Sue's work.](#)

Heather: Yeah.

Roger: So I said, 'Okay.' And then I started to book other musicians' gigs. . . .

Heather: Mm-hmm.

Roger: And I became good at it. . . . And I was making money booking other people, making a good living. So I got out of the poverty level, and then I thought 'I'm just going to keep doing this.' And I thought, 'You know, the real money [pause], I could really make a good living if I could get into some real estate, buy some real estate.'

Roger's dad convinced him to find another way to make money in order to support his children. Roger first brought the family out of poverty by acting as an agent for other musicians. He then added real-estate income to the mix. To get started in this endeavor, his father helped him with a down payment to buy his first house. Roger and his children lived in the house for a number of years before he sold it at a profit. He then used that money toward other properties.

Roger did not return to his music until eighteen years later, when he had the emotional support after remarrying. The income from his real estate ventures allowed him to pursue music again as a passion versus a source of income, and he has been subsequently rediscovered—a documentary was made about his life and his work has made it onto the Grammy ballot.<sup>74</sup>

Roger's ability to pursue music later in life without the pressure of earning an income was a direct outcome of his father's financial ability to support him in purchasing his first property. This family support did not exist for Belinda. Belinda is the artist we met in Chapter 3 who described the changes she saw in Turner's Falls.

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<sup>74</sup> [Click here to follow or purchase Roger's music.](#)

Like Roger, Belinda had also been supporting herself through her artistic practice until she took on the responsibilities of single parenting:

Morning Star: So, how do you support yourself? Does your art support you? Has it always? Does it now?

Belinda: It has in the past. When I was part of the Tribal Rhythms Troop, . . . I was primarily a working artist. Um, I did that from 1976 until 1990.

Morning Star: And you were living in Boston?

Belinda: I was living in Boston. I moved out here after divorcing and was sort of in culture shock.

Morning Star: Yeah.

Belinda: There weren't many jobs. You know I did work around, I did do workshops in community centers and tried to write a few small grants to get funded to do a few small workshops, but I couldn't really support myself. And at the time I had a child and he was going to school so it was more or less, 'gotta support the family.' So, how I support myself now is I am a personal chef, cook, and bottle washer [laughing]. Basically I work for people who have disabilities and I do a lot of cooking for people who have special diets. So, that is what I do to make money.

Morning Star: Un-hum.

Belinda: In the meantime, you know, I'm always juggling time against money.

Morning Star: Right.

Belinda: And it's the age-old, you know, the age-old conundrum of the artist.

Morning Star: Un-hum.

Belinda: It like, 'Okay, so I have this time but I have no money.'

Morning Star: Right!

Belinda: So I have this money, and I . . .

Said in Unison: . . . have no time.

Morning Star: Right, right.

Belinda: And it is sort of trying to find this cycle, you know. And I turned sixty a few years ago and, you know, I'm waiting [said with a bit of an ironic laugh].

Morning Star: You're waiting?

Belinda: For my time [pause] to just to be able to do my artwork again. I don't want to move back to the city, you know. But I don't know what. It's just hard.

As an African-American woman, part of Belinda's culture shock stemmed from moving from the multi-racial city of Boston into the primarily white Franklin County. As discussed in Chapter 3, she initially stood out as a Black woman, but credits the increased presence of artists in the region as creating openness for racial and cultural diversity. However, even with this shift in culture, she has not been able to find a local market for her art, which is categorized as African-American art:<sup>75</sup>

Morning Star: Basically, you have to go beyond this region to sell your work.

Belinda: Absolutely. Absolutely. It is sad but true. You know, the galleries here want bigger names and they want a different kind of work. They are kind of into glass and ceramics and jewelry. And they want to stay with that because people find it a safe gift-giving thing. So those types of galleries are gift galleries; they are really not art galleries.

Taken all together, Belinda is left "waiting" for her time to just be doing her art again. By comparing her circumstances to that of Roger, we see how even just a small amount of financial support from family can help artists foreground their art. Additionally, we see how artistic genre interacts with race. Roger's folk music has wide appeal in the predominantly white region. By producing traditional African-American art, Belinda primarily only finds buyers in the south or in major cities. Thus, even when parents are in

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<sup>75</sup> Artistic practice is racialized. It is only when the artist is from a marked racial category that race is then used to describe their artwork. A white artist painting white subjects is called "art." An artist of color painting subjects of color is called "ethnic art" or, in Belinda's case, "African-American art."

similar circumstances, in this case, pausing art to raise children alone, those circumstances are shaped differently by class and race.

Artists with children who do persist as full time artists do so under a range of conditions. For many married artists, both men and women, it is the stable income of a partner that allows them to continue their art while parenting. As Lynn describes:

Could I have brought up a family on my salary? Not in the way we lived. But fortunately I have a husband with a tenure-track teaching job. Let's say job security. Not a big salary, but fine, adequate. [...] Do we have enough? We have enough. If we had less, we'd still have enough. We'd just do a little less of something. I have enough to sustain myself. I'm rather proud of that. That over the thirty years since I would call myself a professional, after I got my MFA, even though I was working, teaching, waitressing and many other jobs. Let's say in those thirty years, most years I have paid all of the expenses of materials, studio rent, and made money. But not a lot of money. I have to be really clear: not enough money to live the way I'd like to live which is traveling, raising two children with the cost of shoes and camps. Sports camps. This area makes it easier to live on less. I lived in NYC and we left NYC because we couldn't afford to live there.

By moving to this area where it is “easier to live on less” and by having a partner with a steady income, Lynn was free to pursue her career in art while also living a middle-class lifestyle, with travel and sports camps for the kids.<sup>76</sup>

However, artists whose partners do not have a stable income persist in art under conditions of uncertainty. In these interviews, phrases such as “scraping by,” “living on the skinny,” and “out on a limb” capture the ever-present specter of financial instability. Stephen puts it bluntly:

Eric: Who do you live with and how do you make ends meet?

Stephen: Well, we do not make ends meet. I live with my wife and my two kids. And a dog and a cat. And we have somebody that lives on our third floor, which is nice because she helps pay some of our rent. My wife also works, but she was laid off last year and so it has been a challenge of a year for us, but she recently

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<sup>76</sup> [Click here to follow or purchase Lynn's work.](#)

got work teaching a few classes in Vermont and New Hampshire. She has done and probably will do some grant writing on a contract basis for organizations depending on who they are and what they need. So between that and the income from the pottery, that's our income. That's it.

Not making ends meet creates significant pressure. When asked what advice he would give to other artists, mitigating this pressure was top of the list:

Eric: Any other thoughts about your practice? To other artists in general?

Stephen: Marry someone with independent income. It [being an artist] is difficult. Economically it is really hard. I know I started at a time when it was really hard to start out and I think it has only gotten worse. You have to have a real special angle to make a splash now. The field is getting narrower and narrower and . . . and I am just hanging on by my fingernails. And sometimes, I don't know how I am going to survive.

The need to support a family on art-generated income creates a lot of pressure and doubt about survival, even for artists who are sharing parenting responsibilities.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, for single parents who persist as artists the financial challenge is the greatest. As Karen's interview illustrated above, single parents who persist as artists may experience homelessness. Bekki, a storyteller, also faced homelessness:

You know, when I *had* them [her kids] we had *no* money and I still wanted to do that work [storytelling]. So, 'Okay guys, we get to live in the woods for six months.' Because I did do storytelling, like at the Girls Club and the nursing homes. Hum, 'Is there any money for that?' [Judie laughing]. Hum, 'Hardly.'

For Bekki, storytelling did not bring in much money and as a result she and her kids were homeless for six months. A short time later, she was approached by a patron who provided the financial backing for her to purchase a house in which to live and through which she could run an art non-profit.<sup>78</sup> However, if this patron had not come along, it is likely that Bekki, like Roger and Belinda, would have had to stop her career in art.

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<sup>77</sup> [Click here to view or purchase Stephen's work.](#)

<sup>78</sup> [Click here to follow Bekki's work.](#)

In summary, artists who are parenting have more financial responsibilities and time commitments than artists who do not have children. For some parents this means putting art on hold or pursuing art on the side until retirement. Roger's and Belinda's interviews illustrate that race and class can shape one's ability to get back into the field of art after leaving to parent.

Parents who persist in art full time while parenting do so under a range of conditions. Artists whose partners have stable incomes have the most financial, and thus artistic, flexibility. Families in which both incomes are unstable face more challenges, and financial insecurity shapes how they live in the world and practice their art. Finally, single parents who persist in art face the most significant financial challenges; challenges so extreme that they can lead to homelessness.

This chapter has demonstrated that the ability to start and maintain an artistic career varies widely based on the intersections of class, race, gender, and parenting responsibilities. Bourdieu's work laid the foundation for analyzing the multiple ways through which class background can affect an artist's relationship to art. Artists from poor or working-class backgrounds are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of economic, social, and cultural capital in relationship to artists from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Building from this foundation, I have illustrated that the effects of class background can vary based on race, gender, and parental status; white artists, male artists, and artists without children all have structural advantages in the field of artistic production. The persistence of class-, race-, and gender-based disparities have been documented by recent studies, and this chapter has helped to flesh out some of the specific ways through which these disparities manifest and their intersectional nature.

This chapter has also demonstrated the resilience of artists in the face of familial, social, and/or financial pressures not to pursue art or to desist in their artistic endeavors. Even when facing racism from the very community that Moonlight aimed to support, he persisted as a gallery owner and modeled a different way of being to that community. Even with the two most important male figures in her life, her father and her husband, telling her that as a mother and as an African American she should not become an actress, Rochleigh persisted. Throughout her career she performed on some of the most famous stages in the nation. Whether their artistic careers started after retirement, were pursued on the side, or were undertaken full time, all of the artists featured in this chapter have persisted in the face of multiple challenges. Chapter 7 will propose policies which could help ease some of these challenges.

## CHAPTER 6

### SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH SOCIAL RESEARCH

In April 2013 I attended the “Lift Your Spirits Spring Gospel Concert” at the Second Congregational Church in Greenfield. It was a joyful show organized by two members of the research team: a husband and wife musical duo, Morning Star Chevan and Moonlight Davis. Moonlight was lead vocalist accompanied by Morning Star and the Gospel Star Singers & Band, which featured a world-renowned, yet locally-oriented jazz saxophonist. The acoustics were wonderful in the large sanctuary and there was a soulful connection between the performers and the audience. The youthful minister of the congregation joined the band on drums for a number of songs. To increase the connection between performers and audience, Moonlight sang in the pews, and midway through the show he hugged a woman in the audience; it was another member of the research team, Jeanne Douillard. Excited to see that she was there, I found her after the show to catch up. She radiated joy. Three months before, her husband had retired as the minister of the church in which the show was held, and this was one of her first times back with the church family they had left upon his retirement. Jeanne was, in fact, the reason Moonlight and Morning Star performed in the church. She had invited them to sing at the church in 2010 when the research project was in full swing. Two years later, they were still performing there annually. As we were talking, Moonlight came over to greet us, and Jeanne, with arms wide, said, “Next time we will fill this church, Moonlight!”

Once I left the show it hit me—two years after the research project ended, members of the research team continue to support one another not only through

friendships but also economically. Over the past twenty years Moonlight and Morning Star have created a life that centers on music and art; performing is a significant portion of their household income. Admission to this gospel concert was fifteen dollars for adults and twelve dollars for students. By providing a venue—the church—and much of the audience—the congregation—Jeanne provided direct economic support to Moonlight and Morning Star. Additionally, the guest saxophone performer started playing gigs with Moonlight and Morning Star after he and Moonlight bonded through the interview process; he was one of Moonlight’s interviewees. Connections forged through the research process endured well beyond that process.

Attending this concert left me with two primary questions. First, sociological knowledge production aside, what were the on-the-ground effects of the research process—what was produced? Second, what are the mechanisms through which this production happened?

To answer these questions, I analyzed the research process—the research training, team meetings, team correspondences, the collaborative analysis, and the opening and closing events for the art show. I found that peer-to-peer interviewing, embedded in a collaborative research process framed through what I call an asset-based stance, enhanced the effects of the research on the members of the research team.

My work shows that the research process was not only an exercise in data collection. Instead, participation opened the door for a series of micro-political and material changes: new ways of relating to self and community and new economic opportunities. These findings demonstrate that the material productivity of research noted in previous work is intensified when knowledge production occurs through peer

interactions. I specify mechanisms through which research comes to “matter.” These findings have broad implications for sociologists interested in engendering social change. Change happens not only through teaching, publication, and influencing policy, but also through the very way in which we conduct sociological research.

### Overview of the Research Process

In the fall of 2010, Leo and I co-coordinated the PAR project, hiring and training 22 artists and artisans to work with us as a research team (see figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1: Research Team Members<sup>79</sup>**

All artist and artisan researchers went through eight hours of training on research basics, developed and implemented by Leo and me, and each artist/artisan researcher was then responsible for interviewing five peers. The research design included a “check-in” where members of the team came together after conducting their first interview to discuss what

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<sup>79</sup> Source: Created by Jessamyn Smyth for the Rethinking the Creative Economy Chapbook (see Appendix for full Chapbook)

worked and what needed reworking. The researchers then conducted their remaining interviews independently, coming back together for a collaborative analysis session in early November when the interviews were mostly complete. The formal project ended with the collaborative analysis. However, after a warm and exciting reunion dinner in January, members of the team decided to continue working together into the spring of 2011. As a team we reported back research findings to the community through a presentation at a regional arts summit, created and disseminated a chapbook that catalogued the findings reported at the summit, and hosted a month-long art show that showcased the work of the research team.

Thus, from September 2010 to May 2011 we accomplished much as a research team. After this, the project wound down as the grant money came to an end; some members experienced burn-out as did the co-coordinators; four team members—including myself—moved out of the area; and one member, Kiran Bhowmik, sadly passed way. A trickle of activity continued into 2013, which culminated in the creation of an online art show aimed to showcase the work of the artists and artisans who were interviewed. Figure 6.2 provides the timeline for these activities.



**Figure 6.2: Research Project Timeline<sup>80</sup>**

<sup>80</sup> Images from top to bottom: notes taken by Eric Deluca at the researcher training; Kiran Bhowmik showing her art during an interview conducted by Leo and me; Jeanne Douillard, Jessamyn Smyth, myself, and Eric Deluca brainstorming at the researcher

## **What Was Produced?**

Franklin County was a location ripe for the ontological politics called for by Gibson-Graham (2006a). Regional artists and artisans were concerned that the introduction of a creativity-based development model would exacerbate existing social inequality and price out the artists. While there was on the ground resistance (for example, the Art Work Movement discussed in Chapter 3), the prevalence of the needs-based discourse lead to a regional subjectivity of economic dependence, which was “well paired” with a development discourse focused on bringing in outside “help.” This project asked what would happen if this discourse was disrupted, if artists and artisans, rather than being treated as needy, were treated as asset laden? Specifically, coming back to my research questions, what would be produced through this research process, how would the research process come to matter for the researchers, and through what mechanisms? In this section of the paper I first discuss what was produced, moving to a discussion of the mechanisms.

### **Micro-Political Outcomes**

Members of the research team experienced changes in the way that they relate to themselves as artists and to art itself. Asking fellow artists, “What motivates you, and how do you support yourself?” led to incredibly moving life stories. Coming to the

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check-in; George-Moonlight Davis sharing group findings at the collaborative analysis; Heather Cohen, Jeanne Douillard, Robin Parsons, and Eric Deluca, presenting at the Creative Economy Summit (also presenting but not pictured: Jessamyn Smyth, Moonlight Davis, myself and Leo); Rochleigh Wholfe opening the art show; Heather Cohen and Phyllis Labanowski enjoying the art show closing ceremony; art show flyer created by Kiran Bhowmik; Judi and Don Campbell, myself, Leo, Eric Deluca, and Robin Parsons at a meal to plan for the online art show (Phyllis Labanowski not pictured but in attendance); image from the online art show.

interviews with the openness to receive—to allow one’s self to be affected by the life of another through the interaction—provided a space for reawakening and inspiration in the interviewers receiving those life stories (five researchers noted this):

Robin: ...and, [excitement building in his voice] it's just, I guess one of the things that comes out of all of these interviews is that their [the interviewee's] passion really reawakens and stirs my own up. And it's—wonderful—[lowering his voice here] it's wonderful. I'm alive [enthusiastically whispered].

“I’m alive” is a powerful way to feel that speaks on its own, and it carried through in Robin’s actions. Through his self-motivation and support of team members, Robin, a performing artist, showed his visual art for the first time at the team art show. He was ecstatic to see his work framed and on a gallery wall for the first time. A year later, his work was displayed at the Massachusetts State house as part of an art show organized by team members Judi and Don Campbell.

The research process also provided an avenue for artists to engage the extra-lingual facets of art, which was the most important aspect of the interviews for Heather:

I LOVED experiencing peoples’ art. I met some artists where they showed me their work, or they played music for me, or they sang, or they danced, and I was just blown away by the experience of their art. . . . I liked hearing what they had to say, but I was more interested in interacting with them artistically.

Experiencing the art of her interviewees moved Heather, and that joy can spill over to the artist as well:



**Figure 6.3: Zoe (right) Showing Abby (left) Her Art Work**

Paying attention to Zoe’s face, we see that she allows herself to be moved, taking in the joy that her art evokes in another.

Finally, in addition to experiencing art, the research process allowed for an expanded understanding of what art *is*. In the team check-in, the gathering after everyone had collected at least one interview, we had a very lively discussion about art, ultimately asking, “What *is* art?” Moonlight mentioned that his specific definition of art was being challenged by the creativity he saw everywhere in his community. A month later when we met again for the collaborative analysis, he explained how his understanding of art had changed:

It was such an eye-opener for me to realize that I had conceived of art as one thing. And then during the course of the interviews, and talking to everyone around the room [here he points to his fellow interviewers around the room] art became another thing [he has his arms open wide]. Of all the things that I could possibly learn as an individual . . . finding out what art really meant was the biggest of all things for me. Just finding out that it's not art [here he hold up two

fingers, very close together] or art, [moving those fingers further apart], but it's *art* [stretching his arms out wide and opening his hands all the way]



**Figure 6.4: Moonlight Davis: An Expanding Meaning of Art<sup>81</sup>**

Through the interactions that occurred as part of the research process, Moonlight's meaning of art expanded. A very powerful outcome indeed.

In addition to taking inspiration from fellow artists and the extra-lingual element of art, several members of the research team found that interacting through peer interviews reaffirmed their life choices, principles, and experiences as artists. Most members of the research team had made very difficult financial choices over the course of their lives in order to foreground their art. For some, this meant going without health insurance and for others it meant living on a tight budget. These are decisions that are often not supported by the artist's family or by the broader cultural norms that stress economic decisions that foreground security. Interviewing other artists, and seeing their own lives and choices reflected in the life of the interviewee, was incredibly meaningful.

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<sup>81</sup> Pictured: Phyllis (left), Moonlight (center), and Judi (right)

For example, Phyllis struggled with her recent choice to move back to Franklin County, but found hope in the enthusiasm with which her interviewees experienced the region:

It was really great to hear how people, how artists, use the land and love that land that they lived on . . . from gardening to having the inspiration for materials. That really helped me locate myself here.

The interviews helped her “locate [her]self” in the region. For Jessamyn, interviewing other artists affirmed the choice that she made to make economic decisions based on her social justice principles, a choice that sometimes leaves her underemployed. The stories shared in the interviews also confirmed some of her own experiences of sexism as a woman artist. Finally, Al had recently learned that his talented young apprentice had decided not to pursue a life as an artist after seeing how difficult it was to earn a living as an artist. This had created doubt in Al that was compounded by dealing with diminishing eyesight brought on by aging, but:

[The interviews] have helped me with dark thoughts I've had about having done what I've done for so long; I've pretty much been doing the same professional life since I was 24 and I'm now 51. . . . Having had twenty-year relationships with some of these people, sitting down and interviewing them has allowed me to kind of revel in what my life has been. And focus more on what I've built than on what opportunities I've had to give up. And focusing much more on how my capacities are expanded in most directions, rather than the few in which they were limited.

Through interviewing his colleagues, Al was able to re-orient himself toward his strengths and accomplishments, seeing the arc of his artistic career in a fresh light. The interviews thus provided a nourishing source of interaction, where many of the researchers could reaffirm their own values and decisions in the face of external circumstance that led them to question their life choices.

The interviews provided a nourishing source of interaction, and for some members of the research team the cumulative effects of interacting with peers throughout

the research process profoundly affected the way they inhabited their own artistic subjectivity. Four members of the research team reported feeling more confident and willing to share and sell their work by the end of the art show. For example, Don, who is creative in his own right, joined the research team primarily to support his wife, Judi, who was unable to drive after a recent knee surgery. Judi, a life-long artist, wanted the connection to other artists offered by participation in the project and relied Don to drive her. Don's participation opened a way of seeing himself that had been discouraged at early age:

I found that part of me that, that probably got squashed with [his volume lowering] the expectations of going into something like engineering, or whatever, you know [so quiet now, he is barely audible] from my family and the education I had. So, [volume returning to his voice] I always kind of knew it [artistic creativity] was there . . . and, boy, hanging out with people who do this, it was like 'whooo' [laughing], there is some life-altering stuff at work, that is happening here. Thank you.

Through interaction, Don was valued as a creative person with capacity and potential, leading him to create his first piece of visual art so that he could participate in the art show. He was deeply proud of his piece, and the process—being encouraged to try, trying, and being well received—had “life-altering” effects on Don. The process allowed his creativity, which, as his voice betrayed, had been painfully crushed in his early life, to emerge again late in life. As Judi told me, this creative emergence was what led them to organize an art show at the Massachusetts State House, one of the material outcomes of the project that I discuss below.

### **Material Outcomes**

Members of the research team changed in the ways they relate to themselves and to art through interaction with peers and the art of peers: finding inspiration in the work

of others, taking the risk to create new art themselves, seeing the arc of their artistic career in a new light, and expanding what art means. These are powerful shifts, which in some cases visibly and directly affect the material outcomes of the research process. Judi and Don organized an art show as a direct result of Don coming to see himself in a new light. Robin chose to exhibit a piece in their show after taking inspiration and support from the research process. Other material outcomes include: a housing opportunity, artistic collaborations, the transfer of practical skills and knowledge about living and working as artists and artisan in Franklin County, and deepening existing ties. The most immediate of these outcomes was for Jessamyn:

.... [Interviewing] brought some really immediate and large changes into my life, like where I live. The first person that I interviewed actually runs a colony for women artists and I ended up moving there. And her joke now is, 'Jessamyn came to interview me and never left' [laughs from the group]. It just turned out to be an amazing gift in my life to be in this place. . . .

For Jessamyn the peer-to-peer connections provided her with an affordable place to live. Located in the wilderness, the artist colony also provided direct inspiration for her work—wilderness poetry.

At a very practical level, peer interviewing allowed for a transfer of skills and knowledge. One of the primary questions in our interview schedule was, "What are the diverse economic practices that support your work as an artist?" For several members of the team, seeing how other artists and artisans answered this question provided a new window into "art as a profession:"

Phyllis: As an emerging artist I'm like, 'How the hell do you make a living at this?' And I really feel like people completely and utterly bared every detail of their financial life with me—the good, the bad, and the ugly, and everything in between.

Phyllis demonstrates that peer interviews created a conduit for sharing the practices that artists and artisans use to balance their artistic lives and values while working to meet material needs.

In addition to the transfer of practical skills, three members of the research team noted that the peer interviews provided an avenue for deepening existing relationships. For example, for two years Jerilyn had been painting with a group of artists every Wednesday morning, her “feeding my soul day.” All six painters wanted to be interviewed by Jerilyn, to great effect:

[They] invited me into their homes, showed me their private, sacred studios. And their faces changed, their whole beings changed. I've known them for a couple of years and I felt like, ‘After all this time I've spent [with them] I never really knew them.’ It was a real gift to get to know people I thought I already knew on such a deeper level and through their art world.

She was so moved and honored to see her long-time colleagues transform, “their faces changed” within their art worlds. Eric most valued seeing his peers within the arc of their artistic lives:

These were people that I knew and had an artistic relationship with . . . and yet, something within the design and structure of the interview opened up this whole other world: another level of understanding them in the context of their path.

Early in the project, Eric observed that most of the artists he interviewed experienced their artistic lives through a series of cut-off points, coming to places where they had to “either fold or ante-up for the next round.” It was seeing his peers in this context that he found so powerful.

Finally, the most lasting material outcomes from the research process include artistic collaborations. In the spring of 2011, Heather organized a benefit concert for the Prison Birth Project, a local nonprofit focused on reproductive health rights for

incarcerated pregnant women. She recruited the bulk of the performers through the interviews. Phyllis, who produces and coordinates contemporary ceremonies, put on two events including women from her interviews and from the research team. The first event, “Water Dances,” the closing ceremony of the Franklin County Biennial, was held in October 2010, in the midst of interviewing. The second event, “This Side of the Flood Waters,” was held in the summer of 2012—nearly two years after the interviews were conducted—to pay homage to the Deerfield River one year after regional flooding caused by Hurricane Irene.

In the spring of 2012, Judi and Don co-coordinated an art show, the “Facets of Western Massachusetts,” which was displayed in the offices of Senator Stan Rosenberg in the Massachusetts’ State House in Boston. The show drew together some of the artists they had interviewed and a fellow member of the research team, Robin. As discussed above, Judi credits their participation in the project as the inspiration she and Don needed to organize their show the following spring. In 2014 Phyllis and Leo collaborated on an Arts and Humanities Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Leo and Eric worked together on an arts development project, and Phyllis organized another “Water Dance,” inviting participation from members of the research project. Finally, the spring of 2017 marked Moonlight and Morning Star’s seventh annual gospel concert in Jeanne’s former church.

In summary, peer interviews embedded in a collaborative research process generated a variety of micro-political changes, which influenced lasting material outcomes. Some members of the research team continue to work together in a variety of capacities to support each other artistically and, thus, economically. Through the

connections forged through Jeanne, Moonlight and Morning Star have a venue and audience members. Phyllis continues to provide avenues for performance for other artists while meeting her need for performers, and Leo continues to work directly to influence the development of the creative economy in Franklin County through separate collaborations with Phyllis and Eric. The research process concretely had on-the-ground effects; something was produced. The following section explores some of the mechanisms through which the research came to matter for the members of the research team.

### **What Were the Mechanisms of Production?**

Recognizing the performative nature of social science means that methodological decisions are not only about research ethics or the quality of the data we collect. Although these elements remain central, it is additionally about the quality of the research process and the types of interactions and ways of being we inhabit as researchers. Not only does research enact the world through validating and strengthening some ways of thinking and knowing over others, shaping worldviews (Latour 1993), but it also produces contexts (Law & Singleton 2013) in which researcher and subject, or in the case of PAR, between subject and subject (Fals-Borda 1991), bring each other into being. In the context of our research process, I found that repeated interaction from an asset-based stance created and sustained the outcomes outlined above.

### **Asset-Based Stance**

If research, at least in part, produces the world, and researchers produce research, then the stance—“both an emotional and an affective positioning of the self in relation to thought and thus to apprehending the world” (Gibson-Graham 2006:1)—that researchers

bring to the research process matters. Gibson-Graham (2006:8) encourage researchers to approach research with a reparative stance, “a motive that welcomes surprise, entertains hope, makes connections, tolerates coexistence, and offers care for the new” by encouraging a “shift in organized habits of feeling and judgment” (Connolly 2002:76, quoted in Gibson-Graham 2006:2).<sup>82</sup>

In our research process, we hybridized the reparative stance with asset-based thinking, creating what I call an asset-based stance. We created a shift in organized ways of thinking and being through substituting needs-based thinking with asset-based thinking. Then, the asset-based way of thinking shaped how we looked for possibility; as a research team we explicitly looked for possibility within the assets that emerged during the research process. Relating this back to regional need within the creative economy, this means that assets did not eclipse need, but, rather, provided local resources and strategies for addressing the existing need. It places economic possibility back in the hands of the local community such that the external-based “creative-class” solution cannot be seen as the only way to develop the regional creative economy. It allowed members of the research team to see themselves as economic agents, opening the possibility for the material outcomes noted above—artists must first perceive themselves as capable of economic action before they can undertake economic collaborations.

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<sup>82</sup> The reparative stance is in contrast to what Eve Sedgwick (2003) calls the paranoid stance, which she argues has become normative on the left. As described by Gibson-Graham (2006:4), “Paranoia wants to know everything in advance to protect itself against surprise. It attempts to show intricately and at great lengths how everything adds up, how it all means the same thing.” In other words, we already know that [insert radical idea here] is bound to fail.

To demonstrate the ways in which the asset-based stance operated, I present the initial moment we introduced asset-based thinking, on the first day of the researcher training. To start, we showed a picture of a glass of water asking the familiar question, “What do you see?” The team was starting to feel comfortable with each other, and this cliché question garnered answers that had the group laughing together with shout-outs like “no ice please,” “wanting,” “water,” “53% full,” with the next person chiming in, “no, closer to 60%!” This was a visualization technique borrowed directly from Kretzman and McKnight (1993) to start a conversation about the reality of both standard answers—the glass is half empty and half full. Analogously, needs and assets exist together in any community.

After discussing needs and assets in the context of Franklin County, and building from the connections that were slowly starting to form through validating discussion and laughing together, we next practiced asset mapping, asking what are our assets? Here members of the research team paired off. Each pair shared a large piece of paper on which they started cataloging their internal assets; the personal strengths, skills, and values they have to contribute to their communities. We encouraged them to “cheat”—to look at what their partner was writing and see what it might inspire them to think about in themselves. After completing the list, they then interviewed their partner about what they had written. There were a number of pedagogical layers here. We wanted to start members of the research team thinking from an asset perspective and to practice interviewing fellow artists, and we were aiming to create community between the team members.

Before they reported back to the larger group about their partner’s assets, we broke for dinner. This strategic placement of dinner had a wonderful effect. After spending time asset mapping together—sharing the parts of themselves in which they take the most pride but often don’t get to share—some “pairs” ate together, continuing the conversation. The typical hum of eating was amplified to a thrum as the members of the research team continued to learn about each other from the entry point of seeing self and other as asset laden. This particular meal was one of my favorite parts of the whole research project. I was so deeply moved by the sense of excitement and possibility that came to the fore. It was my first inkling of how powerful this asset-based thinking would be.

After the meal, we came back together as a large group to hear the “report back” from the interviews. What had they learned about each other? Figure 6.5 is the asset map done between two women, Zoe and Kiran, who were meeting for the first time.

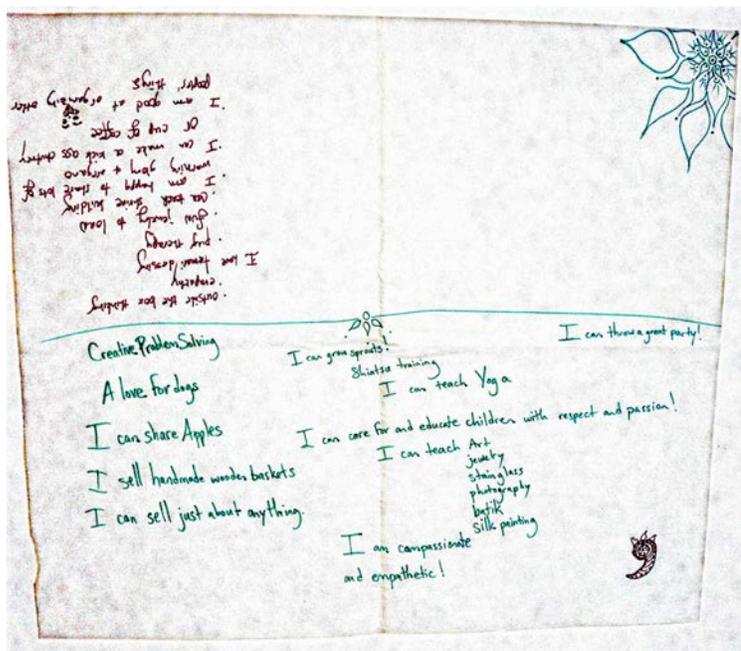
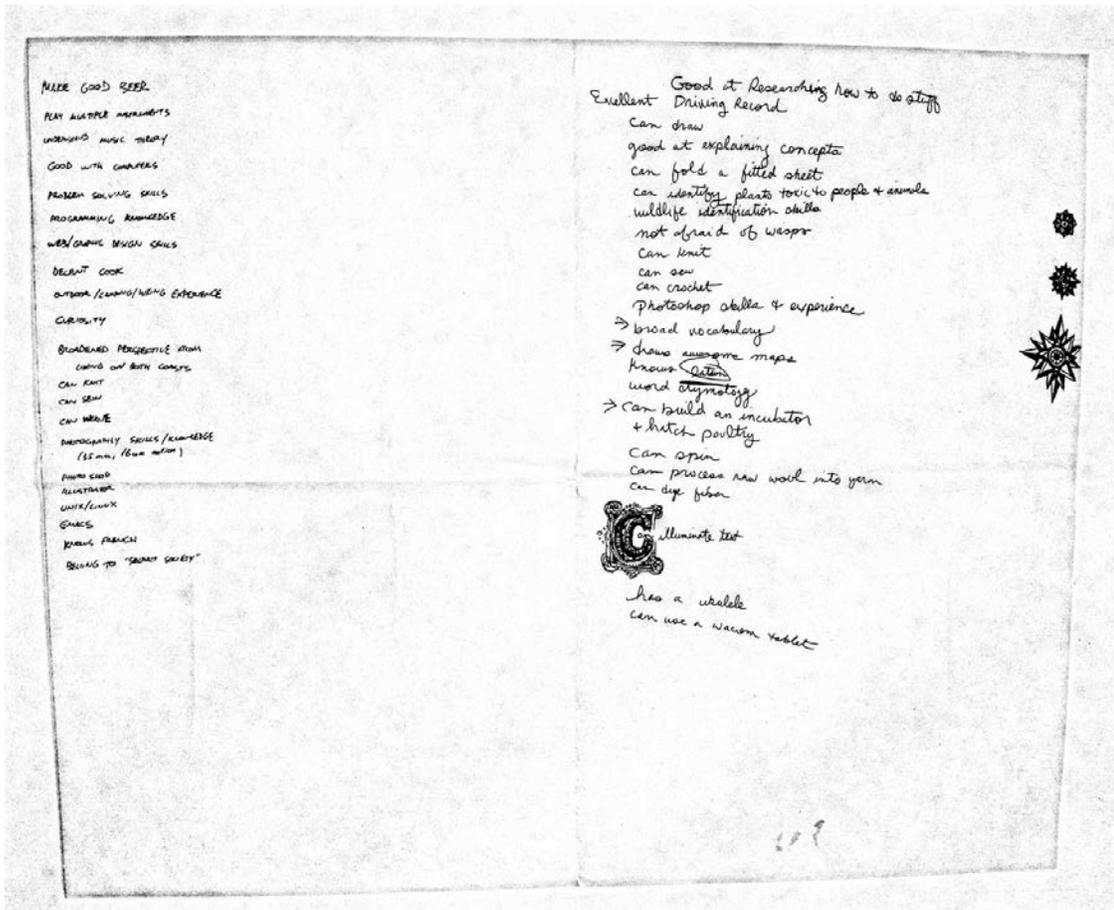


Figure 6.5: Asset Mapping Between Women Meeting for the First Time

The orientation of the words on the page allows us to see that they were sitting across the table from one another. Noting the green image next to the red text and vice versa, we also see that they left a physical mark when they were interviewing one another; they each drew an image on the other's "side" of the paper while they were reading what the other had to say. I love the symbolic marking or touching of these drawings because these were the women who bonded the most through the mapping exercise and the ensuing dinner.

Reading the text provides a feel for the intimacy of asset mapping. The map provides a window into what the person values. For example, drawing from the green text, Kiran values holistic spiritual and physical health (teaching yoga, growing sprouts). She places value on being an educator (teaching both kids and adults), and she places values on her character (being respectful, passionate, and compassionate). Drawing from the red text, we get a window into Zoe's art form; she has lots of fun jewelry to lend because she makes and designs jewelry. We see a similar window into the person's art form in Figure 6.6. Sitting side-by-side, Andy (left) and Kim (right), husband and wife, interviewed one another. Kim, an illustrator, illustrated some of the text on her asset map.



**Figure 6.6: Asset Map Completed by a Married Couple**

Comparing the number of listed assets in Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 is also illuminating. Because the couple knew one another, when one stopped writing, the other would remind the stalled spouse what was missing. Thus, the married couple ended up with more listed assets than Zoe and Kiran, who were just getting to know one another. For these women, rather than delineating what they already valued about the other, they were forming a new connection, and letting themselves be affected by the other. For example, both noted the things they could teach; seeing someone else self-label “teaching” as an asset gave the other person license to see it as an asset in herself. As one member of the team put it when discussing the asset-mapping process, “feeding off of

someone allowed me to share the deep.” As her partner in asset mapping shared, she became increasingly comfortable sharing the deeper, often hidden parts of herself.

This moment from the training illustrates the depth of connection that can occur when a person is encouraged to share their assets, the parts of themselves that women in particular are socialized not to share for fear of appearing boastful or prideful. This was gentle encouragement, based in interaction that dislodged, even if only at times, the needs-based way of relating to self and community.

The needs-based discourse is strong in Franklin County, and regional artists, including members of the research team, were not accustomed to being valued as people who have something to say about what works economically. They were not accustomed to being asked to share their artistic life as an asset—a potential resource to fellow artists. They were not accustomed to being seen as capable economic actors. For example, at our team check-in early in the interview process, we spent a significant amount of time discussing pedagogical tools for promoting and maintaining an asset-based focus in the interviews. Even after spending the evening discussing how to move interviewees away from needs-based thinking, one member of the research team reacted with surprise when Leo asked him later that night if we could interview him as an artist. He responded, “Me? Really?” While he could see others as asset laden, it was turning that insight toward *self* that proved difficult.

### **Repeated Interaction**

Given that enacting an asset-based stance was at times difficult to internalize, we discovered that it was repeated interactions with one another, over the course of the research project, that proved so generative. We learned how to reflect back one another’s

strengths as sites of possibilities both through conducting interviews and through collaborating as a research team. We were learning to be affected (Latour 2004; Roelvink 2010)—allowing ourselves to be moved through interaction and developing the capacity to be moved toward new subjectivities. As Gibson-Graham (2006) note, within the PAR process there are swerves between the old and the new economic subjectivities. We found that the affirmation of new ways of thinking about self and community, which came from repeated interaction, allowed for longer periods of sustaining a swerve into the new.

The asset-mapping example above demonstrates learning to be affected as it occurred in the beginning of the research process. It occurred in the interviews as well. We can see a similar moment of letting oneself be affected by circling back to Al, the artisan who reported in the collaborative analysis that:

[The interviews] have helped me with dark thoughts I've had about having done what I've done for so long. . . . And focus more on what I've built than on what opportunities I've had to give up.

Looking at conversational moments in Al's interview with Court makes this change visible in real-time. In the interview, Court was a very candid, open, and sharing of his forgiving and spiritually-inflected way of approaching life and his art. An hour and twenty minutes into the interview, Court asks to stop the interview to refill his coffee. He leaves the room for a few moments, giving Al time to sit and reflect. When Court came back in to the room, Al allowed himself to be very vulnerable, sharing what sounds like self-doubt that he had been carrying for years.<sup>83</sup> Through conversation, Court reassures him, empathizing and reflecting back the extreme talent he sees in Al's work. Al accepts the support and then moves on to a new and unrelated line of questions.

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<sup>83</sup> Specifics redacted out of respect for the personal nature of this point in the interview.

Vulnerable self-disclosure was not part of Al’s typical interview style, even when interviewing other long-time friends. The openness of this interviewee coupled with their friendship allowed Al to let himself be affected through the interaction, clearly part of what enabled him to “focus more on what [he] built than on what opportunities [he] had to give up.”

Interactions matter—interactions between members of the research team and interactions between the interviewees and members of the research team. Peer interviewing embedded in a collaborative research process created multiple points of interaction to enact an asset-based stance, helping to explain *how* the research process itself had effects on members of the research team. As Table 6.1 illustrates, interviews were literally embedded in the collaborative process.

<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Team training (September 2010)</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Conducting first peer-to-peer interview</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Collaborative check-in (October 2010)</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Conducting remaining peer-to-peer interviews</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Collaborative analysis (November 2010)</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Presenting at a regional Creative Economy Summit (March 2011)</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Creating a chapbook of favorite interview quotes to disseminate at the Summit and art show (March 2011)</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Hosting a regional art show featuring art of the researchers (April 2011)</b>
<b>Research Team</b>	<b>Hosting an online art show featuring art of interviewees (February 2013)</b>

**Table 6.1: Peer Interviewing Embedded in a Collaborative Research Process**

As collaborators we interacted as equals. All members of the team were seen as equally knowledgeable and capable to make decisions that shaped the direction of the research.<sup>84</sup> Embedded within this collaborative structure, interviewees and interviewers also interacted as peers. They learned from each other, discussed the deep values that motivate them as artists, and they discussed concrete economic practices that support them. It was a dialogic exchange, where both interviewer and interviewee were invited to be affected by the exchange, in the same way that members of the research team were affecting one another. Thus, both the collaborative and the peer-to-peer structure posited participants as capable actors. The asset-based stance amplified this by actively looking for and facilitating participants' capacities.

Interactions also shaped the content of the asset-based stance, taking an abstract way of thinking and making it concrete. For example, above I discussed Jerilyn interviewing all the members of her painting group. At the collaborative analysis, she expressed that the interviews had deepened her existing relationships with the members of her weekly painting group. At the beginning of the project, however, she expressed to Leo that she left the initial researcher training feeling that “no one will want *me* to interview them.” She was then deeply moved that all six members of her painting group not only wanted to participate in the study, but they wanted to be interviewed by *her*. The self-valuation suggested by the asset-based stance came to life only through interactions

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<sup>84</sup> While Leo and I provided a detailed interview schedule, most researchers chose to ask their own questions within the loose frame of thinking about economic activity and values of artists. This means that the research team ultimately produced knowledge that was of use and interest to them as artists living and working in the Greater Franklin County.

with her peers, and was then strengthened through the process of interviewing such that she was left with deeper relationships.

Jerilyn's experience also highlights the ways in which the content of the asset-based stance was fleshed-out through moving back and forth between interactions within the research team and the interactions that occurred through the interviews. Insights from the interviews were discussed in research team gatherings while insights from the research team were discussed in the interviews. As highlighted earlier, the peer interviews left five members of the research team feeling inspired. For example, Robin articulated during the collaborative analysis that interviewing left him inspired. Robin, and others, then put that inspiration into practice at the art show in the spring. Here is Robin discussing his participation in the art show:

This [the art show] was wonderful for me. Actually, every year I set goals for myself, and one of my goals for this year was to get my artwork printed out, and low and behold, this opportunity [the art show] comes along, and now [gesturing around the room] I have three pieces printed up. It was really exciting for me to be able to exhibit. And . . . I was afraid, I felt some fear about doing this, I mean 'Oh my God it's not good enough.' And then everybody says, 'Oh, wow, Robin, it's really good!' So it was really nice to get those strokes.

Concretely, the peer interviews provided Robin with inspiration. The collaborative research process provided an opportunity to show his work while the asset-based stance provided a safe environment for him to display his work for the first time. In this environment he received much praise, which, as I discussed above, opened the door for his continued desire to exhibit his work.

### **Specifics of the Context**

I argue that repeated peer-to-peer interactions from an asset-based stance generated on-the-ground effects for members of the research team. Throughout the course

of the research process some members of the research team shifted the way that they relate to self, community and art, which in part, opened the door for material outcomes such as new artistic collaborations, the deepening of existing ties, and a transfer of practical skills and knowledge about what it means to be an artist. To generate these effects, as a research team we intervened in the dominant needs-based discourse, substituting an asset-based stance, not only looking for assets but also allowing ourselves to be affected by the possibility within those assets. We used the productive micro-power of the research process to disrupt the power-over development discourses. However, the question remains, what was particular about our team and the context of the creative economy of Franklin County that may have influenced these outcomes? To answer this question I will first discuss the creative economy and then the research team.

The discursive disruptions suggested by Cameron and Gibson (2005) play out in a specific way within the creative economy. Much of the economic activity within the creative sector happens outside of the formal economy, thus regional artists and artisans already conceptualize the economy from a diverse economies perspective. In contrast, for economic sectors that primarily rely on employment through wage labor, the diverse economies perspective initially created “reluctant subjects” (Gibson-Graham 2006a) among members of the research team. The participants in Cameron and Gibson’s (2005) project did come to rethink the economy over the course of the project, but it was not their starting point. By working with artists, we could start from a diverse understanding of the economy. This allowed us to focus on the discursive shift toward asset-based thinking, which is where we faced reluctant subjects. As a team we were able to exclusively focus on enacting one conceptual shift, in contrast to two, allowing the shift

to asset-based thinking to take on the quality of a stance—allowing thinking to connect to feeling and being. This finding suggests that Cameron and Gibson’s (2005) methodology is particularly powerful for diversified economic sectors in which community and academic researchers alike can focus on the shift toward an asset-based stance.

This method was particularly powerful for the creative economy in general because of its existing economic diversity, and for the creative economy of Franklin County in particular because the county is very rural, leaving many artists isolated. One of the most prominent needs discovered through the FACP needs-assessment was the need for connection with other artists. Our project was, in fact, one way the FACP hoped to address the need for connection while also looking for community assets. Four members of the research team explicitly stated their interest in meeting other artists as one of the reasons they wanted to participate in the project. Some members of the team were new to the area and wanted to make connections while others had lived here for years but were isolated by health and/or lack of income to travel between towns. Therefore, it is likely that the same project conducted in an urban setting, where contact between artists is easier, would have different results. Given the rural nature of the county in which we conducted the project, contact between artists was valued in and of itself.

Finally, within Franklin County, we had a very specific research team. By selecting members of the community who were excited about the transformative aims of this project, many members of the research team were motivated by social justice, in one form or another, prior to coming to the project. This meant that the project became another venue through which team members enacted their ethics, and it allowed us to push a new way of thinking as far as we could. That said, the degree to which members

of the research team stayed connected to the project after the collaborative analysis was equally motivated by existing ethics and the desire for connections noted early. Many of the deepest changes happened for the team members who were in need of new or renewed connection to the regional arts community. For some members of the research team with family and/or job-related time constraints, continued participation beyond the collaborative analysis was not an option.

Finally, it is crucial to note that by hiring a heterogeneous team in relationship to art as full-time or part-time employment, we were hiring a team with different levels of attachment to and comfort with the labels “artist” or “artisan.” Some members of the team were comfortable operating from an artistic subjectivity while others cultivated their ability to see themselves as artists, and thus artistic economic actors, over the course of the project.

In summary, context matters. The creative sector is particularly ripe for economic discursive intervention given that those working in this sector are accustomed to thinking and working outside the box. It is additionally a very important economic sector in which to intervene, since the creative cities development strategy has become a worldwide development model, which unfortunately exacerbates existing economic inequalities. The peer-to-peer structure of the research process was particularly powerful in the context of Franklin County, given that artists are spread over a wide geographic area and are in need of venues through which to interact with one another. Finally, many members of our research team were social activists, looking for social change prior to engagement with the research project, facilitating “rethinking the creative economy.”

In conclusion, I argue that repeated peer-to-peer interactions from an asset-based stance generated on-the-ground effects for members of the research team. Throughout the course of the research process some members of the research team shifted the way that they relate to self, community, and art, which in part, opened the door for material outcomes such as new artistic collaborations, the deepening of existing ties, and a transfer of practical skills and knowledge about what it means to be an artist. To generate these effects, as a research team we intervened in the dominant needs-based discourse, substituting an asset-based stance. We not only looked for assets but also allowed ourselves to be affected by the possibility within these assets. We used the productive micro-power of the research process to disrupt the dominant development discourses.

Additionally, I argue that the creative sector is particularly ripe for economic discourse intervention given that it is a sector accustomed to thinking and working outside the box. It is additionally a very important economic sector in which to intervene since the creative cities development strategy has become a worldwide development model, which unfortunately exacerbates existing economic inequalities. While the creative cities model has discursive dominance and backing of significant financial capital, some localities are resisting, choosing to foreground their own values in creative economic processes (Edensor and Millington 2013).

My findings suggest that discursive intervention, which enables new forms of economic subjectivity to emerge, can facilitate local resistance as local artists and artisans come to see themselves as more capable economic actors. Finally, my findings highlight that peer-to-peer interviewing is a particularly powerful method for isolated populations or regions. The method itself provides a form of peer-to-peer interaction, which, when

paired with an asset-based stance, creates a needed point of connection and brings with it the possibility for continued connection and economic potential.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this chapter draws together major findings and suggests avenues for policy. However, it is also a postscript. The participatory action research project from which this dissertation emerged was conceptualized and conducted in 2010. As I write this chapter seven years later, the passage of time allows me to frame my findings in the present state of the creative economy in the Greater Franklin County, Massachusetts, and the present state of the creative economy discourse. Gentrification never came to the region. At the same time, Richard Florida's latest book, published in early 2017, comes just shy of admitting that the policies carried out in his name and by his brand, The Creative Class Group®, deepened urban inequalities. This chapter places my findings in conversation with these newer developments, enriching an intellectual understanding of the present state of affairs.

This study concretely bridged between the creative economy literature and the sociology of artistic production literature. It is important to put these literatures in conversation. The widespread utilization of the creative economy discourse currently sets the backdrop for artist- and artisan-related development decisions. In this context, one cannot understand the development landscape in which artists and artisans exist without exploring the creative economy. Conversely, understanding the effects of the creative economy discourse in the lives of artists and artisans requires looking to the specifics of field of artistic production. Finally, whatever its virtues as a strategy of economic development, creativity-based development is no great boon for artists themselves.

Sometimes low-income artists are themselves victims of the very economic development they help create as they are priced out of their communities. More importantly, the market-based focus of creativity based development means that it largely does not resonate with artists and artisans. Many do want to make a living, but most do not view their artistic lives as a business. Many do art part time, not always by choice, but in ways that insulate them from commercial considerations. Art, which is to say artists, not uniquely but distinctively, resists market pressures.

### **Returning to the Creative Economy**

Blazing onto the world development stage in 2002, Richard Florida's "creative class" became the social group that cities large and small aimed to attract in order to redevelop after industrial loss. From its inception, Florida's ill-defined concept was critiqued. This dissertation sides with the literature that argues that there is no such thing as the creative class. The concept is based on a conflation of creativity with educational attainment and its related occupational prestige. Lawyers, doctors, and advertisers are part of the creative class using Florida's index, while other occupations that also require creative thinking, such as the skill trades, are not.

Development aimed at attracting the creative class was simply the latest version of development aimed at meeting upper middle class tastes and values. It has been the logic through which low-income, center-city residents have been and are being pushed out as cities aim to attract the upper middle class back from the suburbs. It is white flight in reverse. Many residents are priced out, and those who are not, particularly those from minoritized racial and ethnic groups, no longer feel welcome in their transitioning communities.

These strong critiques of Florida are not at all new. However, Florida's response is new. His latest book probes the undeniable link between creativity-based development and gentrification. Some (see Wetherell 2017) have interpreted this as his "*mea culpa*." Florida has made a small fortune as the "guru" of the creative class or, to use the marketing language from the Creative Class Group's© website, the "intellectual rock star" of the creative economy. Therefore, I read his latest publication as the most tactful way that he could appropriate the knowledge of his critics in the service of his own brand. Simply the title of the book, *Urban Crisis: how our cities are increasing inequality, deepening segregation, and failing the middle class—and what we can do about it,* positions him as the expert best equipped to clean up the mess that development in the name of the creative class created.

His fuzzy concept of the creative class led to a measure of creativity that simply served as a hidden proxy for social class. This concept and its related development prescriptions were adopted worldwide because they did not require cities to take on meaningful structural reforms to address social inequality. As a result, inequalities deepened. While other scholars without the social power of Florida have been saying this for years, he can now use his brand to continue making money from the idea of the creative class, only this time by framing his expertise around damage control.

What happens to the values and needs of artists and artisans in all of this? They have been lumped into the "creative class" with little or no attention paid to the ways in which the logic of the artistic field of production stands in stark contrast to the market-based logic of dominant creativity-based development. Yet, my findings suggest that it is

the various nonmarket logics of artists and artisan that hold a potential for developing cities in a way that fosters creativity while meeting the needs of all citizens.

### **Artists, Artisans, and Motivating Values**

As has been demonstrated throughout the dissertation, artists and artisans do not build their lives around market-based logics. Organized around the logic of producing art for art's sake, the field of artistic production gives rise to an "interest" in economic "disinterestedness" (Bourdieu 1993:40) among artists and artisans. As previous authors have indicated, this logic coupled with a perpetual oversupply of artists can unfortunately open artists or creative workers up to exploitation. In the service of creativity, artists are willing to take more economic risks, work longer hours, and accept lower pay than professionals in other occupational groups (Caves 2000; Eikhof and Haunschild 2006; Menger 1999). Art is risky. Many of the artists and artisans in this study pursued art full-time, accepting its risks and adapting their economic lives accordingly through drawing on a range of market and non-market practices. Others pursued art on the side, sometimes by choice and sometimes by necessity. For these artists and artisans, creativity remained a central organizing passion and practice within their lives, but it was not their primary income source.

Independent from whether art/creativity was pursued on the side or as the primary source of income, the values of the artists and artisans in this study could not be understood from a market logic. Nor could they be understood from an oft narrow reading of art for art's sake which views the logic of a set of practices to foreground living a "bohemian lifestyle" (see Eikhof and Haunschild 2006, 2007; Ley 2006). Such readings accurately capture art for art's sake as a full departure from a market-based

logic. However, they also tend to flatten the richness and depth of the values that motivate artists and artisans (Eikhof and Haunschild 2006, 2007), or assume a shared upper middle class background for artists that “allow” them the luxury of a choosing bohemian lifestyle (Ley 2003).

This dissertation has helped to deepen social scientific discussions of art for art’s sake. These discussions are already rich and robust within the field of art; however, that depth has not translated to the social sciences. Utilizing the diverse economies approach to understanding the values of artists allowed me to work outside of a market/bohemian dichotomy so common in social scientific discussion of artists. A wide range of values motivated the artists and artisans in this study. For some artists, their motivating values include aspects of what is considered bohemian, particularly in relationship to the logic’s strong anti-economic establishment undercurrents (Lloyd 2004). A number of artists in this study purposely built their lives to minimize their engagement with capitalism and an even larger number built their lives around economic self-sufficiency and independence. This latter group was not always overtly anti-capitalism; rather, they wanted to be free to create their lives in a way that they saw fit. Others, however, were motivated by values that were neither market nor bohemian. Some artists and artisans were motivated by a sense of connection to heritage, saw creativity as a way to build community, or saw it as a way to embody care for the environment.

Additionally, I have illustrated that these motivating values and their related practices cannot be fully understood without considering the role of place. In New England, self-sufficiency does not emanate from a portable bohemian ideal. Here, self-sufficiency is part of the deep-rooted Yankee spirit. While it may work synergistically

with a bohemian ideal, self-sufficiency is not unique to this ideal. The same can be said for the ideal's anti-economic/anti-establishment themes. As illustrated throughout the dissertation, the Greater Franklin County is a patchwork of deep conservatism and progressivism. The region's progressive movements are full of anti-establishment social experiments to address social justice, to end war, to foreground local production and consumption, etc. These movements and values are much wider than a bohemian ideal, even if these values work in concert with the ideal.

Finally, this dissertation has illustrated a need to problematize the conflation of "bohemian lifestyles" with "artists" and with "class." In this study, not all artists identify with bohemian ideals. Those who did did not self-label as bohemians, nor do they all come from the upper middle classes as is often theorized of bohemians (for an example of such theories, see Ley 2003). The artists and artisans in this study were not the children of the elite, choosing to become artists/live a bohemian lifestyle to revolt against the bourgeoisie tastes and lifestyle of their parents. Full-time artists as self-identified on the census do tend to hold advanced degrees at a higher rate than the general population (Menger 1999). However, this does not mean that all full-time artists were born into middle or upper middle class families. As illustrated by Robin, Karen, and Moonlight, a college education cannot be assumed to map onto a middle or upper class background. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, looking only to full-time artists and artisans ignores part-time artists who may be even more likely to be from working class backgrounds.

The artists and artisans in this study came from a range of backgrounds. This dissertation has illustrated the importance of highlighting the class, race, and gender

diversity of artists and artisans as a way to address inequalities within the field of artistic production. Lumping artists into the category “creative class” masks occupational differences between artists and the other occupations within this category. Lumping artists into the category “bohemian” masks the existing heterogeneity of motivating values and demographic heterogeneity.

### **The Greater Franklin County and Gentrification**

Just as the motivating values of artists and artisans cannot be understood outside of the specifics of place, nor can gentrification. The concept of gentrification is similar to the concept of capitalism (see the discussion in Chapter 4). Both terms are widely used and both are rarely defined. Gentrification does not have a singular meaning and thus does not have a singular measure. Additionally, it is most often studied in urban settings. Given the different dynamics of urban and rural settings, simply importing theories of urban gentrification to rural settings is inadequate (Phillips 2004).

The most robust literature on rural gentrification comes out of studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK). Scholars from England and Wales started theorizing rural gentrification in the 1980s (for example, see Cloke and Thrift 1987; Logan and Molotch 1986). Studying gentrification outside of urban settings was slower to take hold in the U.S. context and still lags behind the study of urban gentrification. While nascent, this literature has still uncovered patterns important for understanding gentrification outside of urban areas.

Rural gentrification is most often linked to in-migration, which tends to be class based. Hines (2010:288) argues that rural gentrification is “a form of colonization of formerly predominantly working-class [rural] domains by ex-urban middle-class

Americans.” New residents can be attracted to rural areas for the access to “natural amenities” (Hunter et al 2005) such as outdoor activities or the peace and quiet of rural living. These “amenity migrants” (Abrams and Gosnell 2012) may or may not be interested in the preservation of the existing local culture. However, for some, movement to rural areas is not only about access to amenities but also part of a post-industrial middle-class ideal to live “authentically” as defined by the production and consumption of authentic experiences (Brown-Saracino 2004; Hines 2010). This subset of ex-urbanites leave the city in search of authentic living based on romanticized notions of rural life. In turn, they seek to integrate into the local culture while preserving it from other outside forces.

In addition to these consumption-side studies of rural gentrification, other studies have explored the production side. Instead of looking to why ex-urbanites move—to consume amenities, to consume authenticity, etc.—these studies look to what changes may have occurred in the rural communities to facilitate in-migration. One strand of research developed in the UK theorizes rural spaces as post-productive, meaning that they had largely lost their draw to agrarian capital. As these lands and properties become devalued in respect to agrarian production, they become revalued, albeit unevenly, through consumption-based uses like the amenity-based in-migration discussed above (Phillips 2005).

US-based research has expanded this focus on the production side, arguing that states and municipalities are important actors in determining how rural lands are used. In some cases, rural lands are post-productive and in other cases are they have been protected as wilderness areas. Abrams and Gosnell (2012) find that in-migration can be

facilitated by changes in state and/or local land use regulations that allow for development on previously-protected lands. Through a study of development in the Adirondacks, Darling (2005) found the close regulation of land by the state in and around this wilderness area meant that most theories of urban and rural gentrification did not apply. She concluded her article arguing that the specificities of place may render any overarching theory of “rural gentrification” impractical.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Greater Franklin County is not exempt from change and the possibility for gentrification that it brings. Residents expressed concerns about gentrification in the 1990 regional report on development and the arts. Their concern was in direct response to rapid growth after the construction of I-91. Twenty years later, we conceived our research project around apprehensions about gentrification. This time, concern arose from the region’s adoption of creativity-based development strategies. Overall, however, Franklin County has remained immune to gentrification. Returning to the discussion of redevelopment in downtown Greenfield, the bookstore that opened to cater to the tastes of the creative class folded while the longstanding bookstore with a working-class aesthetic stayed open. The high-end coffee shop that opened on the same block remains alongside its working-class, café counterpart. They simply cater to different segments of the town’s population. More importantly, real estate prices have remained steady in Greenfield and Turners Falls over the past ten years. Prices have risen, but not to the same degree as regions experiencing gentrification. Finally, the region’s population is projected to drop rather than increase.

Findings from this dissertation in conversation with the literature on rural gentrification can help explain why gentrification did not take off. As discussed in

Chapter 3, there has been a steady stream of artists and artisans moving to the Greater Franklin County since the late sixties and early seventies. Some of these artists were drawn by natural amenities. However, many were also drawn by the ability to participate in social experiments, a number of which are anti-market and anti-gentrification in nature. Affordable housing drew others. These migrants have a stake in blocking gentrification. Additionally, land in the region is largely not post-productive. The local foods movement has kept small-scale agriculture alive in the region and, as such, these lands are not available for development.

The region also tends to be culturally protectionist. After the rapid westward expansion of Greenfield after the construction of I-91, the region has doubled down on a protectionist spirit. For example, residents of Greenfield have been fighting the development of a Wal-Mart in the city since 1993. This 24-year battle is the longest successful anti-Wal-Mart campaign in the United States (Woolhouse 2016). This inclination to protect local culture also permeated the regional development plans discussed in Chapter 3 and outlined in detail in the Appendix. While some of the suggested plans for developing the creative economy were rooted in generic, market-based strategies, many were geared toward better understanding and supporting the existing creative economy. Finally, the Sustainable Franklin County development plan, published in 2013, set forth social justice-oriented development guidelines, such as increasing the stock of affordable housing. These guidelines have since been adopted in other regional development plans. My findings thus echo those of Darling (2005). Rural gentrification cannot be understood outside of the state and municipal legal mechanisms that shape development. However, in the context of the Greater Franklin County, my

findings highlight that these development policies and practices cannot be understood outside of the local cultures that shape them.

### **Policy Supports for Artists and Artisans**

Given the popularity of the creativity-based development, there is no dearth of policy recommendations for the so-called creative sector. Policies that consider the specific contours of the artistic labor market, however, are lacking. The findings from this dissertation contribute to policy conversations on two fronts. First, my research supports previous findings that place matters. Jackson (2003, 2004) and Markusen (2013b) both participated in large studies of artists and conclude that effective policies must be tailored to the specifics of that region's artistic community(ies). As I have illustrated throughout, the needs and assets of artists and artisans are place-specific, shaped by regional institutions, culture, and economic forces.

Second, through utilizing a diverse economies framework, I have illustrated the importance of looking to the full range of economic practices that artists and artisans employ and the diverse values that motivate these practices. From a diverse economies perspective, support can happen on a multiple fronts. First, supporting artists cannot only focus on increasing their consumer markets. While important, selling is only one of many practices that artists and artisans utilize to bring in income. Artists also rely heavily on the state and the support of private and public funders. Thus, policies to support, bolster, and/or protect these funding sources are key. Second, as illustrated in this dissertation and in previous studies such as Craig and Dubois (2010), Coulson (2010), and Bain and McLean (2013), many artists work collaboratively at times forgoing payment or individual economic gain in order to support other artists and artisans. These types of

community-focused practices are rooted in an understanding of art and creativity as tools for mutual support and social change. These values, along with those of social justice, sustainability, and connection to one's heritage, are lost when the focus of creative-based development narrows to look only at sales or the movement of investment capital. Thus, policies should be built around supporting the full range of values motivating artists and artisans.

Taken together, these findings point to the need to rethink one of the most commonly prescribed supports for artists and artisans: entrepreneurial and/or business training. Small business trainings can be invaluable for artists. For example, several artists and artisans who participated in this study noted that taking classes on website design or on writing business plans were key to their success. At the same time, the market-only focus of these trainings can keep some artists and artisans away. Given that artistic occupations are significantly different from other occupations, my findings support existing calls to create entrepreneurial trainings specific to artists (Markusen 2013b; Coulson 2010; Bridgestone 2012). Such trainings could assist artists and artisans in generating career plans that allow them to learn key business skills while still centering their artistic practice on their own motivating values.

### **Community-Based Research: Artists and Beyond**

Perhaps the most novel findings from this dissertation relate to methodology. There is a significant literature devoted to discussing the challenges and strengths of utilizing peer interviews and on how to conduct such interviews. However, little is written about how to analyze the unique data produced by the method. The dynamics between an interviewee and a peer interviewer are different from those between an

interviewee and an academic researcher. Our use of peer interviews embedded in a collaborative, action-oriented research project added yet another layer of complexity. As part of equalizing the relationship between the academic researchers and the artist/artisan researchers, the peer interviewers were free to do what they wanted with the interview schedule that the academic researchers had created: some followed it, some did not; some used a conversational style, while others did not. This created heterogeneous data, much of which was interactive.

Rather than consider these interactive moments as “contaminated” data to avoid, I considered them a unique strength of the method. I argue that analyzing the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee in peer interviews can strengthen research findings for community-based studies on two fronts. First, because both the interviewee and interviewer are from the same lifeworld being studied, examining the interaction between participants within peer interviews can provide substantively relevant content for a study. Second, peer interviews often have transformative aims. Analyzing the interaction between interview participants provides an avenue through which to assess these transformative dimensions, for example, observing points of participant empowerment through knowledge sharing. Thus, through attending to the unique aspects of the data produced by peer interviews, researchers can expand the depth of their findings.

This method generated constructive interaction between artists and artisans not only within the interviews, but also within the other moments of the research process: the training, the check-in, the collaborative analysis, and in the public events through which the research team shared findings with the broader community. As discussed in Chapter

6, conceptualizing these points of interaction as sites for change allowed for designing the project to include transformative aims. These aims were met on the micro-level. If projects such as this one were to continue over a number of years, it is quite possible these micro-level changes would help engender broader, structural changes within the community.

The strengths of this method can be utilized not only in the service of advancing academic arguments, but, more importantly, in the creation of development policies that better meet the needs and desires of the community being studied, in this case, artists and artisans. The dominant creativity-based development script and related practices make artists and artisans more vulnerable to gentrification. Truly supporting artists and artisans and other vulnerable low-income residents requires recognizing the specificity of place. “How can the needs of the community be met building from what the community already has?” It also requires including community members in multiple stages of the planning in order to keep development goals and strategies connected to local desires and values. As this dissertation has illustrated, community-based research is a useful tool to accomplish these goals simultaneously. It is a way to learn about place-specific assets, needs, and values while maintaining community participation.

While I have focused my discussion of methods around artists and artisans, these are powerful methods for any social group. Participatory projects are rooted in a tradition of empowerment for socially marginalized and often minoritized groups. Community-oriented, collaborative research projects are one way for socially engaged researchers to put social justice-oriented, public sociology into practice.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL CONTENT

I: INTERVIEWING MATERIALS USED BY THE ARTIST/ARTISAN RESEARCHERS

II: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT INCLUDE THE  
CREATIVE ECONOMY

III: CHAPBOOK CREATED BY RESEARCH TEAM TO DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

I: INTERVIEWING MATERIALS USED BY THE ARTIST/ARTISAN RESEARCHERS

# Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study (for artist-researchers)

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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**Study Title:** Rethinking the Creative Economy: Participatory Action Research with Artists and Artisans in the Greater Franklin County, Massachusetts.

**Principal Investigator:** Professor Richard Wilkie, Department of Geosciences, University of Massachusetts.

**Co-coordinators:** Abby Templer, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts, and Leo Hwang-Carlos, Department of Geosciences, University of Massachusetts and Associate Dean of Humanities, Greenfield Community College.

**Sponsors:** Massachusetts Cultural Council's John and Abigail Adams Arts Program and the University of Massachusetts President's Creative Economy Fund.

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## 1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

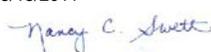
This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research study.

## 2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Any artist or artisan eighteen (18) or older living or working in the Greater Franklin County, MA is eligible to participate.

## 3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The aim of this project is to highlight and support the diverse economic activity of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County. Making visible the rich economic activities already in practice can help the region foster a positive economic identity, shifting away from the portrayals of a region in need, and provide an opportunity to direct funding towards community centered economic practices. Through the use of participatory action research (PAR) with a group of artists and cultural ambassadors, we will create a community partnership of people to (1) create a pool of local knowledge about the broad range of economic activities that artists and artisans participate in, and how these activities impact the community; (2) create avenues to share this knowledge with the region to increase an understanding of how artists and artisans impact our communities; (3) work with artists and artisans to select activities that foster the growth and adaptation of existing diverse

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Updated 8.10.10  
Participant Initials \_\_\_\_

economic practices; and (4) assist the community in recognizing available resources and possible funding sources to support and strengthen their creative economy.

#### 4. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to join the team as one of twenty (20) co-researchers. You will be invited to engage in the following activities:

- i) Participate in trainings led by the project co-coordinators on research ethics, interview techniques, how to identify diverse economic practices, and on collaborative data analysis.
- ii) Undertake in-depth interviews with five artist and artisans from the Greater Franklin County.
- iii) Participate in collaborative analysis of the interviews to identify themes and promising practices and collaboratively create action plans for sharing/supporting these practices.
- iv) Participate in a community event where the research team will share the study findings and start building community support for the action plans.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to respond to a few unstructured questions pertaining to your work as an artist or artisan, and about your experience of the research process itself. We are also interested in tracking how your views of the region or your creative process may change in the course of the project. Interviews (of approximately one hour's duration) will take place in a convenient quiet place of your choosing and will be conducted by one of the project co-coordinators. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. For the duration of the project, you will work alongside the project co-coordinators, who will assist with methodological and ethics training and data collection and who will provide general support.

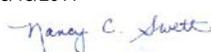
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be expected to share the data you collect with the project co-coordinators. This will not prevent you from drawing on the data you have gathered to publish independently.

#### 5. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place in various locations throughout the greater Franklin County; trainings and group meetings will take place at Greenfield Community College while interviews will be conducted in a location of the interviewees' choosing. Artist-researchers must provide their own transportation and travel will not be reimbursed. This study formally runs from September through December, however if action plans gain momentum in the community, there is a possibility for continued work in the community beyond the formal study period. The possibility also exists to present findings at conferences with the research team. Continued participation is completely voluntary.

#### 6. WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will receive \$500.00 for participating in the formal study period (approximately 25 hours between September and December). You may chose to leave the study at anytime, but you must

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complete at least one interview to receive partial payment of \$200.00. All payments will be made in December and will be prorated by participation as follows:

- 1st interview: \$200.00 (10hrs)
- 1st interview and second training: \$260.00 (13hrs)
- 2nd interview: \$300.00 (15 hrs)
- 3rd interview: \$340.00 (17hrs)
- 4th interview: \$380.00 (19hrs)
- 5th interview: \$420.00 (21hrs)
- Participation in full study: \$500.00 (25 hrs)

### 7. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS AND RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

While you might not directly benefit from this study, we hope that your participation will help highlight the diverse economic practices of artists and artisans in the region. We see the potential for artist and artisan knowledge and practices to be pooled and shared with others in the region and hope to create action plans to support these practices. We consider the risk of participating in the study to be minimal; if you participate in underground economic practices, there is a risk that those practices may have an increased profile. We will take precautions to insure this activity cannot be linked to you, however we cannot guarantee complete anonymity.

### 8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of any information you share. We will label your study records with a code. A master key that links your name and your code will be maintained in a separate location from your records. All information (including any codes to your data) will be kept in a secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed six (6) years after the close of the project. All electronic files (e.g., database, spreadsheet, etc.) containing identifiable information will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the principal investigator and project co-coordinators will have access to the passwords. All researchers will have access to the transcripts. You should be aware that because the region will be named, and the specific area of the region will be discussed anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

At the conclusion of this study, the project co-coordinators (and interested artist-researchers) may publish the findings. Information will be presented in summary format and, unless you request otherwise, you will not be identified in any publications or presentations. The data from this study will also be shared with other artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County through community events, through the Fostering Art and Culture Project, and presentations at regional and national conferences.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research may be used for conference presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research to be used for conference presentations.

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IRB Signature:	<i>Nancy C. Swett</i>

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research may be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research to be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to be identified and given credit as part of the research team.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not wish to be identified and given credit as part of the research team.

### 9. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the project co-coordinators, Abby Templer at (573) 259-9718 or by email at [atempler@soc.umass.edu](mailto:atempler@soc.umass.edu), or Leo Hwang-Carlos at (413) 775-1221 or by email at [lhwang@geo.umass.edu](mailto:lhwang@geo.umass.edu). If you would like to speak with someone not related to this study concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or [humansubjects@ora.umass.edu](mailto:humansubjects@ora.umass.edu).

### 10. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

### 11. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?

The University of Massachusetts does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment.

### 12. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. The general purposes and particulars of the study as well as possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

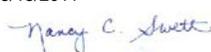
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

<b>University of Massachusetts Amherst-IRB</b> (413) 545-3428	
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**Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study**  
**(for interviewees)**  
 University of Massachusetts Amherst

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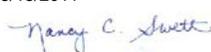
Any artist or artisan over the age of 18 living or working in the Greater Franklin County, MA is eligible to participate.

**3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The aim of this project is to highlight and support the diverse economic activity of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County. Making visible the rich economic activities already in practice can help the region foster a positive economic identity, shifting away from the portrayals of a region in need, and provide an opportunity to direct funding towards community centered economic practices. Through the use of participatory action research (PAR) with a group of artists and cultural ambassadors, we will create a community partnership of people to (1) create a pool of local knowledge about the broad range of economic activities that artists and artisans participate in, and how these activities impact the community; (2) create avenues to share this knowledge with the region to increase an understanding of how artists and artisans impact our communities; (3) work with artists and artisans to select activities that foster the growth and adaptation of existing diverse economic practices; and (4) assist the community in recognizing available resources and possible funding sources to support and strengthen their creative economy.

**4. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview that may last 1-2 hours. You will be asked to respond to a few unstructured questions

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about your work; the production process, finding an audience, your motivation, vision, etc. Interviews will take place in a convenient quiet place of your choosing. If you agree, we might contact you for a follow up conversation, and to let you know when the study findings will be shared in the community. We anticipate interviewing roughly 110 artist and artisans throughout the course of this study. In addition, if you are willing to have you and/or your work photographed, arrangements will be made with a photographer.

### 5. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS AND RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

While you might not directly benefit from this study, we hope that your participation will help highlight the diverse economic practices of artists and artisans in the region. We see the potential for artist and artisan knowledge and practices to be pooled and shared with others in the region and hope to create action plans to support these practices. We consider the risk of participating in the study to be minimal; if you participate in underground economic practices we will take precautions to insure this activity cannot be linked to you, however we cannot guarantee complete anonymity.

### 6. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of any information you share. We will label your study records with a code. A master key that links your name and your code will be maintained in a separate location from your records. All information (including any codes to your data) will be kept in a secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed six (6) years after the close of the project. All electronic files (e.g., database, spreadsheet, etc.) containing identifiable information will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the members of the research team will have access to the passwords. However, you should be aware that because the region will be named and the specific area of the region will be described, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

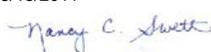
At the conclusion of this study, the researchers may publish their findings as part of the research collaborative or independently for future research studies. Information will be presented in summary format and, unless you request otherwise, you will not be identified in any publications or presentations. The data from this study will also be shared with other artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County through community events, through the Fostering Art and Culture Project, and presentations at regional and national conferences.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research may be used for conference presentations and reports.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research to be used for conference presentations and reports.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research may be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want segments of the recordings and images made of my participation in this research to be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

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\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that my identity can be disclosed in reports and conference presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want my identity to be disclosed in reports and conference presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that my identity can be disclosed in educational and training events.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want my identity to be disclosed in educational and training events.

### 7. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the project co-coordinators, Abby Templer at (573) 259-9718 or by email at [atempler@soc.umass.edu](mailto:atempler@soc.umass.edu), or Leo Hwang-Carlos at (413) 775-1221 or by email at [lhwang@geo.umass.edu](mailto:lhwang@geo.umass.edu). If you would like to speak with someone not related to this study concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or [humansubjects@ora.umass.edu](mailto:humansubjects@ora.umass.edu).

### 8. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

### 9. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?

The University of Massachusetts does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment.

### 10. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. The general purposes and particulars of the study as well as possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

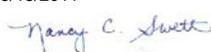
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

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### **Demographic Information**

Giving us this information will help us ensure we are including a wide range of participants for our study.

**What is your gender? (Select all that apply.)**

- Male
- Female
- Queer
- Transgender
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your sexual orientation?**

- Heterosexual
- Gay, Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you describe your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply.)**

- White
- Black or African American
- Latino/a
- Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What year were you born?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where do you live?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education**

- K-12
- Some College
- Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree(s)

## **Interview Summary Sheet**

Interview identification number:

Audio Track #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Summary Notes**

Immediately after the interview, jot down the main points about the interview that you want to remember (use the back of this sheet if needed):

## **Sample Recruitment Script for Researchers to Interviewees**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a community researcher for a project, Rethinking the Creative Economy. The project is supported by the Fostering Art and Culture Project, Greenfield Community College, and the University of Massachusetts.

The aim of this project is to highlight and support the diverse economic activity of artists and artisans in the Greater Franklin County. Working with artists and artisans to make visible the rich economic activities already in practice can help the region foster a positive economic identity, shifting away from the portrayals of a region in need, and provide an opportunity to direct funding towards community centered economic practices. Our goals are to create a community partnership of people to create a pool of local knowledge about the broad range of economic activities that artists and artisans participate in, and how these activities impact the community; create avenues to share this knowledge with the region to increase an understanding of how artists and artisans impact our communities; work with artists and artisans to select activities that foster the growth and adaptation of existing diverse economic practices; and assist the community in recognizing available resources and possible funding sources to support and strengthen their creative economy.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview that may last 1-2 hours. You will be asked to respond to a few unstructured questions about your work; the creative process, finding an audience, your motivation, vision, etc. Interviews will take place in a convenient quiet place of your choosing. If you agree, we might contact you for a follow up conversation, and to let you know when the study findings will be shared in the community. We anticipate interviewing roughly 110 artist and artisans throughout the course of this study. In addition, if you are willing to have you and/or your work photographed, arrangements will be made with a photographer.

## Interviewer's Guide

### Instructions:

Once you've introduced yourself and feel comfortable, start with the first four questions and then choose some or all of the remaining questions to help you find out more about the interviewee.

### Diverse Economic Practices

1. Why and how did you choose to become and continue to pursue a life as an artist or craftsperson?
2. What kinds of work are you engaged in that supports the production of your craft or art?
  - a. Other kinds of work?
3. Please describe a typical day (yesterday for example), from when you woke up to when you went to bed.
4. Who do you live with and how do you make ends meet?

### Sense of Environment

1. Please describe the place or places that you do most of your creative work.
  - a. Why, or what choices have led you to work here in Franklin County?
2. What aspects of place (your studio, the city or town, or region) do most value?
3. As an artists or craftsperson, how would you define environment?
4. Where is home for you and how did you choose to locate there?

### Multiplicity of Identity.

1. What do you most value about being an artist or craftsperson?
2. What other roles do you play in typical week?
  - a. Other jobs?
  - b. Parenting?
  - c. Volunteer work?
3. What communities of people are you engaged with and where do they tend to congregate?
  - a. Churches
  - b. Dinner groups
  - c. Friends
  - d. Extended family
  - e. Recreation
4. Where did you grow up and how does that inform who you are and how you inhabit this space now?

## Interviewer's Guide

**Stalled conversation? You can prompt the interviewee about their involvement in any of these...**

- Tell me about a *typical* day.
- Are your weekdays different from weekends
- How about from season to season?
- Any days lately that were not typical? In what way?
- Meal preparation, cooking, cleaning up
- Childcare, playing w/kids, helping w/schoolwork
- Repairing something
- Maintaining things in the home
- Gardening or agriculture
- Shopping (for yourself; for others)
- Volunteer or community work (including coaching)
- Taking care of someone
- The arts
- Buying, selling, or trading
- Education—teaching, or learning
- Playing a sport
- Laundry, ironing, cleaning, sewing
- Hunting, fishing
- Hobbies, crafts
- Entertaining visitors or visiting others
- Religious activities
- Paid work
- Political work
- Transporting yourself or others
- Computer work or play
- Helping someone

## Some Reminders

### When arranging the interview:

- When asking someone if you can interview them, give a brief description of the project, tell them that it will involve a one and a half to two hour session, and that the interview will be digitally audio-recorded (though there will be no way to identify them with the audio files.)

### Before the interview begins:

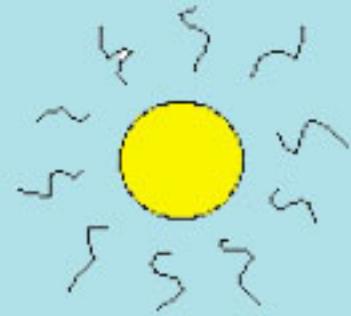
- Write the number of the audio track for the interview on the Interview Summary Sheet (so we can match the audio file and the Interview Identification Number).
- Have the person being interviewed sign *two* consent forms; give one to them for their records, and bring one back to us.
- Have the interviewee fill out the demographic questionnaire. If the interviewee feels uncomfortable answering any question they can opt out of that question.

### During the interview:

- Remember we are looking for a diverse range of work that is both in the formal and informal economies.

### After the interview:

- If they would like to be on the project mailing list, to be notified about future community conferences, etc., ask them to write their address and telephone number on the consent form which you collect from them.
- Immediately after the interview look over your notes and write down your summary notes on the Interview Summary form. It might be another few weeks before you'll need to recall the details of the interview.
- If you run into any problems with your interviews, please feel free to call Leo at 413-775-1221, or email Abby at: [atempler@soc.umass.edu](mailto:atempler@soc.umass.edu), or Leo at: [hwang-carlos@gcc.mass.edu](mailto:hwang-carlos@gcc.mass.edu)



wage labor  
produce for a market  
in a capitalist firm

in schools      **on the street**

in neighborhoods

**within families**      **unpaid**

in church/temple

**the retired**      **between friends**

gifts      *self-employment*      volunteer

**barter**      moonlighting      children

*informal lending*      not for market      illegal

not monetized      **self-provisioning**

under-the-table      ***producer cooperatives***

consumer cooperatives      non-capitalist firms

**II: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT INCLUDE THE  
CREATIVE ECONOMY**

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT INCLUDE THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Year of Report	Name of the Plan	Region Covered by the Plan	Development Directed by	History	Definition of Creative Economy or Creative Sector
1990	<b>The Franklin County Cultural Plan</b>	Franklin County	Plan was developed by the Arts Council of Franklin County with funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Business Fund for Arts in Franklin County, and the Arts Lotteries throughout the county.	The plan was conceived in 1988 to "survey the current condition of the cultural community and begin to think collaboratively about future needs" (p. 6). In the two years between the plan's conception and termination, state-based arts funding was cut by nearly 50%.	The plan pre-dates the development language of creative economy. Here, the term "culture" is broadly defined as experiences, or "those aspects of life that enhance its quality or prompt us to reflect." The plan primarily focuses on arts and heritage.
2002	<b>Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan</b>	Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway from Greenfield to Williamstown	Coordinated by the FROCG and the Berkshire Regional Planning Committee. Planned by the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Committee. This project was funded through the Federal Scenic Byway Program in cooperation with the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.	None.	They do not discuss the creative economy. However, the discussion of cultural and historical assets is similar to activities that are currently called "creative economy."
2004	<b>Northern Tier Strategic Investment Initiatives</b>	Northwest Massachusetts running from the New York border on the west to the town of Gardner on the east. As such, it encompasses all communities in Northern Berkshire county, all of Franklin County, and cities in northwestern Worcester County.	The plan was commissioned by U.S. Congressman John Olver, and conducted by Mt. Auburn Associates. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments directs the development.	This region was previously studied in 1986, in a study that was also commissioned by Congressman John Olver and conducted by Mt. Auburn Associates. However, it was not until the 2004 report that the creative sector was identified as an existing strength.	"Those industries that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual [and creative] property"(p. 1).

Strategies Specific to Cultural/Creative Sector	Gentrifying Strategy	2014-2015 Updates
<p>Make protection of the region's rural character a priority to be achieved thorough citizen involvement in town- and county-wide planning. Convince the community that supporting the arts also supports the community's best interests. Achieve this through increasing visibility of the arts and increasing the participation of artists in city- and county-wide planning. Increase art in the K-12 schools, to be achieved by increasing collaborations between schools and artists and increased arts training for teachers. Address issues such as lack of artist work space and performance spaces by converting vacant manufacturing spaces. Increase Franklin County's profile as a cultural destination. Centralize leadership in the arts through increasing collaboration between arts organizations, artists, and business to make the most efficient uses of the limited financial resources.</p>	<p>No. This plan was written as some of the Franklin County towns were becoming bedroom communities after the construction of I-91. Thus, the plan notes concern about access to affordable housing in order to maintain the region's class and intergenerational diversity. The plan calls for increased support and encouragement of affordable housing.</p>	<p>This plan was never actively revisited, though it was referenced by the FACP when they conducted their marketing report in 2010.</p>
<p>Protect the character of historic districts and village centers along the corridor by encouraging the pursuit of National Historic status/registration and expanding existing historical districts. Promote a low-impact approach to tourism based on recreational, historic, and cultural resources that minimizes traffic congestion by developing a marketing plan for promoting cultural and historic resources (off-peak) and explore the opportunities to develop festivals outside the peak season. Promote greater awareness of the Byway and its recreational, historic, and cultural resources through increased signage and information kiosks, and the creation of information centers (p. 209-210).</p>	<p>The overall aim of the plan is to increase the quality of tourist experiences. Increasing tourist activities while maintaining the natural and historic beauty, and improving the quality and safety of the roads. It is possible that some of these changes could increase property values.</p>	<p>They have since created a website listing the cultural resources along the byway.  <a href="http://www.bywayswestmass.com/byways/Mohawk-trail/">http://www.bywayswestmass.com/byways/Mohawk-trail/</a></p>
<p>The creative cluster is seen as one of four sectors rooted in existing strengths that can grow the region's economy. Recommendations for the cluster include: Convening an event to bring together regional non-profit cultural institutions, individual artists, and creative businesses operating in the region; establishing a Northern Tier Creative Cluster Council; strengthening and broadening the West County Artists Project; promoting artisan and crafts-related business development; establishing the Northern Tier as a Center of Excellence in cultural education and training; capitalizing on the synergies between the creative cluster and the other sectors in the region.</p>	<p>No. Primarily focused on workforce development, this report provided very synergistic recommendations across the sectors targeted for growth. Emphasis is placed on building capacity of existing residents rather than importing a "creative class."</p>	<p>In response to the effects of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and the lingering effects of the Great Recession, the EDA awarded the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, in partnership with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), funds to update this study. In the 2014 update, they reported the following activity to support the Creative Economy: The creation of the Fostering Art and Culture Project and their annual Creative Economy Summit; the creation of the Berkshire Creative to network artists in the Berkshires; the 12th annual Crafts of Colrain artist studio tours; and the definition of Shelburne Falls as a Cultural District, making it eligible for state development funds. They also noted the creation of the Creative Economy Council in the Legislature, which created the Creative Economy Network in 2013, with sub-networks for the Berkshires and the Pioneer Valley (2014 p. 8).</p>

2004	<b>Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress</b>	The 69 cities and towns of Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties, and extending south into Connecticut, including Hartford.	The Plan for Progress Trustees develop and implement the plan while the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council provides oversight, and annual measurement and evaluation is provided by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Because the plan is at least partially funded through the EDA, emphasis is placed on membership from the private sector.	The first Plan for Progress was developed in 1994 and it was in this 2004 revision that the creative economy was first identified as a sector for growth.	Jobs based in the arts, design, media, and entertainment sectors, including self-employed artists, cultural non-profits, and arts-based businesses (p. 12).
2005 and 2010	<b>Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan</b>	The 26 towns of Franklin County, in addition to Amherst located in Hampshire County, and Athol and Phillipston located in Worcester County	CEDS Committee created the plan. It is Overseen by the EDD Governing Board with support from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. In order to meet the requirement of EDA federal funding, emphasis is placed on membership from the private sector.	While CEDS planning began in 2004, this region was officially designated an Economic Development District (EDD) in 2006 by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), providing additional funding for carrying out the CEDS. CEDS plans are created every 5 years and here I present the first report in each of the 5 year cycles.	The 2005 report names the "arts, crafts and creative cluster" as artisans and crafts people (p. 60). The 2010 report uses the term "creative economy cluster," defined as workers such as "writers and artists, as well as those employed in firms that produce crafts or media content" (p. 77).
2009	<b>Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Eastern Section — Athol to Greenfield—Corridor Management Plan</b>	The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway between Greenfield and Athol.	The report was produced by FRCOG and created by the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Committee. This project was funded through the Federal Scenic Byway Program in cooperation with the Massachusetts Highway Department, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, and the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administrations.	None.	They defined the creative cluster and architectural, historical, and cultural resources. Additionally they stated that the following strategies for supporting the creative economy were drawn from a combination of the 2004 Northern Tier study and the stated aims of the Fostering Art and Culture Project.
2010	<b>Fostering Art and Culture Five Hub Marketing Plan</b>	Franklin County	The plan was commissioned by the Fostering Art and Culture Project (FACP) and conducted by Open the Door, Inc. with funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.	The FACP was formed in response to the suggestions made in the 2004 Northern Tier Strategic Investment Report to create a body that could coordinate creativity-based development across the region. The FACP commissioned this marketing strategy in order to efficiently carry out this mission.	The plan does not overtly define the creative economy. However, its stated aims are to increase incomes for artists and "enhance the image of the region as a center for creative industry development."

<p>"Develop networks of and provide support services to arts- and culture-related small businesses to encourage the growth of the region's creative economy"(p. 38). To aid in marketing the region: "Support local artists, artisans, and craftspeople, and encourage the growth of their sector as a major contributor to the region's quality of life and as exporters of their products" (p. 49) and "research the impact of the 'creative economy' on the Pioneer Valley, invest in the growth of that sector, and promote the development of creative economies within the region's urban core communities" (p. 50). The Western Massachusetts Arts Alliance is cited as the regional non-profit to assist in this task.</p>	<p>This plan takes a multifaceted approach to development, including the types of "revitalization" projects that tend to price out existing residents. However, one of the aims of the plan is to address existing inequalities among the region's residents. Thus, all development suggested by the plan is situated within a broader conversation of inequality and as such one of the strategic goals is to develop an array of housing options (p. 31) which could potentially offset gentrification.</p>	<p>While the 2004 plan set a number of long- and short-term goals for the creative economy, the 2015 Plan for Progress only mentions the word "creative" in reference to the 2009 study conducted by PVP which mapped the creative sector, with no discussion of how to integrate the findings of this study into development goals. All mention of supporting artists is gone, with one goal now advocating for "supporting public art" and access to cultural activities (p. 23). However, while the focus on artists and artisans has been lost, the plan still focuses on increasing access to an array of housing options (p. 22).</p>
<p>Neither plan specifies goals specific to the creative economy. In the 2005 plan, the creative economy is discussed under the goal of "foster[ing] the development of emerging industry sectors to diversify economic opportunity" (p. 64), while in the 2010 plan it is discussed under the general objective to "encourage access to and the expansion of markets through marketing and promotion, and cluster development" (p. 91). Both plans then discuss the high concentration of artists and artisans and a recognition of their economic contribution to the region. The 2005 report cites the Western Massachusetts Artist Alliance and the Great Falls Discovery Center as projects supporting the arts, while the 2010 report discusses the work of the Fostering Art and Culture Project as "fostering the creative economy" and supporting artists through offering "business development workshops for artists" and the work of River Culture in Turners Falls to "build capacity among the local artists and related businesses" and to create a facility dedicated to the arts (p. 93).</p>	<p>These plans take a multifaceted approach to development, including the types of "revitalization" projects that tend to price out existing residents. While both plans note that artists locate in the region due to affordability, and that artists are important to "a downtown's vitality" (p. 92), there is no mention of how to maintain affordability, and thus retain artists, while meeting the aims of revitalizing the region's downtowns.</p>	<p>The 2015 CEDS plan outlined specific actions steps for supporting the creative economy: "Promote the growth of the Creative Economy by creating networking and professional development opportunities for individuals working in this cluster to connect with each other and learn about how to sustain and grow their businesses; Complete a creative economy asset mapping project for the West County sub region that could be replicated across the county, to identify and better understand this cluster's capacities, skills, needs and resources, and how it may be integrated with other clusters and industries. Information gained from this project could be used as the basis for a regional Creative Economy Plan and branding effort; and support the sustainability of venues for arts, culture and education in existing and proposed facilities" (p. 41). The PVCEN, GSFABA, FACP, PVCEN, FRCOG, local arts organizations, and local venues will take the lead. As of the 2010 report, there is no mention of how to maintain regional affordability.</p>
<p>Compile a directory of the arts and cultural organizations, museums, galleries, artists, performers, and events located in the Byway area that can be compiled into a printed document or included in a website for the Mohawk Trail East Scenic Byway to promote the creative arts economy in the area; Create a brochure and website to promote the arts along the Byway and encourage tours of galleries, museums, and studios; Work with the Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Corporations, and Town Business Associations and town officials to encourage creative cluster development along the Byway; Encourage discussions between the non-profit cultural institutions, individual artists and performers, and creative businesses operating along the Byway; Promote artisan and crafts-related business development; Capitalize on the synergies between the creative cluster and other economic sectors along the Scenic Byway; Seek funding to inventory and conduct feasibility studies of the historic mills along the Byway for reuse as incubators, industry and manufacturing, and museums/galleries" (p. 241-242).</p>	<p>Yes. The plans discusses revitalization without discussion of maintaining affordability.</p>	<p>They have since created the website listing the cultural resources along the byway. <a href="http://www.bywayswestmass.com/byways/Mohawk-trail/">http://www.bywayswestmass.com/byways/Mohawk-trail/</a></p>

2010	<b>Fostering Art and Culture Five Hub Marketing Plan</b>	Franklin County	The plan was commissioned by the Fostering Art and Culture Project (FACP) and conducted by Open the Door, Inc. with funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.	The FACP was formed in response to the suggestions made in the 2004 Northern Tier Strategic Investment Report to create a body that could coordinate creativity-based development across the region. The FACP commissioned this marketing strategy in order to efficiently carry out this mission.	The plan does not overtly define the creative economy. However, its stated aims are to increase incomes for artists and "enhance the image of the region as a center for creative industry development."
2013	<b>Annual Work Force Investment Act Annual Plan</b>	Franklin and Hampshire Counties, along with the 9 towns in the North Quabbin region in Worcester County.	The Franklin-Hampshire Regional Employment Board, comprised of members appointed by the Mayors of Northampton and Greenfield. Designated as a "local workforce investment board," the organization receives federal funding with the mandate that 50% of the board members come from private business with designated seats for labor and educational institutions.	The creative economy was first incorporated into the plan in 2013 as an "additional area of emerging job growth" (p. 7).	None provided.
2013	<b>Sustainable Franklin County: Regional Plan for Sustainable Development</b>	Franklin County	"In 2011, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) partnered with several regional organizations and towns to obtain a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The partner organizations form the Sustainable Communities Consortium and include: Community Action, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), North Quabbin Community Coalition (NQCC), Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), and the towns of Greenfield, Deerfield, Montague, and Orange. In addition to this Consortium group, a larger Steering Committee was formed to provide a variety of perspectives on the wide-ranging topic of sustainability. The Steering Committee was composed of regional organizations, non-profits, municipal officials, and residents from the region" (p. 3-4).		The geographic concentration of artists and artisans.
2014	<b>Montachusett Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy</b>	17 towns in Northern Worcester County (including Athol and Phillipston included in the Greater Franklin County CEDS) and 5 towns from Northwest Middlesex County.	The Montachusett Regional CEDS Committee, comprised of 5 members from the private sector and 6 members from the public sector, with staff support provided by the Montachusett Regional Planning Committee.	The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission developed its first CEDS funding by the EDA in 1994. Of the regional development plans available online, 2014 was the first mention of the creative economy.	None provided.

<p>"Attract outside dollars into the region by targeting both day trippers and overnight visitors, as well as those interested in purchasing art produced in Franklin County through e-commerce" (p. 6); utilize media to promote the region through coordinated communications campaigns; develop an artist education program comprised of "regularly scheduled networking and educational events" to "encourage artists to become involved, network, and share resources and ideas in order to build capacity" (p. 8).</p>	<p>No. The primary focus of this plan is to increase consumption in the cultural sector.</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>Network with digital/creative economy businesses to learn about their employment needs; encourage job seekers' use of LinkedIn and other social media techniques for connecting with this sometimes hidden job market; assist digital technology companies in finding/developing additional talent pipelines and networks and work to create new workforce training for the field.</p>	<p>No. All the strategies outlined in the plan are aimed at workforce development and garnering better information to find and match potential employers and employees.</p>	<p>The 2015 plan discussed providing training on entrepreneurship, product and web design, and development and marketing to support the creative economy (p. 3). Additionally, they report that the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector was the sector that created the most jobs in Franklin County in 2014 (p. 4).</p>
<p>"Support initiatives that advance the creative economy sector across the region, such as the Fostering the Arts &amp; Culture in Franklin County Project and Partnership and their activities such as the Creative Economy Summit, trip itineraries, Buzz on Biz, workshops, etc.; Sustain Turners Falls River Culture; Encourage artists, craftspeople and others employed in occupations and businesses in the creative economy to participate in the New England Foundation for the Arts' Culture Count database; Create shared artist studio and creative business work spaces in downtowns and village centers; Support for North Quabbin Woods to sustain their activities with locally-crafted wood products and fine art" (p. 33)</p>	<p>Unlike previous reports, this one matches revitalization projects with the aim to "Increase and improve the housing stock, while focusing on affordability."</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Unlike the other plans reviewed, the Montachusett Region plan did not specify key industries or clusters that were being targeted for growth. The creative economy was mention once as an "economic development tool" that would "continue to be pursued" with no specification of what that entails (p. 61).</p>	<p>Unclear, as there was no specification as to how the creative economy is defined or how it is being supported.</p>	<p>Not applicable as this plan is from 2014.</p>

III: CHAPBOOK CREATED BY RESEARCH TEAM TO DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

# Rethinking the Creative Economy



**Participatory Action Research with Artists and Artisans  
in the Greater Franklin County**



Jessamyn Smyth compiled this chapbook from the wonderful work of Project Co-Coordinators Abby Templer and Leo Hwang-Carlos, the team of Project Researchers, and the words of those artists and artisans who so graciously allowed us to interview them.

Many thanks to worker-owned cooperative **Collective Copies!**

## **Artists and Artisans**

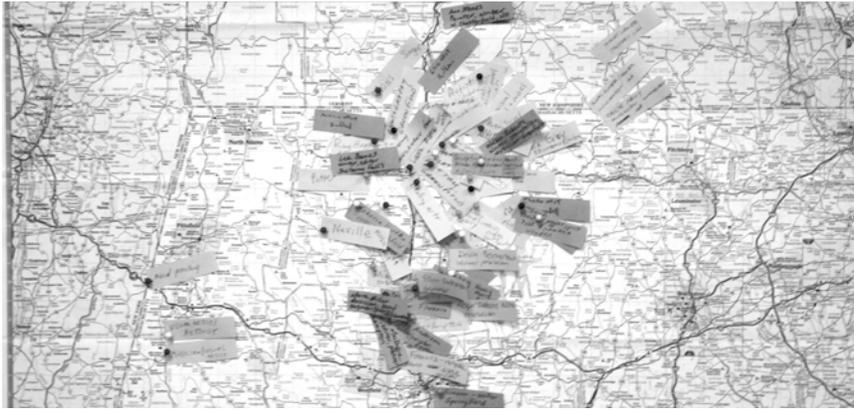
The aim of this project is to highlight and support the diverse economic activity of artists and artisans in Greater Franklin County. We would like to thank all the fantastic artists and artisans who agreed to participate and make this study a success.

Working with artists and artisans to make visible the rich economic activities already in practice can help the region foster a positive economic identity, shifting away from the portrayals of a region in need, and provide an opportunity to direct funding towards community-centered economic practices.

Our goals are to create a community partnership of people to create a pool of local knowledge about the broad range of economic activities that artists and artisans participate in, and how these activities impact the community; to share this knowledge with the region to increase an understanding of how artists and artisans impact our communities; to work with artists and artisans to foster the growth and adaptation of existing diverse economic practices; and to assist the community in recognizing available and possible resources to support and strengthen the creative economy.

“Via writing [and all art], we discover that **here, in the sacred and provisional space** of the story, the play, [the painting, the sculpture, the wood, the music, the warp, the weft], or the poem, **there exist no strangers, only fellow creatures—others to be met, and engaged eye to eye.**”

Eric Darton, "Letter to the Goddard Community"



In the autumn of 2010, 22 researchers conducted over 135 interviews with artists & artisans in the greater Franklin County area to uncover the diverse and thriving creative economic practices that enable artistic richness in the region.

# 22 RESEARCHERS



A word cloud of 22 researchers' names, arranged in a roughly rectangular shape. The names are oriented vertically and horizontally, with varying font sizes. The names are: Robin Parsons, Eric Deluca, Phyllis Labanowski, Kiran Bhowmik, Heather Cohen, Amy Gardiner, Morning Star Chen, Don Campbell, Jessamyn Smyth, Diane Worth, Judi Campbell, Daniel Mahoney, George-Moonlight Davis, Kim Parkhurst, Ail Ladd, Rochleigh Z. Wholfe, Cheryl Rezendes, Zoe Ma, Jeanne Douillard, Andy Chase, Jerilyn Kolbin, and Brad Peters.

Robin Parsons  
Eric Deluca  
Phyllis Labanowski  
Kiran Bhowmik  
Heather Cohen  
Amy Gardiner  
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Don Campbell  
Jessamyn Smyth  
Diane Worth  
Judi Campbell  
Daniel Mahoney  
George-Moonlight Davis  
Kim Parkhurst  
Ail Ladd  
Rochleigh Z. Wholfe  
Cheryl Rezendes  
Zoe Ma  
Jeanne Douillard  
Andy Chase  
Jerilyn Kolbin  
Brad Peters



## Openings, Invitations, Ignitions: entering the artist's space and history

All the researchers were moved by the intimate experience of being invited into not just people's homes and studios, but their life stories and creative identities.

Here are some of the things people shared with us:



"The essence of the people in the struggle and the suffering, all of that is completely embedded in me and who I am."

"When the little light-bulb went off in my head it was like: wait. You can write about anything you want."

"...I thought they were all drawings, I didn't realize that they were brushstrokes and I was trying to copy the lines that I saw in the paper with a pencil, and that's when my father told me that, no, that was paint. So he got me a box of Prang watercolors."

"We became dear, dear friends...it wasn't an abstract idea, it was like, here was my friend [the artist], and she got me in touch with my feelings...and they started to become. To become artistic. I loved writing."

"I would go out in the neighborhood I would collect little pebbles about the size of a quarter and I would paint them different colors and put a bug or something on it. And then I would go around and ask my neighbors if they wanted to buy a pretty painting. A painted rock, for a penny. So I have been selling paintings on rocks ever since. Now I am painting on slate."

"My eldest brother taught me how to use his reel to reel tape recorder when I was four...and after that I was always recording. ...constructing something in this tenuous medium – you can't actually, physically touch it – you can handle the medium itself but that's not where the creativity lies...it's [in] a completion of a creative vision."

Place & Spirit:

sustaining the creative life



"I think it would be important to me to have this environment, not necessarily outside of myself, but at least inside myself..."

"The essence of the people in the struggle and the suffering, all of that is completely embedded in me and who I am."

"There's gotta be truth behind it."

"I meditate. I do mindfulness meditation. Almost every day – you know, it's the thing you mean to do every day, so you do it five days a week – But that ...stilling and grounding and just sitting and being with the breath – that's been a practice, gosh, for the last ten years of my life. A transformative one. I think – I know it influences the way I will sit down to write something, or to do a piece of art – it's to be still with that and really sink into the moment of what I'm describing..."

"... a lot of people are so stuck on the basics, that spirituality and emotional well-being and physical health [are left out in the] cold. I think that people need to be aware of the fact that there are other possibilities, and that there are other things to life besides just maintaining..."

"...I think what inspires me toward work or pieces of art is the way that people can take their own connection to God or spirituality, to what ever you think is more profound than a concrete wall, or even a tree, and put that in a piece of work and completely feel that."

"...people mythologize themselves out of fear. ...it takes a lot to say...I'm just going to stop [mythologizing myself.] *Interviewer: What made you willing to say 'No, authenticity is worth the risk? I'm willing to be skinless, and to tell the truth.' Why?* Wow, that's a really good question. [pauses] I wrote better poems!"

## Individual Struggles, Collective Strengths:

finding thriving



**What if what we need here, we already have here?**

- ~ artistic integrity ~
- ~ growth on one's own terms ~
- ~ space to cultivate one's own voice ~
- ~ the ability to showcase important work by others ~
- ~ a rich and sustaining sense of place and relationship with nature ~
- ~ the possibility of creating low-cost cooperative housing & studios for artists ~
- ~ the possibility of creating low-cost health-insurance pools or cooperatives for artists ~
- ~ energy and willingness to collaborate so these things can manifest in our communities ~

"I really had to use my skills as a survivor. It wasn't just expression for fun. Merging those two realities of the financial necessities and the spiritual necessity to create...that was huge for me."

"Collaborative relationships among artists are special connections. Yet, as rich as these connections are, it is amazing how a structured, appreciative exploration of an artist's voice and practice can open doors of understanding. Behind these doors live a robust core of practical wisdom and depth of purpose. Identifying needs and challenges in a community setting sets the stage for structures that meet those needs. From the practical to the aesthetic, giving voice [to] the essentials creates opportunities for innovation."

"...Then the Women's Movement came. That's why this place [a private retreat for women artists] is here. ...So many of my friends were artists - I wanted people to have a place to just come, and be quiet, and just do whatever they needed to do... [it] excited me to no end. ...I wanted it to be a major retreat. ...The whole thing works by word of mouth. There's a feeling of intimacy that I care about. Just knowing...that you've given space to a woman for her own creative life is incredibly fulfilling. ...I care about women, I love women, and that's what I want to have happen to as many women as possible. And I really define the word artist in a bigger sense than what's happened...so far."

The traditional way to think about strengthening a region is reliance upon outside dollars



...but the Greater Franklin County is already rich in creative resources: discovering and supporting what bounty already exists here leads to sustainable and abundant practices for everyone.

# Focusing on Assets



MAKES FRANKLIN COUNTY STRONGER AND  
MORE VIBRANT

# What is Transformative Participatory Action Research?

## **Rethinking the Creative Economy:**

How do we think of economy as a way to sustain or improve quality of life, rather than as something preoccupied with growth?

## **Interviews:**

An opportunity to learn from the already-successful practices our peers are performing in our communities. An opportunity for both interviewer and interviewee to learn, to self-reflect, and to recognize the work we are doing.

## **Asset Mapping:**

What qualities do we most value in our lives? What allows us to be creative people? What creates energy and excitement? What do we need to create balance that works?

## **Interview Techniques:**

Open-ended questions that allow stories to be told. Patience and trust in what will emerge. Respect. Gentle guidance back to core concerns. Genuine desire to find out what people are doing—and how, and why.

**Some of what emerged for the researchers:**

creativity & learning

community  
learning  
sense of place  
vision  
self-reflection  
curiosity  
inverting sense of scale  
sharing & gifting  
fostering relationships



sustainability  
society  
environment  
value  
deconstructing boundaries  
oral tradition  
space of possibility  
responsibility  
diverse economies

# Moving Forward, Bridging and Building: holding open the space of possibility in Franklin County

## **Creating Multiple Realities: Phase I**

An art show featuring the work of the Project Researchers.

Invitational Exhibition: April 1-30, 2011

Opening Reception: April 2, 2011, 1-6pm

Location: NACUL Gallery, 592 Main St, Amherst, MA 01002

## **Creating Multiple Realities: Phase II**

This fall, there will be an art show featuring the work of the Project Interviewees: check the Rethinking the Creative Economy website for more information!

## **You, bringing these ideas back to your communities**

Our hope is that these ideas will open up a new sense of possibility and agency in each of you, and that you will envision and create new artistic bounties in Franklin County through creative collaborations and the sharing of resources. Keep in touch!

"So when the good stuff is happening here, it's pretty exciting because people leave very excited and they say, 'Oh wow, I didn't realize this could be done.' People are always AMAZED at the Art Kitchen and by what I'm doing. And I'm kind of thinking, 'You know what? ANYBODY could do this! You could do it in your place; you could do it in your place.' You know, it doesn't really take a lot to do something."

Connect with us on the Rethinking the Creative Economy website:

<http://www.rethinkingthecreativeeconomy.org>

The Rethinking the Creative Economy project was funded by:

