

Latina Community-Engaged Artists in Chicago
Practices, (Il)legibility, and Third Spaces

BY

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, Guadalupe De Anda (RIP), José Erculano De Anda, Amalia Muñiz, and Manuel Muñiz (RIP), whose hard work, love, and prayers continue to help me.

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SUMMARY

A study of the practices and experiences of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago was carried out using ethnographic research methods. In-depth, formal interviews were conducted with 10 artists who regularly produce art for and with Chicago's Latina/x/o communities. Participant observation was conducted at community art events, planning sessions, and informal gatherings where these artists were present. Interview transcripts, field notes about events, and images of artists' work were analyzed.

Artists' community-engaged practices were informed by their race, gender, and class backgrounds. Their experiences with art in relation to marginalization and building community shaped their approaches to and understandings of art. Their practices share the following characteristics: rejecting hegemonic definitions, boundaries, and binaries; multidisciplinary; art as a collective process; and art as knowledge production. Latina community-engaged artists are marginalized as a result of devaluation, contested access, stereotyping/pigeonholing, and illegibility. They strategically use legibility and illegibility to secure their position in the arts and make the arts more accessible. Latina community-engaged artists create and work in alternative community art spaces that exhibit the following themes: ephemerality and fluidity; collectivity; accessibility; alternative ways of being in community; and articulation of art, politics, and everyday life.

I. INTRODUCTION

In February 2012, Danny Solís, alderman for the predominantly Latina/x/o¹ neighborhood of Pilsen, introduced the Art in Public Places initiative to use public art to “transform neglected, inactive spaces or sites plagued with vandalism and, to develop a restorative and preservation plan for old community murals” (Ward25.com 2015). He began giving artists permission to paint murals on a mile-long stretch of public viaducts that span the Pilsen neighborhood. This community mural gallery includes work by, largely male, local and international artists. For example, in 2012, the alderman’s office paid for Belgian artist ROA to paint a large disemboweled gray opossum – that many viewed as a rat – on a section of the viaduct (Riley 2013). In 2013, Solís dedicated \$140,000 of his \$1.3 million ward fund meant for infrastructure and beautification to art and cultural programs (Lulay 2015). However, in 2015, it was revealed that \$28,000 was still owed to artists for work completed in 2013 (Lulay 2015).

Pilsen, a Latina/x/o cultural hub, exemplifies the cultural landscape that Chicago-based Latina community artists must navigate. Community artists, in general, are often not compensated fairly, on time, or at all for the work they produce. But Latina community artists face additional obstacles that white artists, male artists, and well-known artists do not. For example, artists from other parts of Chicago, the United States, and the world are often given the most financial support and space to produce artwork in Pilsen. They tend to be white male artists or predominantly white art groups and organizations. When local businesses, public officials,

¹ Throughout the dissertation, I use “a/x/o” when referring to a mixed gender group of people of Latin American descent as I have in other publications (Muñiz 2018). As I wrote in the footnote of Muñiz (2018:531), my use of “Latina/x/o” is informed by Latina/Chicana feminist critiques of collapsing women under the masculine “o” and critiques of “a/o” or “@” as reinforcing the gender binary. I use “Latina/x/o” instead of “Latinx” in order to 1) recognize the continued importance of the “a” and “o” in the gendered lives and politics of many Latinas/os and 2) not erase the specific history and gender politics of the “x”. While awkward, clunky, and possibly distracting, I see written language as malleable and an important site for experimentation and play. Sometimes (gendered) language needs to be disrupted. For a critique of “Latinx” as a catch-all label, see Rodríguez (2017).

non-profits, and media coverage are not highlighting the work of artists from outside the community, they are usually giving most attention to local Latino male artists. This leads local Latina community artists to be actively erased or unintentionally ignored. Given this lack of value and support, why do Latina artists practice and produce community-engaged art? Why and how are they marginalized in the arts and their communities? What explains the ways that they engage with various spaces and institutions? And how do they resist marginalization? These are the central questions that I explore in my dissertation research.

These questions are relevant beyond Chicago, because Latina community artists contribute to murals, parades, festivals, graffiti, sculptures, galleries, and museums that make up the cultural fabrics of Latina/x/o communities around the United States. In a country where the arts are derided as economically unproductive and inconsequential and public funding for the arts are always vulnerable to cuts, US Latina/x/o communities affirm the value of art. They use art as a form of placemaking and placekeeping in which they claim space, express cultural pride, and resist marginalization (Bedoya 2014; Gude and Huebner 2000; Viesca 2004). They draw from Latina American arts and cultural traditions and frameworks to understand their past, present, and future in the US.

From Mexico to Argentina and Cuba to Chile, the arts and culture have been central to national narratives, state violence, and resistance movements (Coffey 2012; De La Fuente 2008; Go 2008; Gómez-Barris 2009; Howell 2012; Longoni 2008; McCaughan 2012; Nevaer and Sendyk 2009; Rodríguez 2009). As the “harvest of empire”² (González 2000), Latina/x/o migrants build diasporic communities using Latin American symbols, meanings, and aesthetics.

²González (2000) argues that the presence of Latinas/xs/os in the United States is directly related to U.S. imperial expansion in the Western Hemisphere. U.S. foreign policies in Latin America, such as military invasions, economic destabilization, and political interference, created conditions that forced Latinas/xs/os to migrate to the U.S. As a result, Latinas/xs/os are the “harvest” of US empire.

However, US Latinas/xs/os are not cut off from their countries of origin after migration. They maintain strong transnational networks (Armbruster-Sandoval 2005; Bandy 2004; Domínguez 2002; Duany 2011; Levitt 2001; Mattingly and Hansen 2006; Smith and Bakker 2008; Stephen 2007; Telles 2008). As a result, the content and form of US Latina/x/o art are part of an ongoing transnational dialogue (Concannon et al. 2009; McCaughan 2012; Padilla 2013).

The case of Latina community artists in Chicago is also academically relevant. Due to art being marginalized within US society, US sociologists, whose task it is to study the most relevant social phenomena, have relegated the study of art to the margins of the discipline or left the arts to the humanities (Alexander and Bowler 2014). Sociologists who do study art have largely focused on six areas: the marginalization of the arts in society and sociology, art markets, government art policies, arts institutions and organizations, artists and their audiences, and meaning making and measurement (Alexander and Bowler 2014). Within each of these areas of focus, sociologists of art have concentrated on mainstream elite fine art, art markets, and arts institutions that are predominantly upper-class and/or white. As a result, community artists of color have been left out of most sociological research on art, and Latina community artists are marginalized within an already marginalized field. This not only leads to empirical gaps, in which the experiences and practices of Latina community artists are unknown, but also produces theoretical limitations.

Sociologists of art and culture have revealed the impact that hegemonic social hierarchies have on hierarchies in the arts. Artists from upper-class backgrounds are given the most power and prestige within the arts due to the arts being organized by logics that privilege the cultural frameworks, tastes, and habitus of dominant groups (Bourdieu 1994). Women and people of color are positioned at the bottom of hierarchies in the arts (Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Miller

2006; Tator et al. 1998). Our knowledge of race, gender, and class inequities in the arts have largely been informed by, and sometimes limited to, macrolevel quantitative data. For example, scholars have studied average artwork sale prices and demographic representation of artists, attendees, and administrators in arts institutions and organizations. These studies have argued that non-white, non-male, non-upper-class artists and communities are structurally marginalized through devaluation, lack of access, stereotypes, and ghettoization. Fewer scholars have conducted in-depth qualitative studies of artists' experiences of marginalization or taken an intersectional approach. As a result, we have few studies that provide a complex understanding of the ways that intersecting systems of oppression impact marginalization within the arts and how artists resist. This limits our theoretical frameworks that explain marginalization and resistance.

The sociology of art and culture have been deeply shaped by the scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu. His canonical works *Distinction* (1983), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1994), and *The Rules of Art* (1996) have laid a theoretical foundation for sociologists in many fields. Bourdieusian field scholars conceptualize a competitive field composed of hierarchized positions that provide individuals with different access to power and resources. Field boundaries are constructed by “spaces between fields” where actors can strategically improve their positions, reshape fields, or create new fields (Eyal 2013). Most scholarship focuses on how competitive actors advance their interests in existing or new fields. Bourdieusian field scholarship has given less theoretical attention to non-competitive, collective spaces that are outside of but still engage with and work against fields. As a result, the literature lacks theoretical conceptualizations of spaces that neither completely disengage from existing fields nor attempt to construct new fields in which they have power over others.

Overall, my research examines the relationship between race, gender, and class, cultural production, space, and community-engaged practices among Latina artists in Chicago. This dissertation uses two years of ethnographic and visual research methods to study the cultural and spatial politics of Latina artists who regularly produce art with and in Chicago's Latina/x/o communities. I find that these artists actively blur, challenge, and transcend dominant social and spatial boundaries, and their practices, marginalization, and resistance must be understood in relation to the ways that spatial and social boundaries are structured by white supremacy, patriarchy, and classism.

A. **Overview of Dissertation Narrative**

The decision to become artists and have community-engaged practices does not solely result from conscious choices. Latina community-engaged artists' artistic development is directly related to their race, gender, and class backgrounds. Growing up as working-class Latinas, they observed the ways that art and creativity became a means to shield them from the consequences of structural marginalization. Their mothers used art to provide joy and resources. Art provided a refuge and home when they were displaced or subjected to violence. They witnessed the role of art in building strong community relationships. These everyday experiences unconsciously and consciously shaped how they understood, valued, and practiced art. Therefore, their community-engaged practices are not only the result of their political ideals but also a result of their race, gender, and class backgrounds.

Latina community-engaged artists produce art using, what I call, "practices of articulation." Their practices turn hegemonic boundaries into joints, or articulations. They reject separations that create binaries, such as artist/non-artist and independent/community work. They bridge multiple artistic disciplines and make traditionally distinct art forms strengthen each

other. Practices of articulation understand art as a collective process of knowledge production and make use of an intersectional lens to highlight how systems of oppression work through each other to produce inequities in the arts and their communities. While practices of articulation are not unique to Latina community-engaged artists, the social origins and cultural symbols, meanings, and references are specific to their race, gender, and class subjectivities. These practices and their subjectivities often lead to their marginalization within the field of cultural production.

Latina community-engaged artists are marginalized in the field of cultural production through the mechanisms of devaluation, denied or limited access, stereotyping and pigeonholing, and illegibility. The first three mechanisms reflect the findings of past research on social hierarchies in the arts. They are devalued by being paid less or not at all and not having their work viewed as legitimate art. Their access to mainstream arts institutions and community arts spaces are impacted by their lack of educational credentials, their race, gender, and class subjectivities, or by not abiding by hegemonic artistic values. As Latinas, gatekeepers, other artists, and community members have preconceived notions about what their work should look like and the meanings they are making in their art. Race, gender, and class stereotypes limit how others see their work, what opportunities they are given, and what is expected of them. The fourth mechanism, illegibility, has rarely been discussed in the literature on marginalization in the arts. Latina community-engaged artists regularly experience instances in which others are simply unable to understand their work. Due to their race, gender, and class and their practices of articulation, they are often met with silence from others. This forces them to do extra labor of trying to make their work legible to gatekeepers and peers. This additional physical and emotional labor can lead artists to “burn out” and voluntarily leave the field of cultural

production, to be forced out of the field, or to be trapped in the margins. Instead of tacitly accepting their marginalization, the artists actively resist their marginalization.

Their resistance often involves the strategic use of illegibility and legibility, or (il)legibility. At times they will make themselves and their work legible according to hegemonic logics and at other times they will actively be illegible. They do so in order to minimize their marginalization but also work against hegemonic structures that produce inequities. Their deployment of multidisciplinary and social and cultural capital exemplify their use of strategic (il)legibility but also highlights the difference among Latina community-engaged artists. They are not all equally marginalized and they do not all have the same opportunities to resist marginalization and work against the field. However, they often find themselves in similar spaces that exist outside of and against existing arts spaces.

I call the alternative community art spaces that Latina community-engaged artists regularly create and work within, “third spaces”. Third spaces are liminal physical and non-physical spaces of possibility and disidentification. Collectives, digital spaces, community art galleries, site interventions, and protests all serve as examples of third spaces actively engage with and work against the field of cultural production and macrolevel society inequities. They use ephemerality, fluidity, collectivity, and accessibility to produce spaces where alternative ways of being in community are possible and reflect the complex relationships between art, politics, and everyday life. These spaces cannot be theoretically located within existing Bourdieusian scholarship. So, I propose that these spaces exist under, yet still engage with hegemonic fields.

Research on cultural production and Latina/x/o community art largely reinforces existing boundaries and dichotomies by focusing solely on artists in mainstream institutions or

community-based artists. My research, on the other hand, argues that Latina community-engaged artists work in a third space that engages with and works against dominant boundaries and dichotomies, such as art/not art, mainstream/community, and individual/collective. They make connections across and simultaneously work with spaces, artistic mediums, audiences, and ideas that are often defined as separate and in contrast to each other. Therefore, the artists' practices highlight the role that artists play in creating alternative relationships to dominant discourses and institutions.

B. **Background**

This project results from the (largely serendipitous) coming together and development of my academic interests, personal passions, and political values. I did not begin my graduate training with an academic interest in community arts nor did I envision art being the focus of my dissertation. However, with some reflection it makes sense that this would be my project given the prominence of art and community work in my life.

My first formal introduction to artmaking was in 2007 when I took a year of film photography classes. I spent much of my senior year of high school taking photos and developing film and photos in my high school's darkroom. I spent extra time in the darkroom when I should have been at lunch or in other classes. After graduating high school, I no longer had access to a darkroom and paused my independent artmaking. I continued my interest in art by taking several undergraduate art history courses. In 2012, I had the space and resources to create a darkroom in my apartment and I began producing artwork again.

I was introduced to community work while attending a Vincentian Catholic university. Community work through service days, service-learning courses, and trips to rallies was central to the university's mission. As a result, I often volunteered in Latina/x/o communities around

Chicago during my education. In 2010, I began tutoring adult GED students at a community-based organization in Humboldt Park as part of a service-learning course. I continued tutoring for a year after the course ended. I moved to Pilsen in 2012 and immediately began volunteering at a local community-based organization that advocates for social justice, education reform, healthcare, and immigrant rights. In 2012, I found a way to combine my passion for arts and community work.

My late-cousin had co-founded a community-based arts organization on the west side of San Antonio, Texas in 1993. While visiting family, I was able to learn more about the organization and how art can be used to address community issues. When I returned to Chicago, I was motivated to find organizations and artists that produce art in and for Latina/x/o communities. In 2013, I discovered the work of Maria Gaspar, an artist who grew up in Little Village, a Latina/x/o working-class neighborhood. She had started a community-engaged art project, called the 96 Acres Project, that examined and addressed Cook County Jail's impact on the surrounding Black and Brown communities. We met over coffee and found that we shared many artistic, political, and community values and interests. She immediately invited me to attend 96 Acres planning meetings.

As I began attending meeting for 96 Acres and other community art projects, I met and learned about several other Latina artists who were doing important community-engaged work in Chicago. I found that many of the important community arts events and organizations were organized and led by Latina artists. Through my observations and conversations, I quickly became aware of the ways that Latina artists and their labor were regularly devalued and marginalized within both mainstream art spaces and community spaces. Latina community artists were actively erased from the history of Latina/x/o community art in Chicago and current artists

were often ignored. It was Latino male artists who have the most space and recognition in local media, the National Museum of Mexican Art, and community and official histories of community art. There was a reason why, prior to 2013, I could not name many Latina community artists. I began engaging with literature on the field of cultural production, sociology of art, and inequities in the arts to understand why this may be happening.

Additionally, Latina community artists complicated what I had previously heard and thought about the relationship between art and gentrification. Since moving to the city of Chicago in 2008, I had regularly heard the argument that artists and art lead to the displacement of working-class Latinas/xs/os in Chicago. Many pointed to the formerly working-class Latina/x/o, now gentrified neighborhoods of Bucktown and Logan Square as prime example of how art opens the door to gentrification. In 2018, Pilsen was named by Forbes as one of the “12 Coolest Neighborhoods Around the World” (Abel 2018). They claimed that the “streets lined with hip galleries and walls decorated with colorful murals” made Pilsen “a nest of cutting-edge culture and art” (Abel 2018). New housing developments in Pilsen have cited Forbes and also featured local art in order to lure middle- and high-income individuals to their high-priced units. But my time with Latina community-engaged artists began to show me that art and artists are also central to resistance against gentrification and displacement. Therefore, I explored the literature on how Latinas/xs/os use art to address marginalization and community issues. Art is not just a catalyst for gentrification but also a main site of struggle over Latina/x/o community futures. Therefore, I approached this dissertation with the desire to add complexity to our understanding of the role and experiences of artists in Latina/x/o communities.

Finally, my focus on space developed as Latina community-engaged artists invited me to underground events, do-it-yourself events, studios, exhibitions, social media groups, parties, and

project planning sessions. It became clear that space was central to how they produced art and engaged with their communities. They used the language of space in relation to physical place as well as social connection. They were frustrated about a lack of space for community members to make and engage with art. They shared experiences of being kicked out of and banned from spaces. They planned about how to create spaces. They found joy in sharing spaces with others.

All of these experiences inform this dissertation's examination of the relationship between race, gender, and class, cultural production, space, and community-engaged practices among Latina artists in Chicago.

C. **Dissertation Chapter Summaries**

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, I situate this dissertation within existing conversations, debates, and frameworks. In doing so, I not only detail the ways that past work informs this dissertation but also highlight the necessity of this research. This dissertation is indebted to scholarship on the sociology of art, social hierarchies in the arts, and Latina/x/o community art. Scholars in these fields have provided empirical and theoretical entry points for my research. These entry points are largely created by gaps and limitations. In order to fill those gaps, I follow my literature review with a discussion of my theoretical framework. I highlight the main theoretical reference points that have helped me intervene in existing scholarly debates.

In Chapter 3, I detail the methods and methodologies that I use to answer my central research questions. Using ethnographic and visual research methods and a feminist decolonizing methodology, I do not seek to produce generalizable claims. Instead, I explore the experiences and actions of particular individuals in order to highlight the ways that macrolevel social structures impact the everyday lives of individuals. This dissertation focuses on the practice and production of Latina artists who regularly produce art with and in Chicago's Latina/x/o

communities, or “community-engaged artists”. Furthermore, I discuss the impact that my subjectivity had on data collection.

This dissertation is composed of four substantive chapters. In Chapter 4, I analyze the construction of Latina community-engaged artists artistic habitus. Rather than natural, I argue that their value and approach to art must be contextualized within their personal experiences with marginalization and the construction and maintenance of community. Race, gender, and class all impacted why they decided to become community-engaged artists and why they produce art in the way that they do. As Latinas from working-class neighborhoods, their artistic habitus shares nothing in common with the hegemonic masculine, white, and elite artistic habitus. As a result, their social backgrounds are the cause for their unique and counterhegemonic approach to art.

In Chapter 5, I detail what characteristics compose Latina community-engaged art practices. I argue that their practices actively involve the blurring, crossing, and challenging of dominant boundaries. I call them practices of articulation. Practices of articulation reject hegemonic definitions, boundaries, and binaries, view art as a collective process, and view art as knowledge production. As a result, they are multidisciplinary artists that practice in a multitude of spaces.

In Chapter 6, I examine how Latina community-engaged artists navigate marginalization in mainstream and community art spaces. I find that they are marginalized through the mechanisms of devaluation, denied/limited access, stereotyping/pigeonholing, and illegibility. I argue that illegibility is an underdiscussed mechanism of marginalization. Paradoxically, I find that Latina community-engaged artists strategically use illegibility and legibility in order to resist marginalization. I use their use of multidisciplinary and social cultural capital to highlight this differential and disidentificatory strategy.

In Chapter 7, I examine the where Latina community-engaged artists create space and curate community. I find that they create and work within alternative community spaces, or third spaces, that are both physical and non-physical. Their third spaces entail ephemerality and fluidity, collectivity, accessibility, alternative ways of being in community, and the articulation of art, politics, and everyday life. My conceptualization of third spaces addresses limitations in the theories of fields and Latina/x/o community art.

In Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, I discuss the overall implications and contributions of this dissertation. For scholarship, I make several theoretical interventions that complicate our understanding of Latinas/xs/os, artists, and the field of cultural production. My conceptualizations of illegibility, strategic (il)legibility, and third spaces offer new pathways for explaining cultural production, marginalization, and resistance. For Latina/x/o artists and communities, my work advocates for transformations in how community artists are treated by arts institutions and their communities. This requires the redistribution of physical space, resources, and support and a fundamental shift in how we understand and value art.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I situate my dissertation with ongoing scholarly debates. I review past theoretical and empirical contributions that have informed my analysis. I also identify existing gaps in the literature that this dissertation fills. Furthermore, the theories, concepts, and findings discussed in this chapter will be implicitly and explicitly referenced throughout the dissertation. I begin with a review of the literature on the sociology of art, social hierarchies in the arts, and Latina/x/o community art. Then, I detail the main theoretical components of this dissertation's theoretical framework. I use this framework to address the limitations I identify in existing scholarship.

A. Literature Review

Sociologists have not yet studied Latina artists who regularly produce art with and in Latina/x/o communities. Giving theoretical and empirical attention to these artists has highlighted gaps and limitations in existing research and theories about art and cultural production. My study of the artistic practices and production of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago builds on and highlights limitations of research on the sociology of art, social hierarchies in the arts, and Latina/x/o community art.

1. Sociology of Art

Art has been sociologically studied from various angles. Sociologists have examined group processes of decision making, institutional constraints in the selection of works for cultural production, institutional change and its effect on style, structural constraints and opportunities in the art world, social symbolic use of art, status, shifts in art styles and art movements, art as a social construct, art as a social process and product, valuation, and art markets, among other topics (Alexander and Bowler 2014; Zolberg 1990). The major discussions within the sociology

of art that I wish to engage with are largely theoretical/methodological debates on the appropriate ways to study art, artwork, and artists. What should sociologists of art focus on? What role should the artwork itself, artists themselves, and macro-level structure play in our analyses? These are just some of the questions that have been central to major debates in the sociology of art. These important conversations have led to the development of a “new sociology of the arts” to which I contribute.

The sociology of art has often been at the margins of the discipline largely due to the belief that discussions of art and aesthetics are best left to the humanities (Alexander and Bowler 2014; Zolberg 1990). “The tendency to construct art and aesthetics as ‘soft’ and to cast them in opposition to the ‘hard’ factors of economy, technology, and science, is evident in sociology and social theory” (de la Fuente 2007:419). Early sociologists of art often centered elite, institutionalized, Western fine visual arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture) (Morris 1958). Additionally, sociologists of art were “viewed as intellectuals in a broad sense or as radicals, but not *really proper* sociologists” (Zolberg 1990:51). However, the publication of Becker’s (1982/2008) *Art Worlds* and Bourdieu’s (1984) *Distinction* laid the foundations for the contemporary sociology of art.

In *Art Worlds*, Becker (1982/2008) argues that art is a collective process and is therefore an appropriate object of study for sociologists. His represents one major approach to the sociological study of art – the process of artistic production. For Becker, art is a social process rather than just the produced object. Becker (1982/2008) argues that his approach stands:

“in direct contradiction to the dominant tradition in the sociology of art, which defines art as something more special, in which creativity comes to the surface and the essential character of the society expresses itself, especially in great works of genius. The dominant tradition takes the artist and art work, rather than the network of cooperation, as central to the analysis of art as a social phenomenon” (p. xi).

This approach traces and examines the various actors and actions involved in the process of producing art. Becker (2003:1) argues that it is important to study “how some artistic phenomenon... comes into being, step by step; all the things that are done, in the order they are done by the people who do them, in the course of the object of study... coming to be what it is.”

Other scholars have studied the roles the economy, politics, and institutions play in the process of artistic production. For example, Gielen’s (2013) study of the connections between arts institutions and artists found that “[t]he current context of production by creative entrepreneurs is characterized by a high degree of individualization or de-collectivization of project work in a fluent network structure” (p. 24). Economic and political shifts have forced museums to increase their focus on profit and efficiency to the detriment of relationships with artists. Artists do not exist within a vacuum. Macrolevel social, political, and economic conditions impact how artists produce work (Becker et al. 2006:3). This approach has been critiqued for neglecting the artwork itself in their analyses (Hennion and Grenier 2000).

The second dominant approach in the sociology of art – artwork as an object of sociological analysis – reveals “the social determination of art behind any pretended autonomy (be it the autonomy of the works, following the objectivist aesthetics, or the autonomy of the taste for them, following aesthetics of subjectivity)” (Hennion and Grenier 2000:341). Zolberg (1990) characterizes this approach as studying the art object sociologically. Even among sociologists of art, analyses of form and aesthetics has often been seen as the jurisdiction of art history and other humanities. This approach seeks to bring sociology closer to art history (Witkin 2005; Tanner 2003). Wolff (1981:139) argues that if “the sociology of art is the study of the practices and institutions of artistic production,” then this “necessarily involves the study of aesthetic conventions.” As a result, her analysis draws relationships between aesthetics and the

social (Wolff 1983). Hennion and Grenier (2000:341) believe that “the dilemma now faced by sociologists is how to incorporate the material character of works produced and devices used, without reverting to autonomous aesthetic comments, which in the past treated works of art as extractions removed from their social context.”

I find these two dominant approaches unsatisfying. Scholars have highlighted the limitations of mainstream sociology of art. Willis (2005) argued that sociologists of art must look beyond that which is traditionally and officially defined as “art”. He claimed that the sociology of art often “helps reproduce the fallacy that ‘aesthetics’ is synonymous with ‘art’ ... [I]n denying a living content to aesthetics, sociology fails to locate ‘aesthetics’ (without the shell) as a characteristic of *ordinary* and *everyday* social contexts” (Willis 2005: 74). In neglecting the aesthetics of everyday cultures, “the sociology of art differs little from other academic forms of comprehension, such as art history, in its privileging of official ‘art’ spaces and practices” (Willis 2005:85). For this reason, sociologists have not examined community-engaged art practices, which often happen outside of official art spaces and are not always viewed as art.

The “new sociology of the arts” (de la Fuente 2007, 2010; Eyerman and McCormick 2006) includes sociologists that seek a middle ground between the two dominant approaches to the sociology of art – art as a social process and artwork as an object of sociological analysis (Zolberg 1990). New sociology of the arts scholars argue that something is missed when art is reduced to the outcome of social causes but also want to recenter art in the sociological study of art (de la Fuente 2007; Eyerman and McCormick 2006). de la Fuente (2010) believes that the tensions between macro-level theory construction and micro-level analysis of art-objects is productive and does not need to be solved. The new sociology of art finds a middle path by expanding the sociological approach to art to include the content, performance, and meaning of

artworks and expanding its focus to include artifacts from popular culture (Eyerman and McCormick 2006). As Molotch (2004:344) notes, “The magic of art is in the way complex social and psychological stimuli are made to conjoin, a kind of lash-up of sensualities.” In my study I seek to examine both the microlevel content, form, and aesthetics of artwork along with the macrolevel economic, political, and social processes that impact the production and practice of art.

Influenced by the work of Bruno Latour, the new sociology of the arts has begun to view artwork as having agency. They argue that art is not merely the result of social relations but also exerts influence on social relations (Gell 1998; Strandvad 2012). From this perspective, artwork is regarded as “one of the actors involved in the drama of its own making” (Becker, Faulkner, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006:3). For example, Strandvad (2012) shows the ways that a film became an evolving product that facilitated the creation of networks and thus a “mediator of the social relations which it is at the same time a product of” (p. 164). The film and the social relations surrounding it were co-produced. Artwork is an active participant in everyday life. Art can mobilize, demobilize, or maintain status quo (Lee and Lingo 2011). Scholars studying community art have provided empirical evidence of this work. Community art “mirrors, activates, stimulates, educates, agitates, delights, promotes, prevents, provides options, intervenes, inspires, transforms, crosses cultures, honors traditions, unites, entertains, and heals – in safe, accessible, and relevant ways” (Martinez 2007:8). Community art projects build community sentiment by facilitating the development of interconnection and cohesion among participants (Lowe 2001).

While new sociology of art makes important interventions by recentering aesthetics and artwork along with paying attention to large-scale social formations, the relationship between

space and art has not been discussed much. My study's approach to this relationship is most influenced by the work of Eyerman (2006). He views art as "a concept, an object, a practice, and an experience" that "opens an imaginative space (individual and collective) from which to view the world and from there to represent it" (Eyerman 2006:18). This space can be material (theater, gallery, or social movement) or imaginative. Eyerman (2006) differs from Becker's "art worlds" and Bourdieu's "field of cultural production" because worlds or fields are things you enter and then can impact your actions and beliefs. His approach "gives more place to imagination and creativity, as meaningful and constitutive of space, rather than something external and determinant... [Art] can provide a space within a space, a place from which to view the surrounding world yet not be untouched by it" (Eyerman 2006:19). According to Eyerman (2006), art opens a space for experimentation, social and political as well as aesthetic. Art is a relatively autonomous space of experience as well as practice.

This dissertation examines how Latina community-engaged artists navigate institutions, values, norms, ideas, and positions within the arts. Bourdieu's later work *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) built on his claim in *Distinction* (1984:7) that:

"[t]he denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasure forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences."

In the next section, I review scholarship that details the impact of social hierarchies on artists and arts institutions.

2. **Social Hierarchies in the Arts**

Bourdieu (1993) argues that the field of cultural production is structured by constant struggle over power and legitimacy. An artist's power and legitimacy are determined by the

relationship between an artist's social background, the social backgrounds of critics, colleagues, "experts", historians, dealers, publishers, etc., macro-level historical processes, and contemporary social contexts (Bourdieu 1993:76-8). Therefore, artists' positions within the field of cultural production must be viewed in relation hegemonic social hierarchies. Bourdieu (1993) argues that the field of cultural production reproduces hierarchies found in other fields, such as economy and politics, even though it uses different logics. For example, artists must reject economic profit motivations to be given prestige and power, but the artists that are able to reject economic considerations often already have a privileged position in the field of the economy (Bourdieu 1993:67-8). Furthermore, powerful artists are often those who produce artwork using a habitus and cultural codes (language, symbols, intellectual frameworks, history) that match audiences with power in other fields (Bourdieu 1984:2). Bourdieu's work largely focuses on the reproduction of class hierarchies within the arts. Subsequent researchers have detailed the ways race and gender inequities are reproduced in the arts.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in the arts because they are excluded from male-dominant professional networks (Wreyford 2015), struggle to promote themselves (Banks and Milestone 2011; Scharff 2015) and attain paid work as artists (Bielby and Bielby 1996; Goldin and Rouse 2000), are often paid less (Brown 2019), segregated into less-valued positions and genres (Alacovska 2015), receive less recognition (Berkers et al. 2016; Brooks and Daniluk 1998), and lack inclusion in museum and gallery exhibitions (Saltz 2006). Overall, artistic production associated with women is given a lower status, such as the association of men with fine art and women with crafts (Collins 1979). Building on Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations, Miller (2016) argues that ideologies about the archetypical artist,

collective judgments on aesthetic value, and the structure of artistic careers are gendered to favor men artists and creative workers. The archetypical artist is a masculine subject.³

The archetypical artist is also white. Tator et al. (1998) argue that the marginalization of artists of color is reinforced by a larger social system of racism in which non-white groups are not given access to institutions and resources and, therefore, not valued. On average, African American artists' work is priced lower than other artists (Agnello 2010). Museumgoers are overwhelmingly White and class-privileged (Blankenberg 2016). Elite art institutions operate as what Embrick et al. (2019) call "white sanctuaries," because they maintain white supremacy/normativity and reassure whites of their dominant position in society. When artists of color do gain access to arts institutions, it is often "ghettoized" through racially-specific exhibitions that position artists of color as outside the mainstream art world, not meeting dominant artistic standards, and inherently different and inferior (Berger 2005; Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Hall 1997). These issues are directly related to the fact that museum and arts foundation administrators are overwhelmingly white, arts in communities of color are underfunded, and museums and galleries have historically locked out artists of color (Helicon Collaborative 2017; McCambridge 2017; Pindell 1987). Due to political and economic shifts, art institutions are more dependent on private funding and public attendance, and even those art museums created by and for communities of color have had to appeal to elitist and Eurocentric artistic systems of valuation (Dávila 2012; Noriega 1999).

Unfortunately, there has been little research on women of color artists specifically. Due to a lack of intersectional approaches, most research examines race *or* gender inequalities in the arts (Mannarino and Kurlandsky 2018). However, we can infer from this research that if women

³ See Miller (2016) for a detailed analysis of women's marginalization in the arts.

artists fare worse than male artists and artists of color fare worse than white artists, then women of color artists must be facing major obstacles in the arts. For example, women of color artists comprised 5.6% of artists represented at New York City's 45 top commercial galleries (Mannarino and Kurlandsky 2018) While I do not make generalizable claims about the experience of women of color artists, I use the case of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago to examine the mechanisms by which they are marginalized and how they resist marginalization. I focus on the experiences of Latina community artists to provide insight into racial and gender marginalization in the arts, because Latina/x/o community arts have historically come as a result of and been a response to marginalization in the mainstream art world and society.

3. **Latina/x/o Community Art**

Latina/x/o communities in the United States have long used art to address individual and collective marginalization. This is because artists not only document social change; they promote, inform, and shape it (Martinez 2007). Throughout the mid-to-late-20th century, Chicanas/os, Nuyoricans, and other Latinas/xs/os used art to make claims to space, rights, and identity (Acosta-Belén 1992; Arreola 1984; Calvo 2004; Caragol-Barreto 2005; Caragol-Barreto 2009; Holscher 1976; Hurtado 2000; McCaughan 2012; Rossini and Ybarra 2012). This practice continues in contemporary Latina/x/o social and community movements (Cruz and Rodriguez 2016; Martinez 2007; Rodriguez 2013; Seif 2014; Villarrubia-Mendoza 2017). However, sociologists have given little attention to the practices and production of art in Latina/x/o communities.

Latina/x/o community artists have long been central to the processes of “placemaking/placekeeping” in which Latinas/xs/os claim belonging, engage in local political

issues, and resist their cultural erasure and physical displacement (Bedoya 2014; Dávila 2004; Lin 2019; Wherry 2011). Latina/x/o community artists use various media (mural, music, mosaics, sculpture, landscaping, etc.) in order to show that their communities have the power to shape the physical spaces in which they live (Gude and Huebner 2000; Viesca 2004). Dávila (2004:86) finds that artists, often seen as “pioneers and catalysts for gentrification,” take an active role to market Latina/x/o enclaves while also confronting the threats of gentrification. Similarly, Wherry (2011) found that the arts were important for the branding and positive transformation of a Philadelphia Latina/x/o enclave. He finds that branding does not inherently lead to gentrification and the removal of Latina/x/o residents, because artists played an active role in fighting against projects or approaches that would lead to negative outcomes for already-established residents.

Latina/x/o community-based art practices have historically countered the exclusive culture of downtown, institutional art culture (Grams 2010). This motivated the creation of Latina/x/o-specific art institutions. Latina/x/o-centered museums and galleries around the U.S. were born from community-based movements that created spaces for Latina/x/o artists who were not given access to mainstream arts institutions (Cordova 2017; Dávila 2004; Moreno 2004; NMMA 2019; Selbach 2004). Community members created these spaces to challenge the logics by which mainstream arts institutions operated (Dávila 2004). These spaces redefined how Latina/x/o art was valued and made art more accessible and politically relevant to working-class Latina/x/o communities (Cordova 2017). However, like the communities themselves, these movements and spaces are not monolithic.

Latina/x/o community arts projects contend with various cultural and political tensions (Mayer 2000). As a result, movements for Latina/x/o community art often take different

approaches (Grams 2010:53-9). Some attempt to institutionalize representation of their cultures, such as through the construction of smaller, ethnically specific museums. Others simply wanted more community input and participation for public arts, such as murals (Grams 2010:53-9).

When community arts centers choose to bureaucratize and emphasize voices and supports from outside of the community, they often compromise the values of their communities (Halley and Valdez 2000; Halley et al. 2001). They stray from their original mission, lose their primary audience, and abandon a commitment to innovative, avant-garde artistic expression (Halley et al. 2001; Moreno 2004). Other community artists reject bureaucratization (and the funding opportunities that come along with it) in order to maintain a grassroots, collective approach to community art (Halley et al. 2001). For example, they will not apply to grants that come with “strings attached” or stipulations that dictate how the center must run and what kind of projects they must produce.

Among the few sociologists who have studied Latina/x/o community art, few have given attention to individual Latina/x/o artists’ experiences and practices. Instead, they have largely made community or institutions their objects of study. Scholars in other disciplines have given individual artists more attention but often do not make connections between individual artists and social structures. As a result, this dissertation uniquely provides a complex understanding of Latina artists’ experiences and practices and situates them in relation to larger social structures within the arts and society.

B. **Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I highlight the theories, concepts, and findings that serve as the foundation for my analysis and allow me to articulate this study’s theoretical and empirical contributions. I

draw upon additional theoretical reference points in various chapters, but here I highlight those that are central for my dissertation as a whole.

1. **Bourdieuian Field Theory**

Pierre Bourdieu's field theory offers several important theoretical concepts for this dissertation. His field theory is particularly relevant for the study of art and artists, because it highlights the relationality between individual agency and objective structure (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Savage and Silva 2013). Bourdieu (1993:29) says, "there are in fact very few other areas in which the glorification of 'great individuals', unique creators irreducible to any condition or conditioning, is more common or uncontroversial." Field theory challenges the assumption that artistic talent is natural and that artists gain prestige and power solely based on this inherent talent. I will detail Bourdieu's and subsequent scholars' work on field, habitus, and capital that have been central to this dissertation's theoretical framework.

a. **Field**

A field is a social space structured by constant competition among individuals for power, prestige, and resources (Bourdieu 1993). However, a field is not a space in which all individuals have the same opportunity to advance their interests. An individual's opportunity to improve their position within the field is enabled or hindered by the logics, or rules, of the field. Logics create hierarchies and determine what possibilities are available to individuals based on their position in the field and their position in relation to other positions. In addition to resources and prestige, individuals at the top of the field's hierarchy also define 1) the boundaries of the field, 2) the existence and definitions of positions, and 3) the hierarchization of positions within the field. This leads to the reproduction of inequalities. Therefore, the collective investment and

adhesion to the field, or *illusio*, is both the cause and effect of the field's existence (Bourdieu 1996:167).

Chess is often used as a metaphor to illustrate the basic characteristics of a field. The game is the field, the pieces are positions, and the pieces can only move according to the rules of the game and in relation to other pieces. Some pieces can move more freely and have more power than others. For example, a pawn can only move one space vertically or horizontally while a queen can move any number of spaces in any direction. The main difference between chess and fields is that the rules of chess are not changeable. The rules of a field can be changed by internal or external forces.

In addition to internal competition, a field is also structured in relation to the structure of other fields and the larger field of power. Dominant positions within fields often rely on external powers in other fields to help create order and maintain their power within their fields (Bourdieu 1996: 68-9). Struggles in one field can impact the structure of other autonomous fields (Bourdieu 1996:52). For example, changes in the structure of the field of the economy can result in changes to the structure of the field of politics, such as the rise in the neoliberal logic of capitalism fundamentally impacting US electoral politics. As a result, fields are homologous. The dominant group in one field is also the dominant group in another field even if the logics of the two fields are not the same. In principle, fields are autonomous but, in outcome, they correspond to external struggles (Bourdieu 1996:127). However, scholars have noted that Bourdieu strays from his relational approach when making distinctions between fields.

Eyal (2013:158) states that Bourdieu “is quite rigorous in applying this relational approach to political programs, works of art, styles of life, and scientific theories” but “he does not do the same thing with the distinction between fields themselves.” He continues, “It is as if

the relational approach stopped short before [fields]... and left them in their place as distinct spheres whose contents are clearly bounded and well distinguished from one another.” He addresses this gap by arguing that field boundaries are neither built “inside the field nor outside it in another field” (Eyal 2013:175). Instead, spaces between fields mark the boundaries between fields.

The spaces between fields are also strategic spaces of opportunities in which “things can be done and combinations and conversions can be established that are not possible to do within fields” (Eyal 2013:177). The space between fields is easy to access from the fields it is between, has less rules than fields with no clear hierarchy of worth, and impacts the structure of the fields it is between. It draws actors who are marginal within their own fields, because it is a space where these actors can improve their position within fields by doing things that are not possible in their fields, such as making alliances and exchanges and accumulating resources and capital (Eyal 2013:178).

However, the space between fields can also be valued for its own sake. Eyal (2013) uses the example of “hybrid wellness practices,” such as alternative medicine and spiritual guidance, to illustrate spaces between fields that use their liminality as an advantage. This space between the scientific, medical, and personal services fields makes no claims of scientificity or professionalism in order to avoid the regulation of these fields. It is also more accessible than the spaces between fields that are invested in field building.

Eyal’s (2013) contribution is deeply impactful for this dissertation. Spaces between fields provide a clearer understanding of artistic practices and spaces that exist outside of, yet still engage with and impact, existing fields. However, there still remains an inability to account for those spaces that are not structured by competition. Spaces between fields exist for the purpose

of individuals improving their power over others in fields, to reshape field boundaries to their benefit, or to create new fields in which they have power. Competition is often treated in Bourdieusian scholarship as a natural characteristic of actors. There are spaces and actors who engage with fields but are not invested in competition. These are collective, horizontally structured spaces that work against hegemonic hierarchies and field structures. The case of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago can serve as an opening to theoretically address this limitation.

b. **Habitus**

Individuals' actions and practices in fields "are the result of the meeting of two histories: the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their dispositions" (Bourdieu 1993:61). While the field explains the history of their positions, Bourdieu's concept of habitus addresses the history of an individual's dispositions. It explains why individuals may occupy particular positions within a field. A habitus is a system of dispositions that are structured by the backgrounds of individuals and serve to structure individuals' unconscious practices and ideas, or a feel for or sense of the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:120-1; Bourdieu 1993:5). Habitus is the internalization of class conditions and the conditionings it entails (Bourdieu 1984:101). How one talks, eats, walks, and values are all informed by the habitus. The habitus produces practices that are not conscious calculations or strategies but does not negate the possibility of strategic action by individuals. Therefore, if fields are organized around particular logics, or rules, the habitus leads one to successfully or unsuccessfully navigate the logics and structure of a field. This is why Bourdieu summarizes habitus as "a feel for the game". The habitus plays an important role in opening or closing opportunities for individuals to occupy particular positions.

Decoteau (2013) builds on Bourdieu's class-focused habitus and argues that habitus is also informed by other social structures, such as gender, race, and nationality. Furthermore, she finds that actor may simultaneously hold a hybrid habitus that is shaped by multiple discourses. She argues that while Black South Africans living with HIV/AIDS may identify with either traditional indigenous healing practices or Western scientific biomedical practices, they often practice a hybrid mix of both (Decoteau 2013:279). The deployment of hybrid habituses allows actors to strategically navigate various structural obstacles in their daily lives (Decoteau 2013:280). This intervention opens up the possibility to conceptualize how actors strategically deploy habitus in order to resist marginalization. It allows for an understanding of complex and sometimes contradictory actors who do not seek to abide by dominant binaries. Instead, simultaneity holds potential for their strategical survival. With respect to Latina community artists, their artistic habitus is not only constructed by their race, gender, and class backgrounds but also their time within mainstream arts institutions. The possibility of a hybrid habitus explains strategic actions that allow actors to move through various fields.

c. **Capital**

An individual's habitus reflects possession of and affords access to various forms of capital that may provide them access to particular fields and positions. Bourdieu argues that capital takes the forms of cultural capital, social capital, or economic capital (Bourdieu 1986). While using economic terminology of "capital," Bourdieu has little in common with economic orthodoxy (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:118). To possess cultural capital is to possess that which signals one's knowledge or intellectual skills. This is influenced by one's education or class background. It may be embodied (dispositions, language, habits, manners, etc.), objectified (commodities, books, artwork, clothing, etc.), or institutionalized (credentials, titles, official

qualifications, etc.) (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu 1986:248-9). One’s colleagues, professional organization, ethnicity, race, gender, friends, family, community, etc. can inform the amount and quality of social capital. The collectives with which an individual is associated are the source of their social capital. Economic capital can be directly converted into money and may be institutionalized through property or credit (Bourdieu 1986). Cultural and social capital are forms of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is “economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits” (Bourdieu 1993:75). While everyone may possess some kind of capital, capital is only useful when it is recognized by the logics of the field. Therefore, capital does not transfer smoothly between fields.

Capital is linked to habitus in that the accumulation of symbolic or economic capital may coincide with the shaping of a habitus or the possession of a particular habitus may provide more opportunities for the acquisition of economic and symbolic capital. A child who attended prestigious educational institutions their whole life would be conditioned to unconsciously have certain thinking, speaking, and bodily dispositions that would signal their educational pedigree. This child would have likely also been raised within a wealthy family and would therefore also have dispositions that reflected their class background. As this child becomes an adult, their habitus and the cultural and social capital that they have gained from their educational

background and family class background would provide them with more opportunities to enter a well-paying career that would entitle them to even more cultural, social, and economic capital.

Cultural, social, and economic capital reveal the various ways that social positions, networks, and material can produce privileges or obstacles for individuals. When applied to the field of cultural production, it becomes easier to understand how artistic power and prestige is gained and maintained beyond simply being a talented artist. Capital highlights the ways that paths to success are made easier for some artists and more difficult for others according to prevailing objective structures. The arts are not a meritocratic field that rewards inherent artistic genius. Instead, these forms of capital impact your ability to access and stay in the field, be compensated for your work, have your work supported, and to shape the structure of the field.

2. **Intersectionality**

My analysis of the ways race, gender, and class impact Latina community-engaged artists' practices and production is indebted to women of color feminists' labor and theories. This dissertation's theoretical framework draws from the numerous feminist scholars whose work takes an intersectional approach to social analysis. In this section, I highlight and summarize scholarship that has been foundational to my theoretical framework. In doing so, I will undoubtedly fail to give full attention to all of the important contributions and debates about intersectionality. This is not to erase or diminish other works nor to say some works are more important than others. I simply cite the works with which I am most familiar and most prominently shaped my understanding of intersectionality.

The term, "intersectionality," was first used by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), and her objective was:

"to illustrate that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently

understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (p. 1244).

While the term is relatively new, scholars, activists, and everyday women of color have long used an intersectional approach to understand the social world and resist systems of oppression with the language of "intersectionality". For example, the Combahee River Collective (1977/1981:213) did not use the language of intersectionality but no doubt take an intersectional approach when they say, "We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously." Additionally, from European conquest of the Americas to the enslavement of African to the 1960s and 70s revolutionary movements, women of color in the United States have understood and resisted interlocking systems of oppression (Hurtado 2000; Lugones 2010; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015; Truth 1851). Feminist scholars have continued to refine, develop, and implement intersectionality.

Intersectionality fundamentally rejects the siloing of race, gender, class, and sexuality and requires us to take note of the varying ways that these subjectivities magnify and structure each other. Race, gender, and class are interlocking systems of oppression within a larger "matrix of domination" (Collins 2000:226). Individuals experience privilege or oppression based on their position within systems of oppression and can at once be both privileged and oppressed (Collins 2000). This is not to say that all systems of oppression are operating equally at all times. Depending on the context, one system of oppression may be more salient than others (Yuval-Davis 2006:203). But we must attend to all systems that may be operating at any point in time in order to have a complex understanding of oppression and social structures. Furthermore, intersectionality is inherently political, because the oppression and resistance of women of color feminists produced intersectional analyses (Collins 2000; Hurtado 2000; Moraga and Anzaldúa

2015). Therefore, intersectionality is not an apolitical academic exercise but is meant to address and end the oppression of women of color and all people.

The term “Latina” is in itself an intersectional marker of a racialized and gendered subject. An externally imposed subjectivity, this is a woman within the United States who is identified as having some familial and cultural connection to Latin America. Some reject this label or do not actively apply it to themselves. As a result, I use the term solely for clarification rather than an ontological claim. I am referring to women who identify as Latina, Chicana, Xicana, or any form of a Latin American nationality. I do not use this concept to signal a bounded, static, homogenous, essential “community” or “culture”. Rather, I view Latina as an articulation and a diasporic or panethnic identity (Clifford 2001; Diaz and Kauanui 2001; Espiritu 1992; Hall 1994; Naber 2012). Latinas, as part of a diaspora, are connected by a shared history of Iberian conquest of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the abduction and enslavement of Africans, but they are ultimately defined by “the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity... which lives through, not despite, difference” (Hall 1994:402). Even this shared history is not objective but fictionalized through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth (Hall 1994). Latinidad is always conjunctural, relationally constructed, in flux, and contingent on historical, political, and social processes. There is no single, grand Latina/x/o “culture”.

3. **Culture**

Raymond Williams (1983:87) declared that “culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” As a result, scholars have used and understood culture in various ways. Sewell (1999) argues that there are two major conceptualizations of culture. The first is a descriptive conceptualization that regards culture as a bounded set of

beliefs and practices (Sewell 1999). This is the definition we use when we talk about specific cultures. This is the traditional conceptualization of culture historically used by anthropologists. Abu-Lughod (1991:143) argues that this conceptualization of culture is the “essential tool for making other,” because it constructs, produces, and maintains difference. In some ways “culture” has come to take the place of biological race in its essentialist deployment against marginalized groups. Marginalized “cultures” are constructed as timeless, discreet, and homogenous. Instead, Sewell (1999:53) argues that cultures are “contradictory, loosely integrated, contested, mutable, and highly permeable.” This compliments Abu-Lughod’s (1991) call to “write against culture”.

The second conceptualization views culture theoretically as an autonomous aspect of social life, often next to politics and religion (Sewell 1999). In this sense, culture is a social formation that encompasses those things we call “cultural”. Culture is understood as learned behavior, an institutional sphere devoted to meaning making, creativity or agency, a system of symbols and meanings, and practice (Sewell 1999). Concerning himself with this conceptualization, Sewell (1999:52) argues that culture “should be understood as a dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and in its spatial configuration, and as a system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence.” But what impact does culture have on human action?

Schudson (1989:155) finds that “answers to the question of the efficacy of cultural symbols or objects cluster around two poles.” First, culture is viewed as extremely powerful in shaping, mostly inhibiting, human action. For example, elites can use cultural meanings and symbols to maintain the consent and obedience of the masses. On the other side, culture is “an ambiguous set of symbols that are usable as a resource for rational actors in society pursuing their own interests” (Schudson 1989:156). Individuals freely select the meanings and symbols

that they need for their specific context and goals. “In this view, culture is a resource for social action more than a structure to limit social action” (Schudson 1989:155). However, Schudson (1989:156) argues that the reality of culture is somewhere in between these poles, because “[t]o understand the efficacy of culture, it is essential to recognize simultaneously that (1) human beings make their own history and (2) they do not make it according to circumstances of their own choosing.” Sometimes culture works and sometimes it does not.

In this dissertation, I am largely interested in culture in the theoretical, singular sense. I examine cultural practices rather than trying to construct a bounded culture that is distinct from other cultures. Therefore, I do not use terms like “Latino culture” or “Mexican culture” in this dissertation. Latina scholars have critiqued the over-reliance on “culture” as an explanation of Latina/x/o experiences (García 2009; García and Torres 2009; Juarez and Kerl 2003; López and Chesney-Lind 2014). This dissertation works against homogenizing conceptualizations of Latina/x/o communities. Cultures are far more complex and contradictory than they are uniform. I am also not interested in constructing a generalizable culture of Latina community-engaged artists. My findings will may be applicable to Latina community-engaged artists in other parts of the United States, but much of my findings are geographically and historically specific.

With regards to the efficacy of culture, I continue the practice of finding a “middle position” (Schudson 1989). Culture is both a structuring force that is externally imposed and an available resource for individual interests. Culture may determine the paths available to individuals, but culture can also be used by individuals to choose a path or even construct new paths for themselves. Simply put, humans are not blindly programmed by culture, but they are also not free to deploy whatever cultural meanings and symbols they wish. This dissertation examines how Latina community-engaged artists are both limited and liberated by culture.

4. Space

While ethnographers often emphasize physical space, I draw from work within the social sciences that analyze space beyond its materiality. Castells (1996) argues that “global cities” have become the nodes of a transnational network of information flows. The city is no longer simply a place but a process. Space is an expression of society. “Space is a material product, in relationship with other material products – including people—who engage in historically determined social relationships that provide space with a form, function, and a social meaning... space cannot be understood independently of social action” (Castells 1977:115). Consequently, space is different from place. “A place is a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity” (Castells 1996: 453). While people still live in places, the meaning and dynamic of places is altered by the larger structural logic of space of flows (Castells 1996).

Lefebvre ([1974] 1991:37) argues that we must shift from simply studying objects *in* space or discourses *on* space and focus on the productive process of space. Central to Lefebvre’s work is the thesis that space is a social product. Much is missed if we treat space as a static, objective entity. It is a means of production but also a means of control, domination, and power. It is in, what Lefebvre calls, the “double illusion of space” that various political, social, and economic interests are masked (Lefebvre [1974] 1991:27). The illusion that space is transparent, that there are no hidden agendas or motivations, and the “realistic” illusion, that space is merely a natural formation, embody each other and work together in order to mask the productive forces of space. Much like Marx’s commodity fetishism, Lefebvre believes the social, political, and economic forces that produce space are masked by its very existence.

Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) further argues that the production of space reflects the dominant mode of production at a particular historical period. Under capitalism, the production of space shifts from treating space as absolute, where natural space is imbued with infinite meaning, often spiritual or holy, to the production of abstract space. Abstract space is a complex space of power, specifically state power. Consequently, the “users” of space are silenced by the hegemony of the state. Social space is “an (artificial) edifice of hierarchically ordered institutions, of laws and conventions upheld by ‘values’ that are communicated through the national language” (Lefebvre 2009:224). Lefebvre (2009) continues to argue that in contemporary times, the city and country can no longer be separated, because state power is exercised within local spaces. All institutions possess an “appropriate” space for which there is a use specified within the social division of labor and serves to support political domination. The state has physical, social, and mental space.

Space is, then, more than physical. Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) proposes a conceptual triad for space: spatial practice (physical space), representations of space (conceptualized space), and representational spaces (lived experience of space). Each aspect of the triad contributes in different ways to the production of space. Harvey (1990) builds on this work to argue that space is central to the operation of capitalism and resistance against it. “One of the principal tasks of the capitalist state is to locate power in the spaces which the bourgeoisie controls, and disempower those spaces which oppositional movements have the greatest potentiality to command” (Harvey 1990:237). Capitalist control involves how spaces are experienced, perceived, and imagined in four major ways: “accessibility and distancing,” “appropriation and use of space,” “domination and control of space,” and “production of space” (Harvey 1990:219-222). Who has access to what space, how space is used, who controls spaces, and how spaces are produced are all linked to capitalist accumulation.

While this dissertation makes use of each part of Lefebvre's triad, representational spaces are the domain in which artists have most influence. Representational spaces are the direct lived experiences of space through its "associated images and symbols". The spatial meanings, which artists are often trying to change or appropriate, overlay physical space. Consequently, space operates in the mental domain. Bachelard ([1958] 1994) reflects this conceptualization of space by arguing that individuals place meaning on space. The fact that space has been lived in means that individuals invest space with their imagination. Consequently, the home is more than the physicality of a house, but all of the memories, secrets, dreams, and feelings of space.

My dissertation does attend to physical space, but it gives just as much focus to non-physical space. I conceptualize space as existing in many different forms. Discursive space involves the creation of a space where individuals can start identifying in new ways (Flores 1996). I understand social space as a consequence of the building of connections. When artists create collaboration and support networks, this constitutes a new space. When artists create new ways of being in community and feeling connected, they are constructing non-physical space. My dissertation asserts the physical and non-physical dimensions of space.

5. **Latina/x/o Third Space**

I draw from Latina/x/o feminist and queer scholars as a foundation for alternative conceptualization of space. They have explained the various ways that white supremacy and heteropatriarchy intersect to oppress Latinas and queer Latinas/xs/os in both dominant White society and Latina/x/o communities (Anzaldúa 2012; Hames-Garcia and Martínez 2011; Hurtado 2000). Additionally, their theories have emphasized the importance of art and creative expression for feminist and queer strategies of resistance (Hurtado 2000; Muñoz 1999). Art allows minoritized peoples to create and find a "third space" from which to survive and resist

oppression (Licona 2012). This dissertation theoretical framework is shaped by scholarship on Latina/x/o this third space. While not always using that language, many Latina/x/o scholars have pointed to the existence of alternative spaces that are beyond established boundaries, definitions, and binaries and allow Latinas/xs/os to navigate hegemonic institutions built on white supremacy, patriarchy, and classism (Cotera 2008; Allen 1995).

A movida is a submerged technology of resistance that was deployed by Chicana feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. “Moving within and between multiple sites of struggle, they challenged conventional notions of oppositional subjectivity” (Cotera et al. 2018:1). This praxis of resistance “opened up new spaces for different approaches to organizing with other women and created new counterpublics in which they could further develop their aesthetic, theoretical, and political practices” (Cotera et al. 2018:3). At the time, established racial and gender social movement spaces did not fully address or respect the issues faced by straight and lesbian Chicanas. As a result, “Hallways, passages, kitchens – places in between or outside of the main events –... are the spaces of transit and possibility where Chicanas mobilized strategies to challenge the internalities of power and form new networks of resistance” (Cotera et al 2018:12). Chicana’s developed alternative spaces that could best support their political goals (Cotera 2018:16).

Gloria Anzaldúa was central to the development of Chicana feminisms and her concept of *nepantla* has contributed to numerous disciplines and fields. *Nepantla* is an “in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lack clear boundaries” (Anzaldúa 2002a:1). The *nepantla* is “the site of transformation, that place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures” (Anzaldúa 2002b:548-

549). Those who find no home in existing categories or movements often find themselves in this third space. This fluid, liminal space allows nepantleras/xs/os to transform themselves and the world that they live in. As Amanda Martinez (2017:146) says, “nepantla transforms zones of possibility as we prioritize awareness of the fluidity of the numerous existing categories that define us.”

Chela Sandoval (1991/2009) theorized that women of color feminists have a “differential mode of oppositional consciousness”. This consciousness is the “refusal of U.S. third world feminism to buckle under, to submit to sublimation or assimilation within hegemonic feminist praxis” (Sandoval 1991/2009:340). While hegemonic (white) feminist praxis often uses a single-issue, single-approach politics – which Sandoval (1991/2009) identifies as equal rights, revolutionary, supremacism, and separatism – women of color feminists are able to “read the current situation of power and to self-consciously choose and adopt the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations” (Sandoval 1991/2009:348). As a result, women of color feminists to engage in fluid and coalitionary political activism. For example, at one moment women of color may build coalitions with white feminists to focus on reproductive rights and at other moments may work with men to address environmental racism (Hurtado 2000).

Muñoz (1999) highlights a strategic form of resistance that operates on its own terms, not according to the options provided by hegemonic discourses. Focusing on the work of queer artists of color, he defines disidentification as a “survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously” (Muñoz 1999:5). It is “the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz 1999:11). For oppressed groups, it is often not possible to identify with dominant

ideologies. For example, people of color are excluded by white supremacy. For some marginalized people, counteridentities serve as another source of exclusion. Straight and queer women of color in the groundbreaking anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015), wrote from a third space. They highlighted the ways that neither the white feminist movement nor racial justice movements were liberatory spaces and had to come together to create their own movement.

These Latina/x/o scholars provide a framework to conceptualize resistance strategies that are fluid, contextual, and “a political site for the third meaning” (Sandoval 2000:182). Third space, as a theoretical framework, allows for a more complex conceptualization and analysis of practices that reject dominant binaries and categories. Third spaces are not only physical spaces but also discursive spaces that are outside of already existing either/or situations. In this dissertation, I show how Latina community-engaged artists’ practices often create and work within third spaces in resistance to their marginalization and to build community.

Taken as a whole, I engage with the scholarship reviewed in this chapter to situate the importance and relevance of a study on Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago, and I draw from interdisciplinary scholarship to address the gaps in the sociological study of art and culture. Overall, this dissertation highlights Latina artists and their practices but also add complexity to the ways that art, culture, and Latina/x/o communities are understood. In order to make an academic intervention and answer my main research questions, I use ethnographic and visual research methods and a feminist decolonizing methodology. In the next chapter, I detail the methods and methodology that inform this dissertation.

III. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is informed by data collected through ethnographic and visual research methods.⁴ These methods best enabled me to answer my central research questions of: 1) Why do Latina artists practice and produce community-engaged art?; 2) Why and how are they marginalized in the arts and their communities?; 3) What explains the ways that they engage with various spaces and institutions?; and 4) How do they resist marginalization? I approached data collection using a feminist decolonizing methodology in order to produce ethical and non-exploitative research. In this chapter, I detail research methods, data, methodology, subjectivity, and research site.

A. Ethnography

I used ethnography to access what Robin D.G. Kelley (2002:9) calls “poetic knowledge” that “[enables] us to imagine a new society.” I conducted ethnographic research from May 2016 to September 2018. During this time, I lived in the Latina/x/o community of Pilsen. I attended art exhibitions, fundraisers, parties, DJ sessions, artist meetings, art collective meetings, studio visits, art project planning sessions, artist talks, community marches and actions, and community workshops and panels, among other events in which Latina community-engaged artists were active. While at or after these events, I took field notes of the spatial layout, attendees’ interactions, artwork, and conversations I had or overheard. I actively engaged with attendees, featured artists, and organizers. I do not name or give identifiable information about anyone who did not explicitly consent to being part of my research. For the purposes of this study, their individual information was not important, because I approached these situations as general scenes rather than about individual actors.

⁴ This research has been approved by the University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board (Protocol # 2016-0305)

This data allowed me to answer several of my central research questions. I observed the ways that Latina community-engaged artists work in and with various spaces and institutions and how they resist their marginalization. I was able to view the ways that they transformed spaces, how they interacted with various gatekeepers and audiences, how they engaged with hegemonic artistic standards and logics, and how community members reacted to their work. I was also able to be a participant in their practices and an audience member at different times to get a first-hand account of multiple viewpoints. Lastly, I benefitted from seeing how they answered community member's questions about their work, how they talked about their work, and motivations for their work. Much of this information may not have been accessible through other methods.

In-depth interviews allow informants to make meaning of their lives and experiences in their own words (Taylor et al 2015). This is a flexible and dynamic research method, because researchers can probe to request elaboration, clarification, and feedback on a developing analysis. I conducted in-depth formal interviews with 10 Latina community-engaged artists, had informal conversations with over 10 others, and collaborated with eight on art projects and community workshops. I also had informal conversations with dozens of individuals who were not Latina community-engaged artists throughout data collection. They provided insight about how artists with other kinds of practices and subjectivities experience arts institutions. This allowed me to better understand what is unique about Latina community-engaged artists. In-depth formal interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to three hours. Three artists were formally interviewed three times and three artists were interviewed two times. I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews. I interviewed artists in their homes and studios, my home, and coffee shops and restaurants. All formally interviewed artists provided written consent to use their real names in my research.

My first interviews with artists followed a life story format.⁵ The strength of the life story approach is that the act of telling one's life story is in itself a meaning-making process, which is a central interest for this study (Cotera 2008; Latina Feminist Group 2001). The life story approach allowed me to access the social origins of their practices and answer several central research questions. Their narratives of their childhoods and careers allowed them to consciously and unconsciously detail why they do community-engaged artwork, how and why they are marginalized in the arts, why they work in particular spaces and institutions, and how and why they resist structural marginalization. These interviews provided rich data on the ups and downs of being a community-engaged artist on the artists' terms. These interviews yielded data that I could have never accessed with standardized interview questions with specific goals. It was during tangential responses that I collected some of the most fruitful data. During several life story interviews, artists called them "therapeutic" and stated, "I have never said this out loud" or "I have never thought about [life event] in this way". Laughter, anger, and tears were present in many of these interview sessions. I believe the life story interview format created an environment where the artists could feel safe to be vulnerable about their lives and work.

Follow-up interviews allowed me to directly ask about topics covered in previous interviews or to pose new questions developed as a result of interviews with other artists or observations. The topics and goals of these interviews varied from artist to artist. For example, I used a follow up interview with one artist to focus on their institutional relationships because I did not feel like they gave much time to this topic in their life story interview. With another artist, I used the follow-up interview to ask directly about what happened the behind-the-scenes of a community exhibition that they curated at the National Museum of Mexican Art. These

⁵ See Appendix A for examples of interview guides.

interviews were shorter than life story interviews and involved more direct and structured questions.

B. Visual Methods

My focus on artists makes visual methods relevant and necessary to understand their practices, because artists are largely committed to the construction of images, whether it be on walls, paper, or canvas or within people's minds. When sociologists do use photos, they are often only used for illustrative purposes, but not as data in themselves (Parkin 2014). Photography can be used for documentation or systematic recording purposes (Wagner 1979). This can allow for heightened reflexivity and iterative analysis of the documented object or place (Banks 2007; Pink 2007). This can also be especially important in complex or busy research environments where the researcher cannot possibly observe everything relevant (Hartel and Thomson 2011:2221).

The artwork produced by Latina community-engaged artists, images produced by participants, and photographs that I took are data for my analysis. I took photos using an iPhone and a Canon Rebel T6i DSLR camera. All photos in public spaces excluded individuals' identifiable characteristics. Only those who had provided written consent to have their photo taken were included in my photographic data collection. For the most part, my photos were of spaces, architecture, and artwork, because scenes and artistic content were more important than individuals present in particular spaces. I only documented artwork myself when it was public, ephemeral, or not being documented by the artist. Otherwise, most documentation of artwork was provided by the artists. Overall, I have documentation of the work of 23 Latina community-engaged artists.

Visual methods provide a unique entry point to understand Latina community-engaged artists' marginalization, how they use artwork to resist marginalization, and what ideas inform their practices. What is it about their artwork that is vulnerable to marginalization? What topics are they addressing and how do they use artwork to address it? Artwork is a form of communication and it often communicates that which cannot be communicated in other ways. For example, what cannot be articulated in words can be expressed in painting or performance. Visual methods also allowed me to spend more time answering how they engage with space. I could spend more time analyzing photographs of spaces that are often ephemeral than I could while I was physically in the space. As a result, I was able to have a more complex understanding of how the artists engage spaces using visual methods. Lastly, visual methods complimented my ethnographic data. For example, artwork provided more context for interview data and interview data provided more context for artwork.

C. **Analysis**

I used interview transcripts, observations, field notes, and visual data to construct a story about Latina community-engaged artists and their work. I analyzed my data using iterative coding. The first stage of coding involved finding emergent themes throughout the data. In the second stage, I connected the various themes that have emerged. With each round of coding, I began to situate the data within larger theoretical concepts. Rather than forcing the data to fit into predetermined themes, I looked to the data to reveal what themes were important. I identified major themes and their connections through memo-writing (Charmaz 1983; Lofland et al. 2006). Within these memos I documented my emerging analyses of the data and the theories and themes that were becoming more salient.

D. The Artists

I define a “community-engaged artist” as an artist who regularly produces artwork, such as visual art, sculpture, photography, performance, music, or writing, for, in, *and* with community members.⁶ This does not include artists who simply exhibit their individual artwork in community spaces. For example, artists who show their work in community galleries or paint a mural in a public space are not necessarily “community-engaged artists”. To be engaged, one must collaborate with community members throughout their creative process. For some artists, they include community members in the initial planning of artwork and art events. Others have community members contribute to the production and execution of artwork and art events. For all community-engaged artists, the community is the central audience to whom they want their work to be relevant and useful. Some community-engaged artists are traditionally trained full-time artists (photographers, painters, sculptors, etc.) and art educators/teaching artists. Others are not formally trained nor professional artists but still regularly produce artwork.

All but one of the artists I interviewed are Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicana. The other is Puerto Rican. Their ages range from 31 to 64. Six have master’s degrees, two have bachelor’s degrees, and two do not have college degrees. Eight of them primarily grew up in the city of Chicago. The other two moved to Chicago as adults.

The vast majority of other Latina community-engaged artists whose work informs this study are Mexican/Mexican American/Chicana, followed by Puerto Rican, and then Central and South American ethnicities. Their ages range from their mid-20s to 50s, and most have college degrees. Some of them refused to be interviewed or did not respond to my requests. My data on these artists included, going to their events, having informal conversations with them, reading

⁶ See Appendix B for Interviewed Artist Information

and listening to interviews that they had given in podcasts, articles, and online publications, and viewing their publicly shared artwork. I found their work, experiences, and knowledge reinforced what I had learned from artists that I interviewed.

E. **Feminist Decolonizing Methodology**

I approached this dissertation with a feminist decolonizing methodology. I draw from the work of decolonial, postcolonial, and women of color feminists to formulate my methodology. Traditional research methods have been used to freeze, flatten, and oppress marginalized groups (Smith 1999/2012). De/post-colonial epistemologies provincialize positivism and Western systems of knowledge. Instead, they center and give value to non-Western ways of knowing, because Western positivist standards of evidence-based science, validity, generalizability, and replicability contribute to the erasure of marginalized people's voices (Cannella and Lincoln 2016). De/post-colonial epistemologies argue that true solutions to social inequities will come from within marginalized communities (Chandler and Lalonde 2004; Freire 2000; Smith 1999/2012). In their study of suicide rates among First Nations communities in British Columbia, Canada, Chandler and Lalonde (2004:118) argue, "to imagine that knowledge and problem-solving strategies evolved in native communities over hundreds of years have no legitimate pride of place at the transfer table of contemporary knowledge production and exchange is [hostile]." I do not assume that Latina community-engaged artists do not 1) know that they are marginalized, 2) know why they are marginalized, nor 3) know how to resist their marginalization.

Furthermore, I do not attempt to collect a data towards a representative sample of Latina community-engaged artists. As a way to work against the colonial practice of othering, homogenizing, and reinforcing boundaries, I aim to conduct an "ethnography of the particular"

(Abu-Lughod 1991:149). I carry out this study with the understanding that “the effects of extralocal and long-term processes are only manifested locally and specifically, produced in the actions of individuals living their particular lives, inscribed in their bodies and their words” (Abu-Lughod 1991:150). I use study participants’ particular experiences to better understand macro-level systems and processes.

A feminist decolonizing approach to ethnography is built on my belief that knowledge is expressed and constructed through dialogue (Anzaldúa 2012; Collins 2000; Davalos 2008) and that marginalized groups construct knowledge and theories through their everyday experiences and actions (Collins 1989). Latinas construct “a theory in the flesh” in which “the physical realities of our lives – our skin color, the land or concrete where we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015:19). Therefore, ethnographic methods and a form of what Jafari Allen (2011) calls “deep hanging out” allowed me to access and understand Latina community-engaged artists. By being present in informal and casual spaces that are not always explicitly connected to art production, I was able to see how particular everyday events highlight macro-level processes that act on artists. These everyday interactions and reactions illustrate larger structural concerns that underpin individuals’ self-making. The ways artists speak with peers, the stories they share, the jokes they tell, the ways others speak to and treat them are all important for a deeper understanding of their subjectivities and meaning-making. I view artists as individuals whose complexity is only partially captured through their art production. Furthermore, this form of research pushes back against positivist goals of separation and authority in favor of feminist values of connection, accountability, and proximity.

Visweswaran (1994) argues that researchers must be conscious of the role that betrayal can play during research. Artists' trust was central to this project. Therefore, I held myself to a higher ethical standard than any Institutional Review Board would. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I regularly checked-in with artist to be sure I was respecting their words, experiences, and artwork. There were a few times that I had misinterpreted my data or artists asked that I not use particular data. Some artists did not consent to having their real name used in my data, but later changed their minds and consented. Constant reflexivity allowed me to maintain trust and avoid betrayal. In the end, my A main goal of this research was to respect the knowledge and labor of Latina community-engaged artists and produce work that raises their voices. Constant reflexivity helped me maintain trust and avoid betrayal.

F. **Positionality**

When talking about my research, I have been asked why, as a Chicano man, I was focusing only on Latina women. My subjectivity no doubt impacted my interest in this study, my ability to collect data, and what kind of data I collected. It is necessary for me to intentionally engaged in constant self-reflexivity. I regularly reflected on how my subjectivity was shaping, increasing, and limiting what I was seeing, hearing, thinking, asking, and doing.

My choice of dissertation research was fundamentally decided by starting where I already was. As a Chicano living in a predominantly-Latina/x/o community that is set within the larger context of a racially hypersegregated Chicago, most of the community cultural spaces I encountered in my daily life were predominantly composed of other Latinas/xs/os. These spaces focused on issues, experiences, and histories specific to Latinas/xs/os. Consequently, I became most familiar with the experiences and practices of Latina/x/o artists.

My racial subjectivity was likely the biggest source of access and rapport. I had personally witnessed the discomfort that Latinas/xs/os felt when white researchers asked to observe community spaces or interview artists. They were not sure about what the researcher was going to do with the information, the researcher's personal and professional motivations, or what racialized assumptions the researcher held. Their reaction was to act and express their thoughts differently than they normally would. In my case, I was largely welcome in predominantly-Latina/x/o spaces. Latinas/xs/os were comfortable with my presence in public and private Latina/x/o spaces. In my interviews, there was an assumption that I understood the nuances and complexity of being Latina/x/o in the United States, that they could speak in Spanish, and that I would not perpetuate racist stereotypes. As a result, my participants were very open about their views of culture and racism and how it impacted their lives and practices. There were times that I believed participants were relying too much on assumptions of shared understanding that I had to explicitly ask them to elaborate and explain. For example, "you know how that goes" or "you know what it feels like" were warnings that I had to ask them to explain to me what they knew or felt.

Being a sociology graduate student also facilitated connections with Latina community-engaged artists. Most had attended college and graduate school. As a result, we shared experiences of being Latina/o within predominantly white higher education institutions. We shared passions for critical intellectual inquiry. In fact, I organized reading groups and workshops with Latina/x/o artists in which we collectively engaged with history, theories, and empirical research. My specific academic interests in theories and research on white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, and other systems of oppression were also

foundational to my shared rapport with artists who did not attend college but were intellectually active.

Prior to conceptualizing this study, I had built relationships and attended and contributed labor to community events. I was already in community with many Latina/x/o artists and activists. So, for many participants, I was not a stranger who had just showed up one day to conduct research. We were already friends, community members, or comrades, rather than researcher and participant. They already knew my political values, views, and goals. Despite Chicago being a large city, the Latina/x/o arts world is relatively small. As a result, for participants that I did not already know, we were usually connected by a shared friend. This person usually acted as a mediator and vouched for me. Already knowing me, seeing me at events, or hearing about me from trusted sources facilitated the most important component of a successful and ethical research project – trust. Trust provided me access to private spaces, artists, and conversations not possible for many other researchers.

Notwithstanding these relationships and my access relative to other researchers, I did not have complete access to all private and social spaces. I was still a graduate student who had not grown up in Chicago and was not a practicing artist. Latina community-engaged artists' closest relationships involve people they grew up with, other active artists, and people they regularly work with. I did not fall into any of these categories. So, there is much about their everyday lives and work that I did not and could not access.

Despite being Chicano, my feminist ideals, my own personal sense of comfort with women, or my familiarity, occupying a different gender subjectivity than Latina artists was likely the biggest reason my participants withheld or edited what they shared. In the end, I would never truly understand the complexity and nuance of their gendered subjectivities, nor would I have

access to social spaces among Latina artists that were for women and femmes only. I would never be privy to more open conversations about gender oppression and marginalization that take place in these spaces. While all participants were extremely generous and open with me, I would not be so foolish as to believe that I had the same access as a Latina/ would have had.

Lastly, I used resources available to me as a result of my position as an academic to benefit participants. I bought artwork from participants, paid them to share their work in classes I taught, promoted their work to my students, introduced them to other opportunities for paid work, donated to their fundraisers, and shared my knowledge of how to navigate higher education. I will always feel indebted to participants, but I did as much I could. The opportunities this dissertation will provide me will be passed on to those who made this dissertation possible.

G. **Research Site**

The site of this study is Chicago, Illinois. According to the 2010 US Census, 28.9% of Chicago's population is Latina/x/o – the largest racial/ethnic minority group. Chicago has the fourth largest Latina/x/o population in the US, and 79% are of Mexican descent. Chicago has some of the largest Mexican and Puerto Rican populations in the United States – fourth largest of both groups (Brown and Lopez 2013). The presence of large Mexican and Puerto Rican populations makes Chicago unlike any other major city in the US. Mexicans were the first major wave of Latinas/xs/os to migrate to Chicago beginning in 1916 (Innis-Jiménez 2013). Puerto Ricans, the second largest Latina/x/o group in Chicago, make up 10% of Chicago Latinas/xs/os and first came in large numbers during the late 1940s (Fernandez 2012). The mixture of various Latin American groups has led to “Latino” being a common self-identification among 2nd and 3rd generation Latinas/xs/os in Chicago (Flores-Gonzalez 1999).

There is a long history of Latina/x/o activism in Chicago. In 1949, Mexican-Americans created the Mexican American Council to fight for the citizenship rights of US citizens of Mexican descent (Fernandez 2012). Additionally, Mexican youth in Chicago were politicized by the Chicano rights movement. They formed chapters of the Brown Berets and La Raza Unida Party (Fernandez 2012). They were fighting for improvements of their educational, healthcare, labor, and housing opportunities. The exploitation of Mexican workers in local tortilla factories was also a major point of activism in the predominantly Mexican Pilsen neighborhood (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). However, Mexicans were not the only Latina/x/o activists in Chicago. Puerto Ricans on Chicago's north side also organized.

Tired of violence and displacement through Mayor Daley's urban renewal programs, Puerto Rican youth formed a group called the Young Lords Organization in the 1960s (Fernandez 2012). This group started as a street gang but quickly developed a political consciousness, thanks to YLO leaders José "Cha Cha" Jiménez and Ralph Rivera and national and local political conditions of the 1960s (Vietnam War, Black Power Movement, Chicano Rights Movement, etc.). The YLO tried to rebrand themselves as a community organization that advocated for the needs of low-income Puerto Ricans in Chicago. As Rúa (2012) shows, Puerto Ricans were consistently subject to police brutality, urban renewal/removal, and gentrification. Lincoln Park, Uptown, and recently Logan Square are some examples of neighborhoods once inhabited by Puerto Ricans that are now some of the wealthier and Whiter neighborhoods of Chicago. Residents were pushed out by rising rents, rising property taxes, and opportunistic landlords. In July 2001, 300 Logan Square residents marched in a funeral procession mourning the loss of housing (Rúa 2012:52).

While Latinas/xs/os have been externally racialized as a single, sometimes homogenous, group (Forbes 1992; Oboler 1995; Saragoza et al. 1992), they also take an active role in defining and shaping what it means to be Latina/x/o and who is Latina/x/o (Aparicio 2016; Flores-González 1999). In Chicago, “Latino” became a way through which Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Spanish-speaking ethnic groups in Chicago could understand themselves as sharing certain political goals and organize to attain them (Padilla 1985). Chicago Latinas/xs/os were largely mobilized during the early 1970s around Affirmative Action policies in order to gain more Latina/x/o presence in various government institutions (Padilla 1985). But *latinidad* in Chicago is not only deployed for situational political purposes, and it is not free of conflict and tensions. The experiences, practices, and identities of Chicago Latinas/xs/os reveal that *latinidad* is “a particular geopolitical experience but it also contains within it the complexities and contradictions of immigration, (post) (neo) colonialism, race, color, legal status, class, nation, language and the politics of location” (Rodríguez 2003:9-10).

Latinidad’s complexities and contradictions consist of the simultaneous existence of panethnic harmony and cultural nationalism (García and Rúa 2007). In Chicago, *latinidad* includes how Latinas/xs/os create symbolic boundaries between their group other Latina/x/o ethnic groups (García 2012; Pérez 2003) and the identity construction of Latinas/xs/os of multiple national origins, such as MexiRicans and EcuadoRicans (Aparicio 2016, 2019; Rúa 2001). Furthermore, panethnic and ethnically-specific Latina/x/o cultural events in Chicago expose the ways in which *latinidad* entails moments of intracommunity differences become sources of conflict at times and solidarity at others (García and Rúa 2007). For example, while cars drive up and down 26th Street in Little Village honking their horns while flying large Mexican flags to celebrate Mexican Independence Day, other Central American flags, whose

countries also celebrate independence around the same time, also regularly participate in this public performance. It becomes a performance of Latina/x/o pride instead of specifically Mexican pride. Conversely, events marketed as panethnic Latina/x/o celebrations can end up privileging specific groups, such as Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, and marginalizing other Latinas/xs/os (García and Rúa 2007). The tensions of panethnic Latina/x/o solidarity and cultural nationalism are most visually apparent in public art in Chicago's Latina/x/o communities.

Chicago has a long history of community art, because Blacks and Latinas/xs/os used the arts to carve a place within Chicago where they could belong. Along with attempting to narrate their communities' stories, these artists used various media (mural, mosaics, sculpture, landscaping, etc.) in order to show that these communities had the power to shape the physical spaces they lived within (Gude and Huebner 2000). These community-based art practices countered the exclusive culture of downtown institutional art culture (Grams 2010). Those who were not and could not be represented within the city's main arts institutions had a place within community arts projects. Many used murals as a way to call attention to the dehumanizing conditions that Blacks and Latinas/xs/os faced in the city. For example, the *Wall of Respect*, created by twenty artists from the Visual Art Workshop of the Organization for Black American Culture, was a mural painted on the 43rd Street Community Organization's building on the South Side of Chicago. It displayed the images of black heroes, such as Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Stokely Carmichael, Muhammad Ali, Nina Simone, Gwendolyn Brooks, and other important Black figures (Grams 2010:57). The lead muralist, William Walker, was influenced by the work of Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros (Gude and Huebner 2000:17).

Chicago Latinas/xs/os have a particular relationship to public arts and activism. Starting in the 1960s, Mexican American artists in the Southwest Side neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village painted murals to express cultural heritage and activist struggles particular to their communities. Mario Castillo and local youth painted some of the first Latina/x/o community murals in the United States in 1968 and 1969, and in 1970, Raymond Patlán painted the building of Casa Aztlán in Pilsen with images of important Latina/x/o revolutionary figures (Gude and Huebner 2000:19). In Humboldt Park, Puerto Rican artists painted murals of Puerto Rican nationalist figures and events, such as the image of Don Pedro Albizu Campos (who was against US imperialism and colonialism in Puerto Rico), while also addressing issues of urban removal and absentee landlords (Gude and Huebner 2000:20).

Chicago's Latina/x/o muralism grew with the creation of artist collectives and networks, such as the Movimiento Artístico Chicano (MARCH), that has led to the centrality of public community art in Latina/x/o neighborhoods through the city (Gude and Huebner 2000). Among that many important murals in Pilsen, one example is "Alto al Deplazamiento Urbano de Pilsen/Stop Gentrification in Pilsen" completed in 1997 by Hector Duarte and other artists from Taller Mestizarte – José Guerrero, Jesús Gonzalez, Luis Montenegro, Jose Piño, Mariah de Forest, and others. This mural used the eagle image from the United Farm Workers and shows Mexican Pilsen residents organizing and marching to keep their jobs and housing "despite the clawing threat of real estate speculators and city bureaucrats" and also depicts the struggles of eloteros (street pushcart vendors) who face city restrictions on their ability to make a living (Gude and Huebner 2000:116). Another Pilsen mural, "Prevent World War III" painted by a group of muralists – Marcos Raya, Celia Radek, Mark Rogovin, Rich Capalbo, Caryl Yasko, José Guerrero, Roman Villarreal, Rey Vasquez, and Carlos Cortez – in 1980 addresses the plight

of Latin American countries dealing with US-installed dictators, the US's "Plan Colombia", and other issues that arise from US imperialism in Latin America (Gude and Huebner 2000:126). This long history of Latina/x/o community-based art makes Chicago a prime location to study Latina activist artists.

My research methods and methodology have informed the findings in the following substantive chapters. I seek to provide an understanding of their practices and experiences that highlights the knowledge they shared with me and complicates our understanding of art, culture, and Latinas/xs/os. Overall, I demonstrate the impact that race, gender, and class have on artistic production and practice and how Latina community-engaged artists strategically find ways to minimize and resist structural marginalization. The next chapter explores the social origins of Latina artists community-engaged practices.

IV. “*TODO TIENE UN ARTE*”: BECOMING A LATINA COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTIST

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bourdieu (1993) cites the habitus as a one of the central explanans of individual practices. Habitus is particularly important for my analysis of Latina community-engaged artists, because it requires scholars to socially and historically contextualize the tastes, manners, habits, and predispositions of individuals. In this chapter, I examine the various cultural and social experiences that inform Latina community-engaged artists’ practices. I find that their decisions to practice community-engaged art are not simply a matter of conscious political or personal beliefs. Instead, their practices are informed by their artistic habitus. Their social backgrounds, consciously and unconsciously, influence their views of art, and their marginalized subjectivities have led them to practice art in a way that runs counter to hegemonic artistic norms.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that the habitus, rather than being an inherent, essential characteristic, is constructed from the social conditions of one’s life. His work largely focuses on class conditions and how they shape individuals’ tastes and dispositions. However, other scholars have extended his work to show how various other social positions (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, colonial status, etc.) also play a central role in the shaping of one’s habitus (Decoteau 2013). For Latina community-engaged artists, race, gender, and class all play central roles in laying the foundation for how they understand the connections between art, everyday life, community, politics, and culture. When asked how they became interested in art and why they chose to become artists, they describe experiences that have little-to-nothing to do with mainstream art institutions, famous artists, or formal artistic training. One would assume that they would talk about how they went to a museum and were inspired by a famous impressionist

or had learned about a famous artist in their art classes. Instead, Latina community-engaged artists recount everyday experiences in their neighborhoods or with their families that laid the foundation for their future as artists.

Many Latina community-engaged artists did not first want to be artists and then later discovered that they wanted to do community-engaged work. Nor did they start out wanting to do community-engaged work and then found art to be the way in which they would do this work. Art and community engagement could not be separated from each other in their life experiences. In fact, art was simply inseparable from every aspect of life. One artist explained, “I don’t mean to sound ridiculous but I think I was introduced to art the minute I was born, because I think about what it means to be exposed to things, to experience them, and to create experiences as a result of that... just sort of being born into this world where everything is unfamiliar and then creating and naming these experiences.” Experiencing new things every day and understanding those experiences is an artistic process. Their race, gender, and class all played central roles in their life experiences and thus in the shaping of their artistic habitus. And this habitus influences their art practices. I find that Latina community-engaged artists grew up with art being central in two everyday processes: marginalization and the construction and maintenance of community. This informed the artistic habitus they developed and led them to become community-engaged artists.

A. **Marginalization**

For Latina community-engaged artists, art has never simply been a hobby or a privilege that was disconnected from larger structural conditions. Art and creativity have always been deeply intertwined with the struggles and joys of everyday life. Latina community-engaged artists each have their own story of how art has always been intricately tied to the material

conditions of their lives and their objective position within the field of power. In order to deal with and minimize the harms of poverty, racism, sexism, and displacement, they grew up creating abundance out of scarcity and joy out of monotony.

1. **Motherwork**

Mothers are central to many Latina community-engaged artists' development. Silvia says, "Art is everything! And that's something that grew up with my mother telling me. Like there's an art of cooking. There's an art of walking. She would always tell me that there's an art to dishwashing. '*Todo tiene un arte.*' You know, everything is an art." And 64-year-old Pilsen community elder, educator, and artist Diana Solis cites her mother as an important influence in her work. Her mother, while not an artist, always encouraged Diana and her siblings "to study arts, to study music, to look at literature... my mom was a super compassionate woman and very passionate also about things... always 'you need to help other people. You need to give this. You need to be conscientious about what is going on around your community.'"

Collins (1994) argues that mothers of color perform "motherwork" in order to ensure their children's and community's survival. Mothers are central to the survival, empowerment, and identity of communities of color. Motherwork rejects the social construction of private/public and family/work as separate spheres. Women of color have used motherwork to equip their children with the skills to creatively challenge systems of oppression and inequality (Collins 1994: 58-9). Latina community-engaged artists' mothers practiced motherwork as a form of pedagogy. Villenas et al. (2006) argue that Chicana/Latina everyday practices are forms of education and reenvision "sites of pedagogy to include women's brown bodies and their agency articulated on the church steps, the university cafeteria, and in the intimate spaces where *mujer-to-mujer* conversations are whispered" (3). Through everyday practices, Latina

community-engaged artists' mothers enacted "pedagogies of the home" that "provide strategies of resistance" to survive and challenge dominant norms, ideologies, and structures (Bernal 2006; Villenas 2006). Unlike Chicana/Latina mothers that Anzaldúa (2012) describes in *Borderlands* or the working-class dynamics described by Valdés (1996), Latina community-engaged artists' mothers did not simply enforce and transmit oppressive heteropatriarchal ideologies onto their daughters. Instead, they did motherwork in a "borderlands," a "third space" where they were taught to creatively negotiate and strategize ways to survive and thrive (Villenas 2006). This was reflected in Latina community-engaged artists' childhoods.

Many of them grew up seeing their parents, often their mothers, creatively navigate the limitations that poverty placed on them. They had to "make do" with the little that they did have available to them. As a fourth grader, 31-year-old Victoria Martinez was invited to participate in a school program where students would travel across Europe. The cost was \$5000, far too expensive for her family. Victoria's parents told her no. "I was crushed but my mom took me to the thrift store here in Pilsen and she bought some toys for me and I was super happy playing with them." She cites these early skill-building experiences as important for her artistic ability to improvise with whatever materials she has available to her. For example, at her art school "there was a shelf called the free shelf. So, all these students would throw away all of their materials and I thought it was crazy! But then again I thought it was awesome because I was always broke. I needed materials often." Thirty-three-year-old Paulina Camacho Valencia's mother could not afford to buy her and her three siblings new clothes. Instead, she was a seamstress and made clothes for her children. From this, Paulina she learned "how to be self-sufficient and figure things out. Like how to be creative out of necessity." Beyond art and creativity being hobbies or

pastimes, Paulina and Victoria experienced art and creativity as necessities in order to navigate a world that, as a result of their social positions, did not provide them with the resources needed.

The practice of taking whatever is available and creatively using them is a common practice within working-class Mexican and Mexican American communities. For many Latina community-engaged artists, a *rasquache* sensibility is central to their understandings of art. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (1989:5) defined “*rasquachismo*” as “neither an idea nor a style but an attitude or a taste”. This taste is a “visceral response to a lived reality, not an intellectual cognition” and results in “a view from *los de abajo*. An attitude rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability.” In Bourdieusian terms, *rasquachismo*, as a disposition shaped by dominant structures, is a *habitus*. However, this *habitus* is not solely shaped by class. *Rasquachismo* is a *habitus* that results from the articulation of race, ethnicity, and class, because it is something specifically rooted in a working-class Mexican/Mexican American experience of marginalization. *Rasquachismo* further exemplifies its articulated nature by the value it gives to mixtures and confluence. “Communion is preferred over purity.” (Ybarra-Frausto 1989:6). Therefore, *rasquachismo* is kind of *habitus* that would lead one to have a practice of articulation.

The *rasquache* are “down but not out” resilient survivors who are resourceful and inventive by using “spit, grit, and movidas” to hold together “an environment always on the edge of coming apart” (Ybarra-Frausto 1989:5). It is not a purely aesthetic taste but an active challenge to marginalization and dominant groups who find “solace in less exuberant, more muted and ‘purer’ traditions” (idib.). *Rasquaches* use bright colors, high intensity, sparkles, and shimmers to combat the ways dominant systems of oppression try to mute, make somber, and subdue their lives. Therefore, *rasquachismo* not only addresses the material reality of oppression but also the affectual consequences of marginalization.

2. Affect

In addition to material consequences, racism, sexism, and classism all have affectual consequences on those marginalized by these systems. That is to say, to be poor, to be black or brown, and to be a woman all have negative effects on how people feel. Ahmed (2014) posits an “outside in” response the traditional “inside out” view of emotion. Emotions are often viewed as originating within individuals and then move out towards other people and objects. Ahmed (2014) argues that there is a “sociality of emotion,” meaning emotions are social and cultural practices. Similarly, Cvetkovich (2012) seeks to shift our understanding of depression and racialized sadness from biochemical imbalances to the result of historical and contemporary structural social violence. Furthermore, Muñoz (2000) argues that race and ethnicity can be understood as “affective difference”. He explains, “by which I mean the ways in which various historically coherent groups ‘feel’ differently and navigate the material world on a different emotional register” (2000:70). Therefore, *latinidad*, or brownness, is not simply something people are (fixed); it is what people do (performative). And the feelings that arise from a particular historical social position are not individual psychological issues. “Brown feelings are not individualized affective particularity; they more nearly express... a larger collective mapping of self and other” (Muñoz 2006:679). While much of the feminist work on Latina/Chicana mother-daughter relationships centers on suffering, pain, and anger, the artists in my study often discussed their relationships with their mothers as based in feelings of joy, fun, magic, and love.

Many of the artists in this study grew up working-class and found art and creativity central to how they experienced joy in neighborhoods in which there were little opportunities for youth to have joy. As young teen, 40-year-old Maria Gaspar was quoted in a local newspaper article. She lamented that her mother would not allow her to go to a nearby mall to hang out with

her friends. The route to get there might be too dangerous. Other Latina community-engaged artists grew up in similar conditions. Art and creativity were the main ways that they were able to experience positive emotions in environments with few opportunities to feel them.

Paulina's mother used art and creativity to shield her four children from the negative affectual consequences of poverty. "My mom really kept us from experiencing our poverty in like super creative ways." For example, her mother would recycle old bras, cardboard boxes, aluminum foil, and other everyday items to make toys and Halloween costumes. Paulina saw how art and creativity brought joy and entertainment in a society where material reality of poverty often results in leisure, entertainment, and joy not being privileges that are easily accessible to low-income individuals. "Everything was free. She just started asking and finding resources and exposing us to these things. And she would take us to poetry readings or take us to exhibitions and take us to museums. You know, we lived on the bus and like had those free passes. We were exposed to a ton of shit because my mom was trying to find a way to keep four kids entertained."

Similarly, Maria also grew up seeing her mother use art and creativity to resist the affectual consequences of structural marginalization. Maria's earliest memories with creativity were the "very creative Mexican knick-knacks that [my mother] would make at home. She was really good at making really boring things become really beautiful. And maybe I didn't think they were that amazing. But the way she would look at them and the way she would talk about them and the way she would *lovingly* talk about them then they really felt more magical to me." The beauty of her mother's creations was felt. Maria's mother taught her that art and creativity were not just about visual aesthetics and the physical utility of the production. Art was to be *felt*.

Art was supposed to make people *feel* something. Her memories of her mother's creations involved joy, love, and magic.

Furthermore, Victoria argues that the arts are necessary for Black and Latina/x/o youth to process and understand the affectual violence that racism and poverty has in their lives.

“They really need it as a form of expression, because often times in academic studies like math and science and other subjects, those are necessary subjects, but I don't feel that they allow people to reflect and think deeply about their feelings. And coming from a Mexican background and also having some relationships with the Black community. Like we go through a lot of traumatic experiences and a lot discrimination and it's not fair but also the arts can help alleviate some of those feelings.”

This understanding comes as a result of Victoria's own experience of losing a friend to gang violence weeks before she left for college. “I think honestly now that I look back. I feel like my first two years at MCAD [Minneapolis College of Art and Design] were a healing process.”

3. **Struggles as Women and Mothers**

For 37-year-old Vanessa Sanchez, art was an important way to address the intersecting violence of immigration policies, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence. As a young woman, her partner was abusive but also undocumented and the father of her child. So, a lot of her artwork was about the various questions her relationship brought up.

“It was a lot about “what happens if you go back?” A lot of those kind of drawings. Of him going back and I was like being torn apart. And then when we had a kid together, it was again about that whole like “ok we have a kid, what will happen if you're gone or something happens?” And then we broke up and it was this whole other thing about being a mom, being a woman, being a leader, being strong. I don't talk so much about the abusive relationship and now lately I feel like I need to let it out.”

Art allowed her to confront the realities of the various forms of violence that came as a result of immigration policies and gender. Being a woman and have a child with a man who was undocumented but also abusive subjected her to intersecting violences from multiple structures. Art served as a way to navigate the various affectual consequences of instability that resulted from domestic violence, motherhood, and immigration policies.

Similarly, Teresa Magaña, a 40-year-old self-taught Chicana artist who runs a community art shop and gallery in Pilsen, used art as an aspect of her motherwork. It was not until she was in her 30s that she started painting and doing other visual creative projects. “It actually initially started with doing projects with my kids. I felt like they were becoming very disconnected from the cultura and I know I went through that in my teens. So, when I saw that happening, I started coming up with projects for them.” Art became a way for her to connect with her children, connect her children to their culture, and for them to collectively learn more about their culture. She continues, “But also within that time frame life happens. I was going through a divorce, and I was going through different family situations.” And like Vanessa, she used visual arts as a way to not only deal with problems in her life but also served as a pathway to a new career.

4. **Displacement**

This is why many Latina community-engaged artists used art as a way to address feelings of not belonging to a community, feeling displaced or out-of-place. Paulina immigrated to the United States from Mexico as a young child and did not speak English. She remembers not being able to communicate with her teacher that she needed to use the bathroom and ended up urinating on herself. She was an immigrant while her friends were mostly 2nd and 3rd generation. She was really into punk music in an urban, working-class Latina/x/o community where you were, as Maria put it, “either a gangbanger or preppy”. Both Maria and Paulina did not fit into the prescribed, pre-approved identities in their neighborhood. They did not feel particularly connected to the social groups available to them. Paulina says, “I think as a kid I was also very frustrated with feeling limited by these definitions of identity. Like the cliquy-ness of things or the like ‘you have to be this or that’. And I really pushed back against that.” This discomfort came from her feeling of being out of place transnationally. “I was also super aware that when I

went to México, because my family traveled back and forth to México often like at least once a year. So, I think as a teenager that's where I really began to think about this 'I'm not from here, I'm not from there.' Like I'm kind of in this in-between space and I don't really know what to define it." An in-betweenness is shared by other Latina community-engaged artists who had transnational upbringings.

Gloria Anzaldúa's (2012) theories of the "borderlands," "nepantla," and "la conciencia de la mestiza" has been foundational to Latina/Chicana feminist scholarship. Her work has been central to the theorization about the experience of living in liminal spaces. She speaks to the experience of feeling between cultures, rejected by both, and without a sense of "home". Latina/Chicana feminists have theorized about the ways that Latinas/Chicanas in the United States have suffered and had to develop new identities and strategies to resist the violence of living in "una herida abierta" (Anzaldúa 2012:25).

Thirty-one-year-old Silvia González grew up moving between Chicago and Mexico for the first ten years of her life. When she would return to Chicago, she would be placed in an ESL [English as Second Language] class and felt a sense of not belonging. Her and her ESL classmates struggled to communicate with their teachers and each other. This had a profound impact on her artwork. Throughout her life, her art has always been about trying to understand and unpack these feelings she had and trying to connect to a group or community. "It was hard because I never fit in. Even sometimes I struggled fitting in Latinx spaces... I didn't have a good solid, core group of women of color that I could turn to. I had some people but I don't know I felt like everything was sort of moving fast."

Paulina, Silvia, and other Latina community-engaged artists found Chicana artists who spoke to their experiences of in-betweenness. Silvia was heavily impacted by reading Chicana

artists like Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Cisneros. She began to take on “nepantlera” (living in the liminal space, not being from here nor there) as an identity. Finding this gave her so much relief, because “I think for so long I was like ‘who am I?’ ‘why am I so different?’ ‘why am I always thought of as so different?’ and ‘why am I struggling so much to communicate what I want to communicate?’ Or it was just this very ‘other’. So now I can use that space to navigate it myself and find that to be very exciting.”

In addition to helping them navigate displacement, art was central to their ability to feel some kind of sense of “home”. Silvia recounts:

Art class was the one place where I didn’t have to necessarily talk or give an answer. I could just make something and look at what the teacher was making and what the other students were making and try to follow along... That’s where I started to feel like I feel accepted here. I don’t have to pretend to be someone else in order to belong. I don’t have to assimilate to their school’s way of thinking. I can just be and make and experiment.

Art was often the first and only space where Latina community-engaged artists felt connected to other individuals. Art served as a language through which they could communicate with others, build connections, and resist their marginalization.

Artists that moved within the United States also learned that art allowed them to find a sense of acceptance. When Victoria went to Minneapolis for art school, it was the first time she was not among other Latinas/xs/os. She realized, “ok I go to a white art school and it’s hard to communicate with them what I’m trying to express. And that was the first time that I ever experienced that feeling. So immediately after I was like I have to find a job outside this school in the neighborhood that allows me to work with people who aren’t part of the institution. I ended up teaching a community arts-based class down the street from MCAD.” While she spoke English, she still found it difficult to communicate with individuals not from her racial, ethnic, or class background. Art allowed her to find and connect with those who shared similar

backgrounds. Using art to build and maintain a sense of community is another process that art was deeply linked to in Latina community-engaged artists' lives.

5. Addressing Systems of Oppression

Latina community-engaged artists did not only address their own individual struggles. Many saw art as a way to actually do something to change systems of oppression. As a young artist-in-training, Victoria began to ask, "Like ok there's all these oppressive things that go on. But what do I do? Do I dwell on them? Do I make art to respond? Or do I actually take action and try to alleviate the situations through the arts or protest by teaching and making?" Art was not just a shield for individuals to protect themselves from or limit the consequences of being in marginal positions within the field of power. Art could be used to dismantle and challenge dominant structures and systems.

Nicole Marroquín, a 49-year-old Chicana, grew up around artists who were explicitly doing radical political artwork. So, for her, art was never something separate from everyday life and politics. Furthermore, she grew up in non-traditional schools. For example, her preschool had a radical Leftist baker with beads in their beard teach the students how to bake bread. Art was integrated into every class she took. She recalls:

"I went to a really radical leftist public high school called Commie High, Community High. I went to the first open elementary school in the country too. All multi-grade, hippie, rad, everything. Really radical art teacher. Beautiful stuff. Everything was aligned. Like the work that she made vision was aligned with the way that you want society to become. It was so huge. And the only reason I found out that all that stuff I was doing was unusual was when I left. I didn't even know. I thought everybody had this."

For her high school Creative Problem Solving class, one of the assignments was to participate in a die-in in which students took over six lanes of traffic in front of the police station.

Consequently, art and creativity were always connected to politics, learning, and everyday life.

Throughout our conversation she often ended long stories about political actions or experiences

of marginalization with “but none of that is separate from art,” because art is both about looking in and connecting to that which is outside of us.

B. **Construction and Maintenance of Community**

Latina community-engaged artists define “community” as a network of relationships between various individuals – a social space. It is not just a physical space. Building and maintaining relationships between individuals was another everyday process central to the development of their artistic habitus. Art was not an individual enterprise, nor did it result in individuals becoming isolated from each other. Art was seen as the conduit through which individuals become further connected to each other and communities are built. This started at a young age for many Latina community-engaged artists. They were exposed to art bringing people together, or they saw their community as being represented by or entwined with the art that they encountered daily.

1. **Making Community**

Maria credits her mother as an important inspiration for her creative development, particularly her mother’s use of art and creativity to engage and build community. Maria was born 10-15 years after her siblings. Consequently, her mother was at a different phase of her life, which included being more independent and trying new careers. For example, when Maria was young her mother went to clown school to learn how to be a party clown. Her mother would perform at various parties around the neighborhood always bringing young Maria to perform with her as a “mini me”. She would dress Maria and paint Maria’s face in a way that matched her own costume. Maria has memories of children her age poking her and her clown wig while she hid behind her mother.

But this experience had a profound impact on how Maria understood the relationship between art and community. “I never articulated this before. I think I was always conscientious of her audience. I saw people being happy, people responding to her animal balloons or her little clown tricks and stuff. Like I saw a lot of joy in the room because of what she was doing. So, I think I was both interested in how creative she was but also thinking a lot about the engagement piece. So, I feel like in a way my mom was, there was something about her charisma and her ability to present something that was partly the fascinating piece to me.” She was also conscious of the audience at her mother’s other creative job.

Maria’s mother also had two radio shows that were part of a community arts radio program at the Boys and Girls Club in her neighborhood. One was a Latina women’s health program and the other was a Spanish language poetry show in which Maria’s mom would use a “sexy voice” and use Maria’s name as her sexy radio persona. “Even though I didn’t get to see her audience on the radio, I knew there were listeners because they would call in. And then sometimes I would hear her voice when we were home and then I became the audience.” Although embarrassing at the time to hear her mother speak in a sexy voice on the radio, she learned that art, performance, and poetry were central to cultivating community and connecting to others. This continued as she began producing art regularly.

2. **Finding a Creative Community**

When Maria participated in her first mural project at 14-years-old, she considered herself a “weird teenage kid” who was experimental in the way she dressed and thought. The lead artist was an older white woman who validated her “weirdness”, such as buying the same silver lipstick that Maria wore. Additionally, as a high school senior, she met an older Latina artist who was very inviting and showed Maria that an artistic life is a collective life. Maria remembers:

She would just be like ‘Come over to my house. Can you help me finish this other project?’ And I was like hell yeah! And then she’d be like ‘come eat with me!’ OK! and I’d be upstairs hanging out with her husband and other artists came in... I think what happened was that I really witnessed that artists were living artistic lives 24/7. It wasn’t a job, it wasn’t a thing you had to do. It was totally embedded in their life. They were having parties and social gatherings and interesting people were coming over and Aztec dancing and then there’s a print show. It was all these things and I guess for me it was like oh this is really cool that an artist can be around all this culture. That artists can produce culture in these different ways and people want to come and be part of the culture. So, it felt to me that it was all mixed up and beautiful. And that’s then when I was like oh this is cool. I like this. This is what I want to do, too.

Through her relationships with community artists, she learned about her connection to a larger cultural and historical community. She started doing Mexica dancing at 17 and went to sweat lodges to learn more about the spiritual aspect of her cultural background and identity as a Mexican American woman.

Latina community-engaged artists often describe art programs as a place where they felt accepted and part of a community. Even though Maria went to a selective-enrollment high school that is known for its strength in math and science, she says, “I just found refuge in the art department and they were very accepting and very nice and weird. That I just found a space there and I really liked it there. So that was my refuge... The art department was really like my savior in a way.” Unfortunately, not all Latina community-engaged artists can find that acceptance in their public school arts programs. Paulina did not have a good relationship with her high school art teacher, because “She was really prescriptive in her method... and if it wasn’t in her style, her method, her way, she really pushed back... And there was only one way... She wanted my finished pieces to look in one particular style. And that wasn’t my style.” This approach to art did not fit Paulina’s experience in other arts spaces in which she was allowed to be flexible and experiment. Therefore, she found community in other arts programs.

Many of Latina community-engaged artists participated in various youth art programs throughout the city. These programs were structured to promote the creation of art in

experimental, open, and collective ways. These were spaces where young people could just be “weird,” as many phrased it. One program is Marwen, which is a free arts program for young people grades 6-12. Paulina found this space to be an important community:

Marwen was kind of really this amazing safe haven for me. And then I also met a bunch of other young people who were also a little bit odd and a little bit different and were asking similar questions about the world that I was asking in similar ways. Who were observant about things and who were just like ‘hey what do you think about that?’ and it was ok to be a little different and weird... I didn’t really value community or community work until I didn’t have it. And then I realized, oh shit, Marwen was my community, I had multiple types of communities. And it wasn’t until I didn’t have it that I was just like fuck, this sucks.

It was at Marwen that Silvia was building community with people who were not only active artists but also educators. This had a profound impact on her and her current practice as an art educator. “But I’ve also been able to be part of art spaces that also allow me to do multiple things. Like Marwen was a space where I was like I don’t have to pay anything. I can do it all. I can just do whatever. And if I don’t like it, then I can make that decision.” This arts program and ones that other Latina community-engaged artists attended, such as Yollocalli, were important to both their individual artistic development and their development of a creative, intellectual, and social community that supported and contributed to their understanding of art.

Places like Marwen and Yollocalli are exceptional art spaces in Chicago. They did not operate on traditional models of arts education. Students are not taught to produce art according to Eurocentric artistic values. Students are viewed as already having skills and ideas. Marwen and Yollocalli give students the resources, space, community, and guidance with which their skills can improve. Most importantly, access to this space is free. Non-profit arts organizations become even more important in a context in which public school arts programs are often the first to be cut during budget issues. In 2013, over one hundred arts teachers were laid off (Fang 2013) and Chicago Public Schools has regularly cut arts programming. The continued underfunding of

arts programming in public schools, especially at predominantly working-class Black and Latina/x/o schools, led Chance the Rapper to raise and donate millions of dollars for arts programming in 2017 (Best 2017).

Throughout Latina community-engaged artists' lives, art was an important way that they connected with people and became accepted into a community outside of arts institutions. Silvia, who was put in ESL classes when she returned to Chicago from Mexico, used art to make her first friend in Chicago, who was from Yugoslavia. Even though neither of them spoke the same language, they used art and creativity to communicate, perform, and build a friendship. Thirty-five-year-old Amara Betty Martín had been separated from art for several years until she ran into an old friend from high school who had founded an art collective. He invited her to bartend at the collective's events. Eventually he put her in charge of organizing the space, operating the radio station, and curating arts and cultural events. In working with this collective, she not only saw how art and politics were connected but also learned how to build community and collectively grow into a consciousness that was pro-community and pro-culture. This consciousness included a greater appreciation and pride for her African and Indigenous cultural roots. When Nicole moved to Chicago from Michigan, she realized that she could use her art to gain acceptance into her new neighborhood. She knew that Chicago artists were familiar with social realism due to the mural movement, so she shared her figurative realistic artwork in order to make connections with likeminded people in her community.

Central to Victoria feeling comfortable when she moved to Minneapolis for art school was doing a collective community art project with young people. Before working with the young people, she walked into a café that had bare windows and asked if they would allow her and young people to paint on their windows. They gave her permission and she reflects, "It was a

beautiful experience. It was such a risk for me that that time, because I was maybe 20, 21. And going on the bus with 12 kids and then painting inside of an environment that I was barely getting to know.” This allowed her to build a community outside of her predominantly-white art school in which she did not fully feel accepted.

3. **Community Support**

Latina community-engaged artists saw how art was important for building relationships through the practice of reciprocity, such as the exchange of artwork, creative labor, or financial support. When Amara planned a self-organized art residency in Oaxaca, Mexico, it was her community that fundraised for her. She explains:

I wouldn’t be able to do the things I do without that. And that’s because I’ve invested so much time, not to create my own work, but I’ve invested in so many other people. That’s what validated my work. Seeing that people were like, ok now it’s time, now we’re going to give something back to you. And that’s what their response was... I had a fundraiser where I raised like \$600. I did a Kickstarter, raised like \$1000 on there. I sold a bunch of art before I left.

Amara was not expecting the amount of support she received. But it was not completely shocking for her, because she had seen throughout her life how artists build community through reciprocity. Although she never does her work so that one day someone will do something for her. There is an understanding that communities operate through mutual support.

Artwork allows for this kind of social space of giving and receiving. According to Paulina, “It’s about sharing food, sharing a feel. Yeah, sharing, being present, listening, and doing these things”. While in graduate school, she made a series of prints with an image of herself as a child and on the bottom were individual secrets or fact about herself. Each of her classmates received one with a unique secret or fact. So, while the whole class shared the same piece, each piece had something different. This affirmed her sense of community among her graduate school classmates. “It was very low quality but it was this idea of giving something of

myself. And what could I give. I'm going to make an individualized drawing because I don't have the time. But I can make these prints." Like Amara, Paulina understood community as being about mutual support. In a healthy community, each member contributes to the wellbeing of other members and the whole.

The intersection of art and creativity with the everyday processes of marginalization and the construction and maintenance community shaped the artistic habitus of Latina community-engaged artists. While Bourdieu (1984) prioritizes the role of class in shaping the habitus, race and gender also played central roles in the development of Latina community-engaged artists' artistic habitus. Their artistic habitus leads them to have critical, anti-hegemonic, collective-based conceptions of the potential of art and creativity – what I call “practices of articulation”. In the next chapter, I explain how Latina community-engaged artists produce artwork using practices of articulation. Practices of articulation are fundamentally invested in connections. Practices of articulation produce work that reflects an understanding of the connection between various ideas, disciplines, audiences, systems, and spaces and also uses art and creativity to facilitate connections. These connections often reject the hegemonic siloing and separation of ideas, disciplines, audiences, systems, and spaces. In the following chapter, I detail the shared characteristics of their practices of articulation.

V. LATINA COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTISTS' PRACTICES OF ARTICULATION



Image 5-1 - Gaspar, Maria, *Brown Brilliance Darkness Matter*, Installation, 2016, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, Illinois, Image Provided by Artist.

On March 25, 2016, Maria Gaspar's exhibition *Brown Brilliance Darkness Matter* opened at the National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA) in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. The exhibition was based on a dialogue between the museum's permanent collection and ephemera from Gaspar's personal surroundings. She built Acapulco furniture to hold her brown clay reproductions/translations of artifacts and images from the institution's ephemera archive. For example, one piece was a representation of the texture of a rebozo, others were three-

dimensional shapes from a printed manifesto, and another was a re-creation of braided hair. Framing and breaking up the room were large semi-transparent curtains displaying collages that Gaspar created by weaving copies of photos from the museum's collection and her own personal collection. At the opening, six local community members served as docents for the clay objects. They each created "facto-fictional" narratives that they shared with museum visitors. These narratives played with fact, fiction, time, meaning, and imagination. They created intimate exchanges of information and challenged visitors to question and reimagine how they understand and engage with the iconography in the space, specifically, and Mexican cultural representations, more generally.

While taking place within a traditional art institution, *Brown Brilliance* is an excellent example of how Gaspar and many other Latina community-engaged artists use their artistic practices to blur, challenge, and transcend various boundaries. Art forms of sculpture, design, performance, collage, installation, and print simultaneously operated in this multidisciplinary exhibition. Visitors became part of the exhibition when docents engaged with them and broke down the art/audience separation. Community members were brought into the institution as "experts" on the artwork. At various moments, visitors posed questions to docents about the objects creating new contexts that Gaspar and the docents had not envisioned. Gaspar asked docents to create narratives that play with the boundaries between fact and fiction and past, present, and future. In doing so, they challenged notions of authority and official knowledge and the boundaries between individuals and institutions. She said about the exhibition, "I was interested in how historical materials play a role in the way we see ourselves and the way institutions can form our understanding of history." By making connections across boundaries, she hoped to create new meaning and understanding.

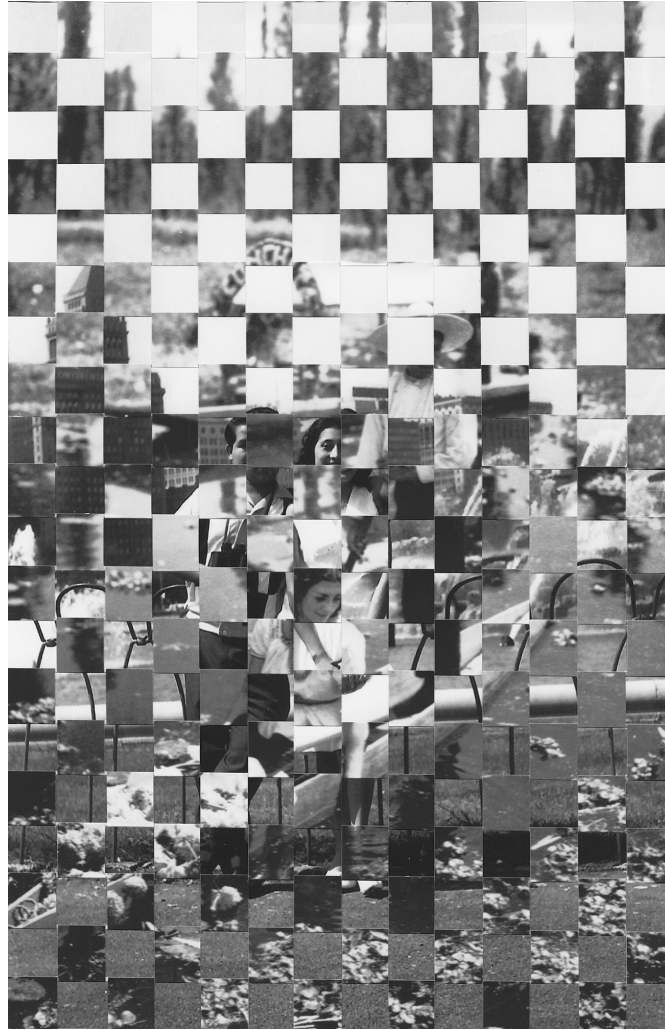


Image 5-2 - Gaspar, Maria, *Textile Collage*. 2016, Chicago, Illinois, Image Provided by Artist.

In the collage above, Gaspar weaves a Mexican postcard from the NMMA's permanent collection with a personal family photo. The first photo is a mid-20th century postcard showing a woman on a *tajinera*, or a gondola-like boat, in Mexico City's famous canals of Xochimilco. The

other photo is of Gaspar's mother and father in Chicago's Grant Park when they first arrived from Mexico in 1965. The images are from two very different geographic spaces and two different temporal periods. Yet, by articulating these two images, Gaspar creates the possibility for multiple new narratives that extend beyond the "facts" of the original images. In the new image, two women's faces and half a man's face are visible. One woman seemingly has her arm around the other below her. The man and one woman look forward while the other woman looks down and to the side. The buildings of Chicago mix with the natural landscape of Xochimilco. Water and concrete serve as the floor. The name "Conchita" is visible above the people. The collage's heteroglossia evokes themes of migration, family, gender, sexuality, diaspora, labor, and culture. No narrative is *the* truth. Perhaps, the image inspires a story about a woman who has migrated to Chicago from Mexico with her husband that is still in love with a woman in her hometown in Mexico. Maybe the image depicts a woman taking the memory of her sister or mother with her to Chicago. Or the image depicts the ways that Mexicans have contributed to the social, political, and economic landscape of Chicago by not cutting transnational ties with Mexico. The power of this articulation of images is in its ability to open up possibilities. It challenges, blurs, and transcends the boundaries implicit in the original images. Through my research, I have found this approach to boundaries to be a foundational aspect of Latina community-engaged artists' practices.

Connections are fundamental to Latina community-engaged artists' practices. Their practices not only reflect the various articulations that they see between art and everyday life but also facilitate connections between various audiences, ideas, and spaces. Among the many articulations they facilitate with their art, they bring together people from different backgrounds, connect institutions with Chicago communities, and create spaces in which various ideas connect

and coexist in new ways. In this chapter, I examine the shared characteristics of Latina community-engage artists' practices. I first will detail the main characteristics of practices of articulation and then provide a summary of how I conceptualize practices of articulation.

A. **Shared Characteristics of Latina Community-Engaged Artists' Practices**

Latina community-engaged artists' early experiences with art, marginalization, and the construction and maintenance of community are directly related to their practices. Bourdieu argues that in order to understand the practices of individuals, they must be contextualized with the habitus of the individuals. The artists' artistic habitus were impacted by their marginalized positions within the field of power as women of color from working-class backgrounds. Their current artistic practices are informed by an understanding of the various systems of oppression they live within and the power that the arts and creativity had in their lives in resisting those systems. Important to their resistance was community acceptance. Therefore, practices of articulation are defined by their rejection of hegemonic definitions, boundaries, and binaries and the central view of art as a collective/collectivizing process that produces knowledge. In this section, I further explain the main shared characteristics of practices of articulation. I discuss differences between Latina community-engaged artists in the next chapter.

1. **Rejecting Hegemonic Definitions, Boundaries, and Binaries**

One major characteristic of practices of articulation is the rejection of dominant definitions, boundaries, and binaries. The Latina community-engaged artists in my study are generally uncomfortable with boundedness, discreteness, and reductionism. In doing so, they challenge and complicate the field of cultural production's hegemonic logics. This begins with their definitions of art and what makes somebody an artist.

In discussions of their mothers, it was common for the artists to question dominant definitions of art and creativity. None of their mothers went to art school and few produced artwork that could hegemonically be defined as an art practice. Some artists, like Paulina and Maria, had extended family members who were artisans or had creative hobbies, but none of their family members were full-time artists. But when I asked them how they became exposed to art, many began by talking about their mothers.

Silvia brilliantly summarizes this with her answer to the question of “is anyone in your family an artist?”:

Defined by the capitalist system, none of my family is artistic. Defined by me and my understanding of art and creativity, I think every woman in my family is especially artistic. And I think that’s where I start to push and question what is the creative and artistic process and who gets to validate it. And I think my abuela was artistic. I think my mother definitely. My tías. I see my family as creative and artistic just by the way we grew up. I was always encouraged. So, they must have known something about that was important.

The hegemonic definition of “artist” itself is connected to larger social structures such as capitalism, gender, class, and race. Maria always lovingly talks about her mother’s artistic abilities and creativity. Similarly, Victoria and Vanessa also describe their mothers’ creativity with admiration. Seeing their mothers as artists and creatives was very impactful to their desire to be artists. Latina community-engaged artists often challenge the dominant definition of artist that is archetypically represented by the upper-class white man who obtained formal art training at an art school and practices in his own private art studio to produce work to exhibit in art galleries. Within this conceptualization, art is something autonomous from everyday life and highly individualistic. Latina community-engaged artists saw their mothers being creative and artistic not only in their creation of traditional arts and crafts but also in everyday acts, like making food.

Their alternative and more inclusive definitions of art and creativity informs how they encourage individuals to be creative. For example, not long after meeting Maria, she would introduce me as a sociologist *and* an artist. The only creative thing I regularly do is photography and that was without any formal art school training. Yet, she always encouraged me to identify as an artist, because she truly believes that everyone, in their own ways, is an artist. This provided me confidence to begin participating in performance art pieces in museums and art spaces around Chicago. Similarly, one of Paulina's central pedagogical goal is to convince young people "that art anything and everything." Once young people believe they are artists, they begin to confidently see themselves and the world in more creative ways. This allows their communities to understand that "art is a way of life," as Amara put it.

Latina community-engaged artists also problematize the dominant definition of what makes a legitimate and valuable artistic practice. In line with Bourdieu's conceptualization of the field of cultural production, those who produce art for art's sake are given the most prestige in the field. Consequently, the definition of what makes someone a legitimate and valuable artist is based on the practices of these kinds of artists. Artists should be individualistic, only produce in studios, only show in museums and galleries, and should only be based in one artistic medium. Artists must separate their personal practice from any other social, collective, or community artwork. In many ways, this is founded on the idea that you must protect the purity, cleanliness, and value of individual artistic practice from the messiness of collective work with non-artists. This is socially enforced as well as part of a basic art school education. Paulina says:

I even remember in grad school some of our conversations with my cohort being around how do you balance teaching and making in your own practice. How do you do both? And then thinking and feeling like you had to kind of keep them separate. And even I remember my teachers, like everything was separate. Like my sculpture teacher, he was a sculpture. He made these things separately. And then he was a teacher. You had these two lives... the concept that a teacher's life, everything was always so separate. I mean

even my high school art teacher that I was closer to, she would show us her paintings and stuff but it was very different from whatever it was that we were working on in class. It was always very separate.

Maria also felt this pressure to separate her work. “I started to feel like I was living a double life. I was a muralist or public artist and then I was doing studio art. And I didn’t like that. I didn’t want to do the double life anymore... It’s a very traditional way.” Her discontent with the options of only doing studio art, only doing community art, or maintaining a double life came from the fact that she loved the feeling and fulfillment she got from both her studio practice and her community work, but neither was the “end all for me.”

Latina community-engaged artists resist this idea that anything other than single-discipline, studio-based artistic production is not legitimate or valuable artistic practice and must be kept separate from the “real” artistic practice of individual studio work. They do this by articulating their personal artistic practice with their collective and community artistic practice. Paulina says, “And as I began to put together curriculum and as I began [teaching] in the classroom and the more experience that I gathered, I was like why not interweave both?” So, she began to bring concepts and ideas that she was working on in her own practice into her classroom. “I have 150 kids at my disposal to test shit out on and ask questions to. Like let’s do it. Why not ask them to help me understand these concepts through their perspective?”

Victoria gained inspiration from seeing other women artists do both gallery and community artwork.

“I like to think of Margaret Kilgallen a lot... I really appreciated her, because she hand-painted a lot of signs but also murals, and she would paint on freight trains and eventually she started showing at the Whitney Biennial and in different institutions or exhibitions. I thought that was great that a woman had that ability to produce outside and be inspired by neighborhoods but also have a space carved out for her in the institution. I don’t see that happening often. Like I don’t see women being represented in both arenas. I hate to say this. But I feel like sometimes they’re pigeonholed to just doing one thing.”

In her experience, her insistence on doing both gallery and community art was a form of resistance to what she understood as the inability for women to have the flexibility that men are often afforded. Her view is supported by the way that some of the most famous “street artists” who are not only celebrated for their public work but also selling their work in auctions and galleries happen to be predominantly white men. Banksy, Shepard Fairey, and so many other white men are the face of urban street art and its ultimate mainstream acceptance, even though street art was largely developed and practiced by boys and men of color, who also systematically devalued and marginalized girls and women of color street artists.

Consequently, Latina community-engaged artists reject these separations by conceptualizing their practices as an articulation of their personal practice and community work.

Paulina explains:

“But I think one of the other things I’ve been coming to terms with more so lately, because I’ve been a teacher now for five years, is that my teaching practice is now my art... Like this is my work, this is my artistic practice. I’m curating an experience for my students, I’m curating the work. I am making something. I make examples. And why can’t my examples be my artwork? Like why? Even if it’s for an Art 1 class. Does that mean, does that devalue my work then because it’s for an Art 1 class? Why can’t my Art 1 students’ work then be elevated to this other position?”

Silvia echoes this sentiment:

“I think that’s also what I love about thinking about my practice as an art form, as a teacher being an artist. I legit when I say I’m a teacher think I’m saying I’m an artist. And when I say I’m an artist, I legit think I’m saying I’m a teacher. I don’t see any difference between the two. I do but do you know what I mean by that... And I think that’s also why I love teaching. And teaching is an art form.”

And Nicole, who teaches in both K-12 and an art school says, “I don’t think there’s much of a line between the community-based work and the studio work... Anything I’m doing is totally going to translate to something I teach. I have thought for a long time that my studio work was teaching for a while.”

2. **Multidisciplinarity**

Latina community-engaged artists' ability to articulate those things that are normally separated by dominant logics comes from their personal experiences of living intersectional lives. They have seen the ways race, gender, and class and art, politics, and space operate through each other. Therefore, it is easy for them to actively see, as Silvia says, "the way things overlap and layer and support or take away from something else." This way of thinking extends to their understanding of artistic mediums, because to see community work as overlapping with individual practice, it follows that practices of articulation require a multidisciplinary artistic approach. Of this, Silvia says,

"So multidisciplinary or whatever, just being able to use multiple disciplines is liberating because it's community taught. It's looking at what other people are doing and challenging myself to ask if I can do something like that. Or it's self-training sometimes. Or it's watching a YouTube video. Or it's asking someone that I know does it within my community if they can teach me. Or it's going back to school and looking at what other people are doing. And thinking 'hm I want to try that.' But I've also been able to be part of art spaces that also allow me to do multiple things."

Art schools often train artists to be monodisciplinary. Elvia Rodriguez-Ochoa, a 49-year-old Mexican artist, intentionally chose not to attend art school for this reason. Instead, she went to a liberal arts college where she felt multidisciplinarity was more supported and double-majored in art and computer science. In the arts, monodisciplinary expertise is ideal. Artists are supposed to identify as their single discipline. "I am a painter," "I am a photographer," and "I am a sculptor," are complete sentences and are often the most important sentences to art institutions and art critics. It is assumed that artists can either be experts in one discipline or mediocre in many. Latina community-engaged artists vehemently reject this. They argue that they can be skilled in multiple disciplines because they believe skill in one medium is relational to being skilled in other mediums.

Artists with practices of articulation are interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary. They believe that one medium cannot do everything. Paulina argues:

“I don’t think that the medium dictates the content but that the context dictates the medium... That’s why I chose interdisciplinary art because I feel like you can definitely explore a number of different contents through the same media or vice versa but for me it always felt like ‘yeah sometimes I feel comfortable with a painting expressing this concept and sometimes a painting isn’t enough.’ Sometimes you need to work on an installation or an intervention or sometimes it requires an object or sometimes it’s just sound or sometimes it’s a combination of things. I hated to say that I was just a photographer or a printmaker and so I’ve explored a lot of different material and media in my life.”

There is a sense of freedom for artists to freely choose which medium(s) they will employ to communicate a particular idea or address a specific topic. Paulina continues:

“Why can’t I just do [multiple mediums] and do them well? Cause I do them really well! Sometimes I feel comfortable with a painting expressing this concept and sometimes a painting isn’t enough. Sometimes you need to work on an installation or an intervention or sometimes it requires an object or sometimes it’s just sound or sometimes it’s a combination of things. I hated to say that I was just a photographer or a printmaker and so I’ve explored a lot of different material and media in my life.”

Multidisciplinarity rejects the dominant belief in the field of cultural production that artists must be defined by a single medium or that artists can only do one medium very well.

Maria entered art school as a painting major and then found it frustrating to only be able to paint:

“I just didn’t have the right materials. It was just a fucking paintbrush on canvas. I cannot do all those things I wanted to do. And then it changed the last year [of art school]. Then I was working with my parents clothing, my father’s shoes. I was burning text into tamal leaves and making big installations on the floor with them. It just started to become installation based. For me the materials, I was so excited about the materials because the materials had meanings. They already had a history. And I wanted to grapple with that history rather than deal with so-called neutral materials.”

Art materials are themselves saturated with meaning due the materials’ articulation with other aspects of life. Materials themselves are not neutral, isolated objects. Silvia finds it necessary to

use sound, education, performance, photography, and writing in various configurations, because “I see them as all very connected to each other.” She sees the process of trying new disciplines necessary for her development as an art educator. Multidisciplinarity involved not only the development of multiple skills, but the experience of particular feelings. The process of using multiple disciplines invokes feelings that, like Silvia, Latina community-engaged artists seek to feel.

In rejecting boundaries around disciplines, practices of articulation also reject boundaries between spaces. Latina community-engaged artists reject the notion that art should only be relegated to particular spaces. These spatial boundaries reinforce the ideologies that art is separate from other aspects of everyday life, art can/should only be appreciated by those with capital and power, and that art’s value comes from its lack of accessibility. Practices of articulation actively seek to blur and dismantle spatial boundaries as a rejection of these ideological boundaries.

Mainstream art institutions like galleries and museum are often inaccessible to those that come from Latina/x/o communities— financially inaccessible (cost of admission), spatially inaccessible (location), culturally inaccessible (language, content, institutional logics), and temporally inaccessible (operating hours). This is why Latina community-engaged artists can be found in public spaces and other non-art spaces. Victoria says, “When it comes to work outside it’s anything goes. Anyone is seeing it. Artist, non-artist, kids, babies, paleteros, like anyone, everyone. I love that. I love that so much because that’s how art should be. Art should be accessible to everyone. And that’s what I aim for. That’s why I started working outside.” Her most memorable work and the “more authentic me” is when she creates and installs pieces outside in public spaces with no funding. She simply uses what she has available to her and

relates the work to the space it occupies. She often also shows this work in galleries and museums.

Latina community-engaged artists often use their work to blur boundaries between art and non-art spaces and audiences. For example, Maria produced art with men incarcerated at Cook County Jail. The work was initially presented at a two-night free, public installation in which participants' work was projected onto the jail wall. The jail is located in the predominantly immigrant and working-class Latina/x/o neighborhood of Little Village. So, the audience included community members who were walking or driving by and those who are actively involved in the arts. This work has also been shown in galleries and museums in Chicago. Through her work, Maria has brought actors from the field of art into non-art spaces to see the work on non-traditional artists, and she has brought the work of non-traditional artists into mainstream art institutions.

Additionally, Latina community-engaged artists reject the dominant dichotomy between process and product. They take a both/and approach. Dominant art logics give more power to the product. Latina community-engaged artists do not counter this by giving more power to the process. Instead, they see it as a both/and situation in which the process is just as important as the product and that the two are deeply related. However, their decision to focus on one over the other largely depends on the context in which they are practicing. Paulina asks herself, "How do we arrive at [the product]? How do we get there? Are we doing individual or are we doing it together? What's inspiring it? Where is it coming from?" She does not solely think about what the final product will look like. She also thinks about what process best reflects the idea and topic she is addressing.

The process is very much related to the product for practices of articulation. Silvia asks, “What are the tools that I would need in order to create that kind of art? What were the questions that I wanted to be asking myself in this process? What did the process look like? What happens when the process is messy? What happens when the product is not satisfying? What happens when the product is satisfying?” In practices of articulation, art is an iterative process. Paulina views art as a constant process of drafting. It is not only about having a specific goal in mind and trying to perfectly create that goal. The process informs the shape that the product will take but the product may inform the subsequent revision process. Vanessa Sanchez says, “Because I feel like I’m more in love with the process than really like the final product. Because even then once the final product is out, I’m going to hate it in a year for sure.”

However, there are instances when Latina community-engaged artists emphasize product more than process. For example, Latina community-engaged artists do need to secure support and funding in order to produce artwork. So, when they apply for grants, exhibitions, or other jobs, they have to emphasize the product more than the process. They need to show something to their bosses, funders, and students’ parents that is evidence of their talent and effectiveness. Additionally, when Latina community-engaged artists work with young people or first-time artists, they make sure that their co-producers can be proud of the end product. Silvia says:

“Sometimes young people, and myself included, you just need to make something that makes you feel really good. You know what I mean. There are art pieces that I’ve made that I’m like ‘that’s so conceptual. I feel so great’ but sometimes I don’t. So sometimes I will make a really nice image because that’s what makes me feel good. And I need to feel that moment of accomplishment. I used to be heavy process-based and a lot of my curriculum was exploring and process and I had a mentor where I student taught at Franklin tell me, you gotta think beyond the process, because some kids need this. This is the only class where they... and then again I went back to my childhood. This is the only class where they feel validated and they need to have moments of success.”

Emerging from the rejection of hegemonic definitions, boundaries, and binaries come two conceptualizations of art that are specific to Latina community-engaged artists’ practices of

articulation. First, they understand art as an inherently collective process. Every aspect of art practice and production is imbued with collectivity. Second, they see art as a form of knowledge production. The practice and production of art allows artists and audiences to produce knowledge about themselves and the world around them. Art provides the space to ask questions and develop solutions that may not occur in other non-art spaces.

3. **Art as a Collective Process**

Latina community-engaged artists' practices support Becker's (1982/2008) important argument that art lends itself to sociological examination because it is a highly collective process. It may seem so obvious as not needing to be said that a *community*-engaged artist would believe that art is collective. However, doing community work does not always entail the belief that art is a collective process. Sometimes community artists simply impose individualist artistic processes in community spaces and call it community art. Victoria says:

There are some artists that I question... In general, their idea of community art is getting pictures in front of mural with kids and you're in the middle. Like that's wrong. There's some etiquette to it I would say. Or like taking a picture washing the car with the kids and you're like, I don't know, sponging something. Like that's community art. Like no that's wrong! Because it takes a lot of relational ideas and memories and footwork to produce a well created community-based project.

Many times, community art follows dominant ideas about art production and results in an artist developing a project on their own and then putting it in a public space. Along the way, there is no consultation or relationship building with community members. Victoria notes, "It is important to work with people and to survey them as much as you can to integrate what their desires are, what their thoughts are." For her, art is "a form of collaboration, it's a form of negotiating and working with people who relate to you and it's a time to exchange dialogue. To laugh also and to celebrate what you are used to without feeling ashamed of it."

When Silvia thinks about her practice and producing art she thinks “about engagement... I think about participation. I think about collaboration... I think that’s a huge drastic change [from] producing work that I’m like ‘oh yeah this is to be gazed at for an audience that is willing to look at this and think about it’... And now I make work that is to heal and process with others. And I’m inviting participation. I’m inviting narrative. Which is what I love.” To produce art is to build relationships and connections to others. Art leads to collective discussions, healing, feelings, and experiences.

Many Latina community-engaged artists use the language of “responsibility” in their discussions about art production. They have a responsibility to produce art with and for their communities. This responsibility heavily impacts the career paths of Latina community-engaged artists. Victoria, for instance, decided to move back to her neighborhood in Chicago after spending a year in Baltimore, Maryland as part of Americorps:

“My goal was always to come back to Pilsen and teach. I thought it was my responsibility to move back here. I come from a generation where I saw a lot of people die because of gang violence. It wasn’t promising for people to leave the neighborhood and chase their dreams as an artist or whatever it is that they wanted to chase. So, in a way I’m very grateful and I feel very lucky that I had that opportunity to leave the neighborhood, to grow as an artist. But I also feel that although that was a beautiful time in my life, I also have to come back and thank the neighborhood that raised me or inspired me to run away... So yeah, I feel like it is a responsibility. Because I could have easily kept on moving and done other things. But, also, I think again it’s just a part of my heart. Being from Pilsen is a part of my heart and I would feel awful if I didn’t share some of those experiences or techniques with students.”

Their artistic successes and growth are often attributed to the connections and relationships that they make with people and their communities. For example, Paulina went to graduate school specifically interested in the concept of community, home, and identity. As she explained, “And I think it was at that point that I was thinking about the importance of community for myself. Trying to find ways to build a school community, a classroom community, building my community of people where I feel supported and cared for. And trying to make those things

overlap, too, is also really important.” It was Paulina’s community that made teaching a possibility for her. She grew up hating school and never expected to be a teacher. But after finishing her undergraduate degree, her community relationships led her to do work with schools. The development of her love of arts education, teaching, and working with young people would not have occurred without her community supporting her with job opportunities and training. What results is a sense of responsibility to maintain and build upon these connections and help facilitate those connections for others.

In 2014 and 2015, Silvia curated several free and public educational workshops on restorative justice, power, and incarceration at various locations in Chicago’s neighborhoods. Children, adults, educators, students, activists, artists, and community members engaged in activities and conversations in order to critically develop and imagine new narratives that allow participants to actively contribute to the transformation of their communities regarding incarceration. She described the goals as “to activate alliances, build solidarity, and continue working towards creating alternative and socially just spaces.” In these workshops, strangers were vulnerable with each other and actively developed new ways to organize our communities and interact with each other.

Victoria participated in a residency in Puebla, Mexico, and she strategically wanted to be outside in mercados because “that’s where all the community happens.” She found an abandoned post in the Mercado del Carmen and was given permission to use it. She bought fabric and stayed at the post for two hours taking people’s heights with a marker. This included children, butchers, customers, parents, vendors, anyone who was in the market. At the end, she connected all the marks which made this organic, freeform shape. She then filled this shape with materials that she bought from the market. She stitched and collaged the materials onto the fabric and placed the

installation back at the abandoned post. She organized a reception for community members. Of this reception she said:

“and it was great. They were so happy to have that work of art there. But it wouldn’t have been made possible without them. Without their actual height marks. And I think one beautiful thing about Mexican culture is that if you are in a group of people, like you’re happy. You’re happy because of the music but also because of the artwork and sometime so simple as just sharing fruit. Bringing slices of mango and watermelon and then like having chicharrones. Just very simple things but it can easily transform into a party and you feel happy. You feel at home. So that was honestly one of the best experiences that I had.”

Victoria’s belief in not being “selfish” is a sentiment shared by other Latina community-engaged artists. Paulina gladly offers things that she found, her research, or her curriculum with someone who could also benefit from it:

“I’m not selfish about my work, about the labor I put into the work. Because I also feel like so many people are generous with me that I want to also be equally generous with others and I think there’s this reciprocity to the community work or the education work or even the artwork. If I’m asking for a critique from someone, I’m asking for someone’s opinion. That’s labor. That’s work. So, I think there has to be reciprocity there.”

Latina community-engaged artists are highly invested in the exchange that happens as a result of building community.

In the field of cultural production, name recognition is an important part of the accumulation of capital and improvement of position within the field. However, Latina community-engaged artists’ emphasis on collectivity and community production is a refusal to center their name in the work they produce. Victoria pointed to her experience of meeting an artist whose work she originally admired.

“She came to the school to talk about it and how feminist she was and stuff. But she was very rude about it. And I thought that was weird because she made a project with many women, it took a big team to create that sculpture she created. And then she kept on expressing that it was *her* project because it was *her* name. And I thought that was weird... I understand because part of it is like you had the idea, you probably found funding and you probably worked really, really hard, because during that time feminist art wasn’t allowed or feminist art was new. So, I can see why she might have said that. But then again it’s like the reality is that you work with a lot of people. You have to

credit them. It's not only your piece of art anymore. It was your idea but you are allowing and inviting people to work with you so credit them too. They're not just hands."

This belief in the collective authorship of artwork is an important rejection of dominant logics of the field of cultural production. Nicole taught at an elementary school in Little Village that centers Mexican arts and culture in their academic program. She fell in love with the school, because "I was like 'put your name on it.' Students were like 'we don't put our name.' And I was like 'Oh my god I love this place!' Because it's for everybody. And then [the students say] 'which one is mine? I don't know!' And I was like 'oh god, this is such the antidote for art school.' I think everybody should be there." Similarly, when Maria often uses "we/our" when she talks about work and projects that, in many ways, she individually applied for and received funding and led. Yet, she refuses to take sole credit for project in which there was collective labor, even in instances when she actually did do all the work. Several artists are members of artist collectives in which work is collectively authored under the collective's name, regardless of who led the production.

Lastly, Latina community-engaged artists understand art materials as being embedded within the collective. When Victoria started working with fabric she said she was drawn to it, because "I think it's a universal material as well. Like say we were all on the CTA train together, you might not know everyone on that car but one thing that connects you is fabric. We're all wearing fabric. We all need fabric to protect ourselves from weather or to express ourselves. So that's why I really appreciate that material." Vanessa's love of paint comes from her belief that the medium itself can connect people. "Painting for me is personal but I'm also so drawn to the paint, the colors, and the textures and so it was just me thinking about what I want this person to feel through the paint, through the colors, through the sensuality of everything... I knew that most of the things I was showing was for a Latino audience. So, I kind of already knew that there

would already be this connection visually especially through colors or through some of the imagery. So, there's always like this history that we all shared. Whether it's growing up in Pilsen or Little Village or Back of the Yards." As Nicole was throwing clay during our conversation and making cups, she says, "Even cups are social. Things that go out into the world." The collective process of art production opens the possibilities for knowledge production. When various individuals come together with their own experiences, understandings, and skills, this can lead to new ways of knowing. Therefore, to produce art is to produce knowledge. This is the last major characteristic of practices of articulation.

4. **Art as Knowledge Production**

Practices of articulation do not treat art as purely representational or aesthetic. Latina community-engaged artists believe art is a way to better understand yourself and the world in which you live. Creative processes allow individuals to see themselves and the world in new ways, imagine new possibilities, and ask difficult questions that may not be able to be asked in other ways. Augusto Boal (1993), drawing from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, argues that art creates a space for individuals to come to better understand their own experiences of oppression, the structural causes of that oppression, and the possible ways to end oppression. Similarly, Latina community-engaged artists are not invested in an "art for art's sake" ethos. Their belief that art is central to shifting narratives and changing minds is embedded in every aspect of their work. The belief that art is knowledge production is why Latina community-engaged artists are educators, whether in formal educational institutions or informally in their communities. They work in K-12 schools, art schools, non-profit arts organizations, or other community-based organizations/movements where education is central to their practices.

Art as knowledge production runs counter to the hegemonic logics of the field of cultural production. In most mainstream art institutions, art is disconnected from everyday life. Art is not used to incite critical thinking or transformative actions. Maria's experience in art school is a great example of this. She was going to art school in New York City on September 11, 2001. One of her professors posed the radical challenge of "let's talk about the world" to her and her classmates. She said this was an important intervention "because nobody else was doing that. Everybody was in a tiny little world of art." Most of her other professors were solely invested in art for art's sake. The idea that art would not be used to interrogate current issues did not make sense to Maria. So, she was refreshed by this one professor's critical contribution.

Consequently, Latina community-engaged artists view themselves as important to the production of knowledge about their communities. Amara was drawn to art by the way it constructs knowledge for the future. This is why she calls herself a historian despite not being a trained historical researcher.

"I'm not talking necessarily about things that have happened in the past. I'm talking about things that happen now because I know in the future that will be somebody's history. That will be our history. And that's how they're going to be able to figure out some of the stories that we were trying to tell... the way I see [my work], is like archiving stories. I do my work to tell our stories. To tell the stories of people that are not ever going to make art. Somebody's not necessarily gonna think, 'you're worthy of being on a canvas or be in a gallery.' I do my work to get people thinking about how valid our own stories are."

Practices of articulation use art to construct narratives. Most of the news produced about Latinas/xs/os is either event-driven, about undocumented immigrants, or about crime. The everyday lives, community work, and activism within Latina/x/o communities are rarely covered. Silvia believes that an important role of the artist is to document the work of the community that may otherwise be forgotten or unnoticed. The artist's job is to counter the dominant narratives that circulate in mainstream media. She asserts,

“We need people to be a part of it. So that we can create our own narrative around it. We can create our story. We can create more awareness about it. I have a background in photography. I have a background in education. I think I’m supposed to be documenting this work. I think I’m supposed to be doing this work.”

Through her documentation, she has also created zines and curriculum about the prison industrial complex and restorative justice to be used by teachers in Chicago.

Those who work directly with young people, have used their art classes to do more than simply teach their students techniques and skills. They use art to cultivate and empower youth to be active and engaged citizens who see themselves as producers of important knowledge. Being a high school art teacher in a Chicago Public School has institutionally been challenging for Paulina. But the moments in which she has successfully used art to help student produce knowledge about their own abilities to bring about change in their communities makes it all worth it. In the space Paulina developed, students used her classroom and curriculum to make larger global connections and grow as critical thinkers and engaged community members. Nicole has worked with high school students to produce art about their neighborhoods and used this art to produce knowledge about historical and contemporary community change and student activism in Chicago. Their work was exhibited at the Chicago Cultural Center where its audience included Chicagoans as well as tourists from other states and countries.

Paulina never wanted to be like the art teachers she had as a young person where art was disconnected from students’ lived realities. Instead, she finds success in the moments that her students specifically reference topics and content in their activism. She says, “That’s when I see the work come together. That’s the reason I even decided to become an art teacher... Art gives you a creative platform to do just about anything.” For example, Paulina’s students have used sculptures to deconstruct the spatial layout of their classroom and redesign it to make classroom interventions and have used screen printing to examine the history of student walk-outs in their

neighborhood. She recounted, “My students were coming to me during the [Donald Trump] inauguration walk out just to be like, ‘you realize that the reason why 1) we have student government and 2) why we’re even organizing this walk out is because of the shit we learned in your class’ And I was like, this is exactly, this is it. This is why I’m here.” And Victoria collaborated with Black and Latina/x/o youth in Chicago to examine the relationships between African and Latin American textiles. They produced large sewn-together fabrics that include both African and Latin American textile patterns in order to understand the interconnectedness of Black and Latina/x/o communities’ contemporary struggles.

Beyond producing knowledge about communities and society, Latina community-engaged artists find art to be useful for trying to better understand their own experiences and positions in society. As she discussed earlier, Silvia uses art to better understanding why she feels out of place, how she might find a way to construct a sense of home, and overall how to navigate society. She likens her artwork to archaeology and says,

“When I was younger I wanted to be an archaeologist. I wanted to uncover and dig up dirt and use cool brushes and figure out ancestry and place of belonging. And I think that I’m doing that now. I think I’m an archaeologist trying to understand my own place and belonging and where things come from and where I am now. Art lets me do anything I want.”

This has continued in her recent focus on mythology, home, and liminality. Through her sound, performance, poetry, and photography, Silvia gains a better understanding of what “home” means to her. Amara has also continued to use art to gain new understandings of her relationship to water, nature, and her Afro-indigenous ancestry. She has created spaces in which others in her community can collectively decolonize the way they understand themselves. And Vanessa has produced zines that serve as meditations on what it means to be a single mother who is also a community leader. The zines are a mixture of drawings and poetry that trace the labor that

Vanessa much engage in on a daily basis. In reading the zine, the audience feels a bit of the exhaustion that Vanessa feels.

B. **Practices of Articulation**

In this section, I provide a theoretical summary of my analytic concept “practices of articulation”. My use of “articulation” is inspired by the work of Stuart Hall (1980) in which he argues that various social structures connect, or articulate, to produce the conditions under which individuals must live. According to Hall, social formations (race, class, gender, etc.) cannot be reduced to one another nor treated as completely autonomous. Instead, they work *through* each other. For example, the social formation of race articulated to the dominant class formation in the antebellum South. Anti-Black racism is not the cause of the plantation economy, nor was the plantation economy developed autonomously from anti-Blackness. The economic and racial formations in the antebellum south were shaped by their articulation with each other. Hall’s use of articulation is motivated by a commitment to a relational analysis.

Additionally, just as intersectionality argues that social categories, systems, and processes are “mutually constitutive” or “co-constitutive”, articulation argues that social systems work through each other. Both reject the silos that are often placed around social categories, systems, and processes. Although Hall is not traditionally viewed as contributing to the development of intersectionality as an analytical approach, his approach to articulation very much falls in line with feminist scholars’ approach to intersectionality. Bilge (2010) argues that articulation’s ability to avoid the reduction of race, gender, and class to one another and to maintain an analytical autonomy of these systems are what make it a strong compliment to feminist theories of intersectionality. As I discussed in previous chapter, Latina community-engaged artists can best be studied using an intersectional approach. Intersectionality provides the tools to examine

the ways race, gender, and class dynamically and simultaneously interact at various levels (individually, interactionally, and institutionally) in the lives of Latina community-engaged artists. Articulation, while not typically categorized as intersectional scholarship, proves to be in line with intersectionality and is therefore appropriate for my theoretical framework.

Articulation allows me to reject binarism and reductionism. It challenges boundaries, borders, and discreteness. Those fields, systems, formations, and structures that we encounter on a daily basis and play important roles in shaping our thoughts and actions are not as isolated from each other as we often treat them. They are constantly working in conjunction with and through each other. This is important for the specific task of explaining what is special about Latina community-engaged artists' practices. Their practices reflect an analytical use of articulation and also produce articulations.

Latina community-engaged artists have what I call "practices of articulation". At their core, practices of articulation reject discrete boundaries that are traditionally constructed by dominant social institutions, fields, and logics. They are practices of both/and, fluidity, and multiplicity. Practices of articulation are not the result of some essential quality of Latinas or artists. They emerge from lived experiences that are the result of structures of oppression, such as race, gender, and class. While Latina community-engaged artists do not have the same exact upbringing or practice art in the same exact ways, they share a general approach to art production.

Practices of articulation are not unique to Latina community-engaged artists. Artists who seek to challenge dominant art logics will often have practices of articulation. This includes artists of any race or gender. For example, the practice of Chicago-based artist Faheem Majeed, a Black male artist, involves articulations. Inspired by the work of important Black artist Margaret

Burroughs, his “Floating Museum” is a collaborative art project that seeks to challenge traditional art and museum logics. On top of an old barge, he built an interactive cultural space composed of music, performances, sculpture, history, and architecture that brings together artists, historians, community members, and organizations. The barge moved around Chicago by way of the Chicago River. The Floating Museum challenges us to start defining museums by people rather than physical infrastructure in order to have more engaging and accessible museums.

Additionally, Rhoda Rosen and Billy McGuinness’s “Red Line Service” uses food and art in order to create cultural experiences for and with Chicagoans currently experiencing and/or concerned about homelessness. These two white artists bring together those in transition, arts institutions, organizations that provide direct services, and policy advocates in order to challenge dominant understandings of homelessness, service, art, and community. They do not seek to tell people about homelessness through art. Instead, they actively break down various social and institutional barriers in order to reshape our society into a more connected – more loving – community of care.

I argue that Latina community-engaged artists’ practices of articulation come as a result of their specific racial, gender, and class position. Therefore, they have particular kinds of practices of articulation that are specific to their own racial, cultural, gender, and class experiences. Practices of articulation view art as not reducible to nor separate from politics, activism, education, economics, or everyday life. It is difficult for practices of articulation to conceptualize the field of cultural production as a separate entity with discrete boundaries. Art is not an artifact of culture, race, gender, class, or any other field nor is it completely separate. Art is intimately entwined with other fields. To paraphrase Hall (1980:340) – art does not merely reflect or give aesthetic to politics/race/gender/class/etc. – it is through art that

politics/race/gender/class/etc. are enacted. Art is articulated with economics, politics, race, gender, etc. Each is rearticulated with any changes to social formations, because art is always situated within a particular social, political, and economic context.

Practices of articulation are fundamentally multidisciplinary. Artists with practices of articulation each have their own preferred mediums but they are not bounded by a single artistic discipline. Hegemonic logics of the field of cultural production enforce separation of artistic disciplines. Prestige and capital is given to those who identify with only one discipline. To be multidisciplinary carries with it the stigma of being unfocused or lacking expertise or talent. In most mainstream art schools, artists are trained to focus on one art discipline and adhere to the dominant rules of that discipline. To paraphrase Marx and Engels (Bourdieu 1984:397), of those with practices of articulation, there are no painters, but at most artists who engage in painting among other things. Artists with practices of articulation make use of various forms of art making. The medium they choose is always related to the topic, the narrative, and context. The art medium is not predetermined.

Practices of articulation operate in a multitude of spaces, often producing spaces that are themselves articulations. Artists with practices of articulation do not only operate in traditional art spaces (studios and galleries). They see every space as an articulation of various fields. No space is pure. No space is just for art. This opens up the possibilities of spaces. One space can be at the intersection of art, health, education, economics, spirituality, and politics, which are usually hierarchized and separated from each other both physically and ideologically. Practices of articulation reject the dominant logics that seek to impose value and physical and ideological separation between various spaces of social life. Dominant logics may deem these spaces to be fraught with contradictions, but practices of articulation either see no contradictions or see the

tensions that arise from contradictions as productive. Overall, practices of articulation are the only way art Latina community-engaged artists want to practice art and such practices are partially the result of artists' habitus.

In this chapter, I discussed the shared characteristics of what I call Latina community-engaged artists' practices of articulation. As I have shown, their practices reject dominant definitions, boundaries, and binaries that limit the possibilities of art and understand art as a collective endeavor that produces knowledge. Bourdieu (1993) conceptualizes practice as the result of habitus and position in the field. I have focused on shared general characteristics of Latina community-engaged artists' practices. These similar practices lead them to navigate the field of cultural production in similar ways. In the next chapter, I detail Latina community-engaged artists' experiences within the field of cultural production. While much of their experiences are marked by marginalization, they also actively resist. Their marginalization and resistance also highlight differences in social and cultural capital among Latina community-engage artists can impact the characteristics of their marginalization and how they are able to resist.

VI. THE PARADOX OF (IL)LEGIBILITY: NAVIGATING THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION



Image 6-1 – Photo of my SAIC Faculty ID

My 2017 School of the Art Institute of Chicago faculty identification card provokes critical reflection on the experiences of minoritized communities in prestigious institutions within the field of cultural production. Having my last name mispronounced and misspelled has been one of the few consistencies throughout my life. From kindergarten to my senior year of high school, I only had white teachers except my 7th grade Spanish teacher who was Latina. In most of my classes, I was one of two or the only Latina/x/o student. Therefore, I grew used to being “Mew-nez”, “Mew-niz”, “Muh-niz”, and even “Muhnz” with each syllable being accented at some point. It was not until college that I regularly had Latina/o professors who pronounced my last name correctly. But when I received my master’s diploma, it said “Michael De Anda Mūniz” (my computer would not even allow me to make that character). As faculty at

a prestigious art school, I was “Mu?iz”. The illegibility of my last name has served as a linguistic illustration of my experience of marginalization in various institutions. I have found that Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago experience a similar dynamic while in the field of cultural production. Yet, illegibility has rarely been a central concept in popular and academic discussions about the institutional marginalization of Latinas/xs/os.

In this chapter, I examine Latina community-engaged artists’ experiences navigating the field of cultural production. What are the mechanisms by which they are marginalized? How do they strategically resist their marginalization? I introduce some complexity to our understanding of Latina community-engaged artists and their institutional experiences by bringing issues of legibility and illegibility to the center of my analysis. Legibility “refers to the ability to be recognized as legitimate and worthy of resources within institutions” (Sweet 2019:412). I argue that, in addition to devaluation, denied/limited access, and stereotyping/pigeonholing, illegibility is another mechanism of marginalization. Paradoxically, illegibility and legibility, or (il)legibility, are also mechanisms of resistance that are evident in how Latina community-engaged artists employ multidisciplinary and social and cultural capital. The experiences and practices of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago highlight the ways that they strategically negotiate belonging with one foot in the mainstream arts world and the other in their communities. Additionally, while the previous chapter highlighted similarities among Latina community-engaged artists, this chapter examines complexity among my Latina community-engaged artists regarding the source of their marginalization and their ability to strategically use (il)legibility as a form of resistance. I begin by detailing the various experiences of marginalization for Latina community-engaged artists. Then, I explain the ways that they

strategically navigate the field of cultural production. Lastly, I conceptualize “the paradox of (il)legibility”.

A. **Navigating the Field of Cultural Production**

The marginalization of women and people of color in the arts is well-documented. It is most often explained as a result of the devaluation of their work and a lack of access to resources, networks, and institutions (Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Miller 2016; Tator et al. 1998). A recent report produced by Art Basel and UBS finds that, globally, the median valuation for women-made art is about 27 percent lower than art made by men (Brown 2019). Another report found that while arts foundations and nonprofit leaders are increasingly aware of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, foundations’ executive boards are overwhelmingly white, cultural organizations that specifically serve communities of color are underfunded, and arts funding, overall, is allocated in increasingly less equitable ways across race and class (Helicon Collaborative 2017). For example, two percent of all cultural institutions receive nearly 60 percent of all contributed revenue and only four percent of arts foundation funding goes to communities of color. Furthermore, women of color are marginalized in a field dominated primarily by white male artists and secondarily by white women artists (Mannarino and Kurlandsky 2018). Because the arts are structured by racial, gendered, and class hierarchies that position elite, white men as the archetypical artists (Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Miller 2016), Latina community-engaged artists are often treated as if they lack value or legitimacy as artists.

The Latina community-engaged artists in my study cannot and do not want to conform to the archetypical artist model due to their race, gender, and community-engaged practices. As a result, their value and identities as artists are questioned by other artists, institutional gatekeepers, and members of Latina/x/o communities. Their experiences reflect the findings of

past research on gender- and race-based marginalization in the arts (Alacovska 2015; Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Miller 2016; Tator et al. 1998). However, in addition to devaluation, denied/limited access, and stereotyping/pigeonholing, their experiences also highlight another mechanism of marginalization – illegibility.

1. **Devaluation**

Past research has shown that less economic value is given to women artists and artists of color than male artists and white artists (Brown 2019; Agnello 2010). Furthermore, in many institutions and sectors of the labor market, women's and people of color's labor is devalued (Cohen and Huffman 2003; Reskin 1988; SSFNRIG 2017). Latina community-engaged artists are marginalized by the various ways that they and their work is devalued in the arts world. Nearly all of the Latina community-engaged artists with whom I spoke have a story about organizations asking them to produce artwork or perform artistic labor for free. They have been told “you will get great exposure” “I thought you made art because you love it, not to make money” or even “don't you care about your community?” But as one artist aptly put it, “people die of exposure... Yes, I love this. But the gas company doesn't accept love as a form of payment.” For example, one Latina community-engaged artist shared her experience of a Latina/x/o community-based organization asking her to design posters for their event for free. She lamented that she knew that same organization paid a white male artist from outside of the community to produce artwork for them, but “just because I'm brown girl from the hood they expect me to do it for free.” This expectation of free labor can be found among women of color in many professions.

Beyond traditional economic value, Latina community-engaged artists shared other ways that they and their work is devalued within the arts world, such as being passed over for awards

and honors or having their artwork disparaged as “crafts”. But one of the most common experiences of devaluation comes as a result of teaching being central to their practices. The artists’ community engagement largely came through their teaching. Some are arts educators in traditional academic institutions while others’ pedagogical practices take them into non-profit organizations and community spaces. Silvia shared her frustration of not being valued as an artist due to teaching being central to her practice. She says:

“But I’m also an art educator, and it’s interesting to me because I had always felt like art educators were never valued or even seen as the same as a painter or the same as a photographer. So, in some ways I felt more validated as a photographer than as an art educator even though I was doing all of it. And it still happens where if I tell people I’m a photographer, ‘oh what kind of photography?!’ If I’m tell people I’m an art teacher, it’s like ‘ohhhh... how’s that?’”

This common denigration of teaching artists almost kept Paulina from wanting to be an art teacher. She recalls, “I think that part of not wanting to be a teacher was this idea of ‘oh my god, if you’re a teacher, then you’re not really an artist.’ You know? Because you don’t have time, because of all these things. Because your ideas and your attention are focused on these other aspects.” The devaluation of teaching artists is ironic given that most artists’ development is facilitated by arts educators. Nevertheless, many of them have felt the pressure to separate their teaching from their independent practice and put more energy towards independent artistic production. The devaluation of their work often leads to my their denied or limited access to mainstream and community arts spaces.

2. **Denied/Limited Access**

Latina community-engaged artists have varying access to mainstream arts institutions. Some are regularly denied access and others are regularly within mainstream institutions. This variance among Latina community-engaged artists is largely dependent on their possession of social and cultural capital. The rise of a credential society (Collins 2019) has made access

fundamentally linked to the acquisition of educational credentials. Latina community-engaged artists with undergraduate and graduate art degrees have more access relative to those without any credentials. Additionally, access is facilitated through social capital. Artists can also gain access and through social networks that include individuals with institutional power.

Amara has been denied opportunities by curators and arts institutions simply based on her lack of educational credentials. She says, “I feel really pressured to get a degree. But it’s not something I *want* to do. It’s something I feel like I’ll do because I’m pressured by economic reasons. Because I could have all these things on my resume, but I don’t have a degree. And [employers] are kind of like ‘mmmm, I don’t know.’” While Amara has curated numerous community art exhibitions, has had some of her work featured in small galleries and the local National Museum of Mexican Art, and maintains a regular artistic practice, her access to traditional arts institutions has been limited by her lack of degree. She has largely been unable to secure a permanent, full-time job in the arts. Her only jobs in mainstream arts spaces have been temporary and part-time and were made possible by having advocates within institutions. For example, in 2019, she was a teaching artist for a teen advanced apprenticeship program at the Art Institute of Chicago and acquired this position through a friend’s referral.

However, even those who are regularly within mainstream institutions have their access limited or regularly questioned and contested. Even with traditional arts training and credentials, Latina community-engaged artists’ access to mainstream arts institutions is denied or limited. Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees do not necessarily serve as great equalizers. Hegemonic measurements of “impact” are constructed around the archetypical independent, elite, white, male artist. An artist’s impact is then related to their ability to make a name for themselves, have a large audience, secure spaces in prestigious galleries and museums,

and accumulate or produce economic profit. Maria has regularly confronted how impact measurements serve to deny and/or limit access to mainstream arts institutions. This is most exemplified through her employment experiences at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Maria has a BFA and MFA and has been successful at maintaining a community-engaged art practice while also gaining access to mainstream art spaces. Of the artists in this study, Maria has gained the most access to mainstream art spaces. Her work has been shown in museums around the United States and has been awarded prestigious awards and fellowships. But, even for her, this access has been and continues to be questioned and contested. Much of her post-graduate artistic career involved piecing together temporary, part-time teaching artist positions at various institutions and organizations. It was not until 2015 when she had the opportunity to become a tenure-track faculty member in the Department of Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC).

Despite her accolades and accomplishments, such as being named the 2014 Chicagoan of the Year in Visual Arts by the Chicago Tribune, she was not a finalist for her current position. All of the finalists were white artists. However, several advocates at SAIC led by a tenured faculty member of color “made a fuss”, wrote a letter to the college dean, and got her invited as a finalist. At that point, she had been an adjunct faculty member at SAIC for several years and was ready to leave the institution as a result of regularly being denied a permanent position. Despite many challenges, Maria was offered and accepted the position. During the hiring process, tenure review process, and classes she teaches, colleagues and even students question her position at SAIC and the value of her work. Research and testimonies show the racialized and gendered nature of hostility towards women of color professors.⁷ This questioning has often centered on

⁷ See Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. (2012) for a thorough examination of the hostile terrain for women of color professors.

measurability of her community-engaged works' impact. The hyperlocality and publicness of community work, lack of objectification of marginalized communities, her rejection of masculinist standards of self-promotion and claims of expertise, and the fact that her audience is largely working-class people of color has often been interpreted as a lack of impact and value. Race, gender, and class intersect to mark her work as not valuable, because she is not practicing art like an elite white male artist and large numbers of white people and important art world gatekeepers (critics, publications, and well-known artists) are not seeing/experiencing her work. Because she does not abide by traditional artistic standards built around the archetypical elite, white, male artist, her access is always contested.

Elvia had her access limited within community arts spaces based on her gender. For example, she was part of two community art collectives and one community arts organization. She was the president of one collective and the male members of that collective forced her out of her position. She explains:

“[The men] didn’t think I had the capacity to do all the projects that I was involved in. Which honestly was a very machista and bullshit thing to do to me. But that’s how they voted. That’s the explanation they gave me. I think they had deeper machista motives. They said it was because they thought that I couldn’t do those projects. That in and of itself is very machista. It’s like who are you to tell me what my capacity is. And I was pretty much the only woman in the group for a long time. A lot of other women artists came and went but I was the one that tried to stick with it the longest.”

Elvia’s experience emphasizes that Latina community-engaged artists’ access is not only contingent on their credentials or talent. Gendered expectations and assumptions serve to keep them in “their place” as defined by men. As with women of color in other industries and workplaces, capability, authority, and legitimacy are not easily solved through meritocratic means, such as earning credentials and building networks. Despite “objective” markers of qualification, their gender still marks them as underqualified. This is based on prescribed categories and meanings associated with those categories. As a

result, Latina community-engaged artists are also pressured to produce artwork that abides by existing categories. Stereotypes and pigeonholing serve as another mechanism by which the experience marginalization in the field of cultural production.

3. **Stereotyping/Pigeonholing**

The field of cultural production has autonomous logics that require neat, bounded classifications of art. Painting, sculpture, poetry, performance, and other artistic disciplines are hierarchized. This hierarchy depends on the enforcement of disciplinary boundaries by powerful institutions and powerful positions within the field of cultural production. The field of cultural production is also structured by social hierarchies, categories, and meanings that span across fields. Consequently, race, gender, and class stereotypes also impact how artists and their work is treated in the field of cultural production.

In order to do community-engaged work, Latina artists reject prescribed categories that separate artistic mediums, spaces, topics, and identities. They find themselves not fitting into any particular “box”. Whether in mainstream art institutions or Latina/x/o communities, they regularly contend with the imposition of prescribed racial and gendered expectations. As a result, Latina community-engaged artists are regularly marginalized through stereotyping and pigeonholing. They are pressured to produce artwork in ways that fit preconceived notions of how art should be produced, what it should look like, and who Latinas are. Arts schools are the most common mainstream art spaces where Latina community-engaged artists confront this marginalizing mechanism.

As discussed in the previous chapter, art schools enforce monodisciplinarity. When Paulina went to the San Francisco Art Institute, she remembers “taking a painting class, a drawing class, and then a sculpture class. So, when I was in school, I felt like ‘are you painter?

Are you a sculptor?’ I was always like ‘why do I have to define this thing, like why are you trying to assign these things to my identity?’” The artists described marginalizing effects of working in multiple mediums and the constant pressure by art schools to discipline them into one art medium. During Maria’s undergraduate education, a faculty member in the painting department told her that she did not belong in painting, because she “wanted to tell stories”. Instead, she would be better suited for animation.

This comment highlights the desire in the arts to keep artistic disciplines separated and distinct but also how race and gender impact the interpretation of women of color’s artwork. Maria was not being pushed out of painting because she lacked talent or technique. Instead, the faculty had a problem with *how* she approached painting. Critics and established artists make distinctions between artistic mediums and the hierarchization of artistic mediums reflect larger social antagonisms (Bourdieu 1993). Therefore, the faculty member made storytelling a point of distinction between painting and animation, associated storytelling with low status art, and reproduced the common practice of steering women of color into lower status disciplines. Storytelling, or testimonios, are central to the way Latinas produce and share knowledge (Garcia 2012; Latina Feminist Group 2001). So, the faculty member also reinforced the association of gendered and racialized characteristics with lower status art (Alacovska 2015; Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Collins 1979).

This highlights the fact that cultural capital is field specific. The ability to use storytelling to share knowledge and express oneself was not useful in the more prestigious art discipline. This is one way that whiteness, elitism, and masculinity are built into the hierarchy of art disciplines. It serves to reproduce a structure, similar to other fields, where the work and culture of elite, white men are given the most prestige and resources. The more one’s cultural capital

differs from that habitus, the more marginalized they are within the field. In addition to artistic discipline, the content of Latina community-engaged artists' work is also subject to stereotyping and pigeonholing.

When Victoria was attending Minneapolis College of Art and Design, a predominantly-White art school, her work about the impact of gang violence on her life, friends, and community was interpreted by professors as “oh, it’s very avant-garde” or “it’s very outsider art.” Similarly, while in art school, Paulina created a photo series about displacement, development, and gentrification in San Francisco. It included photos of a construction site, and she remembers a professor saying in a condescending tone, “Oh, the gritty urban style.” Their work was interpreted through its “Otherness” and reflects the consumption of Latina/x/o life and culture through an exotic lens. As a result of racialized and classed stereotypes, they and the content of their work were categorized as non-normative, peripheral, and unrefined.

Color-blind racism often codes racial stereotypes through language that is not explicitly race-based (Bonilla-Silva 2002). For example, Silvia produced a series of photos in which she spray-painted gold halos around her friends’ heads as an act of adoration. However, her professor asked her, “Why do you always want to work from the place of anger. Why is all of your work so angry? You’re spray painting people’s heads off.” Silvia’s act of adoration was interpreted through the angry Latina stereotype. For Latina community-engaged artists these frustrating and isolating experiences that characterize their time in art school, but these experiences are limited to mainstream art spaces.

As Noriega (1999:59) observes, “[m]inorities never get to represent more than their marginality.” Elvia was told by mainstream galleries early in her career that her work “was not ethnic/Mexican enough... There was a particular look to Latino/Mexicano work at the time. And

[my] work didn't fit that. So [other artists and I] started to try to support ourselves with shows in the neighborhood..." But as she looked for support in community spaces, she found other Latinas/xs/os also held narrow understandings of the type of work Latinas should produce. "[W]e would also get push back from some of the already more established [Latino community] artists that were throwing at us that 'you're too Americanized, you're too whatever'." In both mainstream and community art spaces, Latinas are expected to produce work that fits preconceived racialized ideas of what their work should look like.

There is an expectation that Latina art work uses imagery that explicitly marks their gender and ethnicity, such as references to Selena, Frida Kahlo, Aztecs, *calaveras*, *La Catrina*, Latin American Catholicism, nationalism, etc. Elvia's experiences made her very conscious of the ways Latina artists are pigeonholed within their own communities. She says:

"[The pigeonholing of Latina/x/o artists] is why I strongly avoided trying to do murals. I think maybe I've helped with three in my lifetime because of that idea, 'Oh you're Mexican, you must do murals.' And it's like 'ummm nope.' And I really love Día de los Muertos. But I try to be really careful about using it."

She expresses her frustration at the limited options available to Latina/x/o artists both within mainstream art institutions and Latina/x/o community spaces and is critical of the superficial and uncritical approaches to Latina/x/o cultural representations.

Latino men have largely produced and controlled official Latina/x/o cultural symbols, frameworks, and knowledge. As result, Latina/x/o assumptions about their own culture are imbued with race, gender, and class assumptions and often privilege specific perspectives and interests. Cultural symbols, histories, and meanings associated with what it means to be Latina/x/o, Mexican, Chicana/x/o, Puerto Rican, etc. often reflect oversimplified racial understandings and heteropatriarchal hierarchies (Anzaldúa 2012; Coffey 2012; Gutiérrez 1993; Wade 2010). These nationalist narratives construct stereotypes that Latina community-engaged

artists refuse to adhere to and accept. Elvia says, “Always painting the Aztecs... I cannot stand that whole nationalistic myth that all *Mexicanos* are *Aztecas*. You have erased hundreds of tribes when you do that. Like I’m from central Mexico. The Mexica were not our friends. So, I’ve always been like, back up with that.” Within Latina/x/o communities there is cultural gatekeeping done by for-profit and non-profit organizations.

Various stakeholders are politically and economically invested in cultural representations of Latinas/xs/os that appeal to hegemonic US national narratives (Dávila 2008). These branding and marketing strategies only serve to homogenize and flatten complexity among Latinas/xs/os (Dávila 2001). The commodification of culture often produces “ethnic entrepreneurs” whose “entire existence is predicated on not only the oversimplification of the ‘exotic peoples’ they purport to represent but about whom they actually know jack shit, but also is dependent upon the continued marginalization and exoticization of said peoples” (Valdes-Rodriguez 2020). This creates intracommunity inequities in which community gatekeepers are invested in maintaining certain stereotypes and understandings of their community (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

When Latina community-engaged artists try to approach art outside of narrow understandings of Latina/x/o cultures, they are either pressured to get back to prescribed imagery or have to engage in additional labor to justify their approach. For example, Paulina was asked to lead a painting event to fundraise for a Latina/x/o organization helping undocumented youth. The non-profit organization wanted her to teach the group how to paint a sugar skull in the likeness of Frida Kahlo. Paulina objected because she believed the event should value the process of building community among her group and have their individual, unique paintings reflect that process. But the organization was adamant about her using this imagery. Paulina stood her

ground and was willing to abandon the event, but the organization, with only days until the event, acquiesced.

Sometimes, Latina community-engaged artists are punished for not following these cultural prescriptions. Businesses in Latina/x/o often provide spaces for Latina/x/o artists by hiring them to DJ and display and sell their artwork. Restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and other businesses often have their walls covered in murals, photographs, paintings, and textiles. However, the artwork is often explicitly or implicitly required to contain recognizable cultural symbols and not unsettle any existing community hierarchies. One Pilsen bar that regularly shows Latina/x/o artists' work ended up destroying a Latina community-engaged artist's work that was critical of the local alderman. When the artist aired her grievances publicly, she was banned from the bar. Apolitical, purely aesthetic Latina/x/o art is given the most space within these businesses.

The previous three sections have explained how processes of devaluation, denied/limited access, and stereotyping/pigeonholing marginalize Latina community-engaged artists. These mechanisms all rely on a particular interpretation and judgement of their work. But what about when Latina community-engaged artists are marginalized as a result of other artists, critics, and the general public being unable to make a judgement of their work? I answer this question in the next section by explaining an additional mechanism of marginalization, illegibility, that few scholars (Herrera 2015) have discussed as it relates to Latinas/xs/os and cultural production.

4. **Illegibility**

While in the field of cultural production, Latina community-engaged artists often made legible in ways that lead to their marginalization. Being legible as Latina, they are immediately understood through particular race, gender, and class stereotypes and as not belonging in certain

institutional and community spaces. Based on not committing to a single art medium or using hegemonic artistic frameworks, they are legible as not serious artists or artists of lower value. However, there are also ways in which Latina community-engaged artists are illegible. They are illegible in those moments in which they are not being categorized, put in a box, or understood through stereotypes. Unlike devaluation, denied/limited access, and stereotyping/pigeonholing, there are moments in which they and their work are unrecognizable as fitting preconceived categories or frameworks. Because they do not fit any existing frameworks, there is no clear directive regarding what to do with them. Consequently, illegibility regularly means neglect and abandonment that can push them to the margins or completely out of the field of cultural production.

Domination requires that the oppressed be knowable to their oppressors (Said 1978). The dominated are made legible in ways that justify their domination. They must be legible as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’” so that that oppressor can be legible as “rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (Said 1978:48). An effective way to this is by constructing a “recognizable Other” that is “almost but not quite” (Bhabha 1994:122). Consequently, illegibility is a threat to power. For something to be illegible problematizes foundations of existing hierarchies. Latinas/xs/os have most prominently been made legible through the construction of the “illegal alien” (Chavez 2008). Politicians, businesspeople, and writers have attempted to counter this construction and assert Latina/x/o social, political, and economic belonging through “Latino spin” narratives (Dávila 2008) or participating in “legibility projects” (Rodríguez-Muñiz 2017). The former make Latinas/xs/os legible as “just ‘another ethnic group’ that is equally well-equipped to display... ‘Anglo protestant values’... and their belonging as undoubtedly American” (Dávila 2008:3). However, this reproduces the colonial strategy of

mimicry that makes Latinas/xs/os legible as “almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 1994:128). I contend illegibility leads to the marginalization of Latina community-engaged artists in the field of cultural production. It facilitates their marginalization and pushes them out of the field through neglect or extra labor that burns them out.

For developing artists, feedback is central to the growth of their practice. Latina community-engaged artists consistently discuss their experiences of simply not having their work understood in mainstream art institutions. Silvia was consistently told by her classmates and professors in art school, “I don’t understand how to talk about your work, so I’m not going to talk about it.” The whiteness and elitism of the institution and the adherence to traditional artistic norms and values was central to the inability for classmates to understand, relate to, and engage with her work even though she was clearly producing artwork. For example, for one of her BFA senior year photo critiques, instead of bringing in photo images that she took and printed, she set up a stage on which she performed, along with photos, a recontextualization of Rosie the Riveter. “And some people didn’t know [how to react]. It was dead silent when the performance was over.” At a time when Silvia felt she was really pushing her artistic practice forward, she was met with silence from classmates and faculty who did not want to engage with her work because it was not completely legible to them.

Their legibility is not only a result of how they produce art but also their subjectivities
Victoria realized during her BFA education:

“ok I go to a white art school and it’s hard to communicate with them what I’m trying to express. And that was the first time that I ever experienced that feeling. My professors wouldn’t know how to critique my work. And I wasn’t liking that. It wasn’t the type of support I needed to grow. And then the students were mainly from Minneapolis or from the suburbs. They didn’t know how to talk about it. And it was just hard for me.”

What makes this experience “hard” for many Latina artists is that in addition to doing the work that all art students are required to complete, they are made responsible for

additional labor. While middle-class, white students get to just be students and grow from the labor of faculty, advisors, and peers, Latina artists are expected to do work that should be the responsibility of institutional positions or end up provide labor for faculty, advisors, and peers.

Elvia attended an interdisciplinary MFA program that supported innovative, multidisciplinary art practices. Yet, her racial and class subjectivity produced challenges because there were no faculty of color. As a result, she had to do the extra labor of trying to find master's project advisors from outside of her institution and complete necessary paperwork. She explained to her program department, "nobody here can really get where I'm coming from. You all have a very different experience from me. Like even talking about what I wanted to do. Some of the feedback I got was like 'oh you don't get this at all.'" While her multidisciplinaryity was legible, her work was rendered illegible due to it being informed by her racial and class subjectivity as a working-class, first-generation Latina. For my Latina artists, producing artwork that was informed by their experiences as Latinas was the central cause of being rendered illegible.

Maria's MFA program was difficult for her and she questions whether it is difficult for everyone or if her racial and gendered subjectivity produced particular struggles. She says:

"Maybe everybody does [struggle in MFA programs]... No, I don't think everybody does actually. I remember my first critique where I made this giant rebozo with these women in Chiapas. And I was doing these performances with women. And it was just demolished. The overall feeling was that, I feel like they had no idea what I was trying to do. I had a professor once ask me after critique if I hated him. And I was so hurt for such a long time that he asked me that. [The faculty] was mostly [composed of] Whites. And I realized 'wow this is what you think of me, that I hate you all.' Like that's fucked up because I actually really liked him. I was so hurt."

As a result of her illegibility, Maria was given the emotional labor of trying understand why he would say that and also make him feel better. This produced a racialized and gendered request of

labor that required a Latina woman to make herself legible to a White man with institutional power in a way that did not make him feel like she hated him. Latina community-engaged artists regularly have experiences of having to do extra labor. This can intentionally or unintentionally wear artists down or burn them out and push them out of the field of cultural production.

Silvia provides a clear account of how being rendered illegible as a result of your race, gender, and class can marginalize Latina artists to the point where they stop producing art. She says this is how:

“white supremacy [and possibly white feminism] manifests in academic spaces. How sometimes it’s just difficult to be a person of color in these institutions with these ideas that I’m struggling with and unpacking. And then there’s no one there to build with. I was making work that was more personal to me, more self-oriented, and more self-guided. And I think that’s where people are like ‘I don’t know who you are or what you’re doing.’ This unwillingness to understand or because you don’t know it, it must not be talked about. Privileging a certain set of knowledge over another. Towards the end I was making pretty pictures just to prove that I was capable. After graduating college, I stopped making art. I just did not want to make art. After my BFA show, I was like I’m done with art. I want to be an art teacher but I don’t want to make art. I’m not interested in producing it. I’m not interested in making meaning. I don’t want to. I’m not into it. So, I stopped.”

The constant labor of having to make yourself legible, not being given support, and feeling invisible all serve to marginalize artists who do not abide by or fit into the field of cultural production’s logics.

Many Latina community-engaged artists in this study had, at one point or another, considered leaving the arts or temporarily stopped producing art due to their marginalization. But, as discussed in an earlier chapter, it was through community work that they were able to revitalize and grow their artistic practices, such as Amara reconnecting with an old friend that invited her to collaborate in a community artistic space or Silvia’s student who pushed her to restart her own independent practice. Despite their various experiences of marginalization, Latina artists have developed strategies that work with and against the various mechanisms of

marginalization. One of the more innovative strategies involves actively working with their legibility and illegibility. They turn a mechanism of their marginalization into a mechanism of resistance. I call this the paradox of (il)legibility.

B. **The Paradox of (Il)legibility**

“The other reason I decided to go to grad school was because as a resource coordinator for a non-profit community-based organization working inside of a high school, I also faced a lot of resistance. When I would go into principal meetings or talk to other individuals, I faced a lot of resistance. I didn’t have the academic education language, but the things I was saying were essentially the same [as others whose ideas were valued]. Because I wasn’t delivering them in the appropriate format or because I looked young, I was constantly being treated in a very condescending, paternalistic, and patronizing way by a lot of the older men and some women in these spaces. And I remember being like fuck this I need to have the language so I can continue to do the work.” – Paulina Camacho Valencia

In the above quote, Paulina details how she was rendered illegible as a result of her race, gender, class, and age. The content of what she was saying was “essentially the same” as what others were saying but, due to her subjectivities, those ideas were not legible to principals and other officials as legitimate. She learned that in order to “do the work” she had to find ways to be legible to gatekeepers and institutional officials.

While her decision to attend graduate school may seem like a decision to assimilate, I find that many of the Latina community-engaged artists in this study create a third path to resist marginalization in the field of cultural production. They neither “sell out”/“buy into” hegemonic values nor do they completely reject mainstream institutions and disengage. Instead, they strategically employ legibility and illegibility, or (il)legibility, to both engage and work against mainstream institutions and values. At times they will make themselves and their practices legible and at other times they will maintain illegibility. Therefore, they paradoxically use a mechanism of their marginalization in order to resist that marginalization. In this section I

explain this concept and detail the ways in which Latina community-engaged artists employ the third path of strategic (il)legibility.

The artists' use of (il)legibility is fundamentally motivated by a commitment to their communities and a rejection of dominant artistic ideologies. Through their own experiences and observations in their communities, they have seen the ways that mainstream arts institutions and values are structured to marginalize and be inaccessible to working-class Latina/x/o communities. Therefore, their actions are aimed at the larger goal of creating alternative and transformative artistic experiences for their communities. (Il)legibility allows them to secure resources from mainstream arts institutions and distribute them to their communities. However, Latina community-engaged artists have differing abilities to strategically use (il)legibility based on their social and cultural capital.

Latina community-engaged artists' practices reveal (il)legibility as a differential, disidentificatory strategy of resistance against their individual marginalization and larger systems of oppression. It is a differential mode of oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 1991/2009) by refusing to buckle under and submit to sublimation or assimilation within the arts. Through their experiences with marginalization, they have developed "the ability to read the current situation of power and to self-consciously choose and adopt" an artform "best suited to push against its configurations" (Sandoval 1991/2009: 348). It is a disidentificatory (Muñoz 1999) survival strategy that works within and outside the mainstream art world simultaneously. They employ a third mode of working on and against dominant artistic and social ideologies by neither assimilating nor strictly opposing them. This allows them to continue to produce artwork, claim spaces for themselves, and work against hegemonic artistic and social ideologies that

marginalize Latina artists. (II)legibility is most apparent in how Latina community-engaged artists approach multidisciplinary and social and cultural capital.

1. **Multidisciplinary**

Latina community-engaged artists' multidisciplinary practices allow them to strategically and simultaneously maintain illegibility and legibility as a form of resistance. Never being settled in a single discipline allows Latina community-engaged artists to minimize their marginalization. For Nicole, multidisciplinary allows her to resist her marginalization as a woman of color in a predominantly white art school. She says:

“I don't really have a home medium. Part of that is a survival mechanism, you know. Being a woman of color. The day I got [to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago] everyone was like, ‘you're not going to make it, you're not going to make it. Here's a list of people who didn't make it before you. They don't tenure Latinas.’ So, you know why I write and I do clay and I do new media and I do other stuff, talks, curating, everything is because I didn't think there was a place for me and I was going to have to keep moving or stay undercover. I just need to make it so it's impossible for them to tell me I'm not good enough. It's kind of like a nasty compulsion. Which is why I'm throwing on the [pottery] wheel now.”

She simultaneously works in mediums that are legible to the school and others that are not. Or as she explains, “What's the thing nobody would ever value at my school. I'm just going to do that a lot. Cause I'm free right now [on sabbatical] and it doesn't resemble something they like.” This allows her to produce work that counts towards promotion and job stability, but also actively produces work that is illegible as work someone in her position should be producing. As a result, she can keep the totality and complexity of her practice “undercover” and illegible to gatekeepers.

Similarly, Silvia, mostly known as a photographer, keep parts of her practice to herself and draws strength from her ability to keep her practice from being totally legible. She says, “Low key, I think a lot people are surprised when they see my work, because people never knew I could paint. It's like ‘when did you do oil paint?’ and I'm like ‘oh you don't know about that?’”

Illegible aspects of her practice complicate how people try to value her in the field of cultural production. At the moment that Latina community-engaged artists start to become completely legible to the field of cultural production, they use multidisciplinary to maintain illegibility. Someone may view Silvia as just a photographer and try to limit her identity and value to that medium, but little do they know she is also a skilled printmaker, sound artist, performance artist, and painter. It then becomes difficult to make her legible according to hegemonic field logics. Additionally, multidisciplinary gives Latina community-engaged artists the power of self-definition. They reject already-provided frameworks and decide for themselves how others will understand or not understand them.

The fluidity of multidisciplinary makes it difficult for gatekeepers within the field of cultural production to claim full intelligibility of their practices. Without full legibility, it makes it more difficult for them to be devalued and marginalized. If they are only photographers/painters/sculptors, then it becomes easy for those in power to make their work legible as inadequate and not a productive, important, nor talented artists.

While multidisciplinary allows Latina community-engaged artists to hold positions within the field of cultural production, their goals are not only motivated by individual survival or inclusion. Maintaining a position within the field is not a goal in and of itself. Instead, they understand their positions as strategic tools to actively challenge the logics and structure of the field of cultural production. Multidisciplinary challenges field hierarchies that determine what is valuable/sophisticated art and who produces this art. The artists understand these hierarchies as ordered by systems of race, gender, and class oppression.

The ordering of art disciplines is structured by larger social hierarchies (Bourdieu 1993). As a result, the most prestigious and valuable art is produced by elite white male artists, for elite

white audiences, and reflects elite white cultural frameworks. Art mediums associated with women, working-class people, and people of color has often been denigrated as “craft,” “folk,” “primitive,” or “naïve” (Becker 2008/1982; Brooklyn Museum 2020; Errington 1994). As a result, “high art” disciplines and movements tend to be dominated by elite, white male artists, such as the various painting, sculpture, and printmaking movements. Elvia, Vanessa, and Nicole each experienced being the only women in various medium-specific spaces, such as printmaking, painting, and sculpture. Art mediums are defined in opposition to each other and boundaries between mediums upholds hierarchies. As a result, multidisciplinary disrupts art medium hierarchies. It asks, as Paulina did in a previous chapter, “Why can’t I be good at all of them?”. By mixing disciplines, Latina community-engaged artists blur dominant boundaries between them. They put devalued art mediums on the same plane as “high art” mediums, position art mediums as complementary rather than contrasting, and argue that art is stronger when drawing from multiple disciplines. Multidisciplinary destabilizes the very foundations of hierarchies in the field of cultural production.

Overall, multidisciplinary is resistance informed by a differential consciousness, because it allows artists to move between artistic mediums and work with ones that will best provide them with the resources, access, and support that they need to survive. They can survey the artistic landscape and decide which artistic mediums will help them in the field of cultural production. Multidisciplinary is disidentificatory because it allows artists to engage with hegemonic artistic ideologies about what constitutes a valuable artform while also working against the notion that artforms should be separate and hierarchized.

Latina community-engaged artists’ use of multidisciplinary to “stay undercover” lets them strategically decide what part of their practices to make legible to the field and what parts

to keep hidden. They read each particular institutional context to decide what part of their practice will allow them to push back against hegemonic systems of oppression and which parts will only serve to further marginalize themselves and their communities. Never being settled in a single discipline allows Latina community-engaged artists to minimize their oppression, because their movement between various disciplines makes it difficult for arts institutions' gatekeepers to claim full intelligibility of their practices, which would then make it easier for them to be devalued and marginalized as artists. This does entail additional labor, but, for these artists, it is productive. The labor that illegibility requires of them, such as learning institutional policies, providing emotional labor for institutional actors, and navigating contentious relationships, often distracts them from artmaking. Multidisciplinarity requires labor that is focused on art production. So, it pushes their practices forward.

Not all Latina community-engaged artists have the equal ability to use multidisciplinarity for strategic (il)legibility. It is not necessary and sufficient in itself. Instead, its possibilities are mediated by an artist's social and cultural capital. As discussed earlier in the chapter, artists that have BFA and MFA degrees have built social networks, artistic knowledge, and individual credentials that positively impact their ability to use multidisciplinarity. They have the ability to articulate and justify their use of particular art mediums in ways that are legible to the field of cultural production. Other artists without that social and cultural capital find it much harder to find a position within the field. Without social and cultural capital that is useful in the field, multidisciplinarity can be disregarded and devalued as a "hobby" or "untrained". Beyond multidisciplinarity, various forms of social and cultural capital allow Latina community-engaged artists to use strategic (il)legibility.

2. Social and Cultural Capital

One's position in the field is both the cause and effect of various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1993). While capital allows Latina artists to use multidisciplinary, and their positions within the field of cultural production also provides them with capital that they can use for strategic (il)legibility. Latina community-engaged artists do not accumulate social and cultural capital for the goal of advancing their individual power and interests. They critically approach the accumulation of capital by asking, as Paulina did in this section's opening quote, what they need in order to be able to effectively navigate the field and serve their communities. Their capital provides Latina community-engaged artists with the knowledge, positions, and relationships necessary to resist and undermine the hegemonic logics and structure of the field of cultural production. These logics and structure are fundamentally shaped according to hegemonic race, gender, and class discourses. Therefore, the artists' understanding of the game and ability to play it allows them to create opportunities for marginalized artists and communities who may not have access to the field or resources within it. They deploy social and cultural capital that give them power and positions in the field to actively use strategic (il)legibility against the field's structure.

Victoria attended Yale University for her MFA. In addition to improving her individual artistic practice, she believes that her training at Yale will make it easier for her to secure funding and resources for Latina/x/o youth art programming in Chicago and give back to communities that have given her so much as an artist. She says, "I have to use the art jargon that you're going to need to know to persuade people [to support community artwork]." Additionally, Elvia's primary motivation for pursuing an MFA was to have "that piece of paper" that would open up opportunities and resources for her community work. This is a common approach among Latina

community-engaged artists. They view social and cultural capital within the field of cultural production as a means to transform inequities they see in their communities and in the arts. Social and cultural capital make it easier for them to attain resources for community work that is normally not supported within the arts. As with multidisciplinary, those artists that have the most social and cultural capital are also the ones that can most successfully deploy it in their practices.

As professors at SAIC, Nicole and Maria are transforming the ways that the next generation of artists and art educators understand and address white supremacy, classism, and patriarchy in the field of cultural production. For example, many of Nicole's art education students work with youth of color in Chicago, and she trains them to recognize how systems of oppression are upheld by traditional arts education pedagogies and how to make the arts more accessible, relevant, and useful for marginalized communities. However, many of their students come from privileged communities. As a result, they often have to use their social and cultural capital in order to "convince" students that they should care about inequities in the arts. They make themselves legible as legitimate sources of training and knowledge with their social capital as professors with social networks of well-known and respected artists and their cultural capital, such as jargon, academic knowledge, and their artistic skills. When discussing their pedagogies to institutional gatekeepers, they have to keep parts of their counterhegemonic pedagogies illegible. They cannot openly share that they are working to undermine the hierarchies that provide their institution power. Social and cultural capital also allow them to be strategically (il)legible in their community-engaged work.

When bringing art to "non-art" spaces, Latina community-engaged artists are strategic about how they talk about their work. For example, applying for grants, fellowships, and other

funding requires a particular language and form of writing. Gaining access to particular spaces, institutions, and permits requires a different form of communication. The wrong choice of words can signal a lack of authority, legitimacy, and preparedness or the wrong ideology. When speaking to gatekeepers and those in positions of power, they must use language to justify the importance and value of their work and why they should be given access to spaces in legible ways. At the same time, they also keep aspects of their work illegible, because they know those aspects would not receive support and resources.

Maria led a series of site-responsive art projects inside and around Cook County Jail. This included power washing phrases on the jail wall, a kite making and theatre performance on the boulevard outside of the courthouse, and, most recently, a year-long series of art workshops with men and women incarcerated at the jail that culminated in a public projection and sound installation on the jail wall. Projects like these had never been done before. To make them possible, Maria had to gain and maintain the permission and support of various gatekeepers, such as the Cook County Sheriff's Office, local politicians, jail administration, and funding sources. Negotiating all of these relationships required her to be strategic about how she talked about the projects, how she interacted with various stakeholders, her use of language, her instructions to those who contributed to the projects, and her presentation of the projects. She had to emphasize her past work, credentials, and use particular language to establish her legitimacy as an artist who could complete these projects and earn the trust of gatekeepers.

The projects were intended to critique the criminal legal system and incarceration and to motivate the public to think of alternative ways of dealing with community problems. Maria explicitly noted in project planning meetings that "the projects are not about beautifying the jail or strengthening the jail." If the project did either of those things, she would abandon the

projects. For this reason, she was explicitly against putting a mural on the jail wall (as many believed the project would do). First, the jail would only allow an apolitical or supportive mural on the wall. Second, the wall often has pieces fall off. Therefore, to install a long-lasting mural, the wall infrastructure would need to be strengthened and reinforced to support the mural.

Maria did not fully share the politics of the projects when talking to jail administration. Instead, she framed projects as “sharing stories” and “allowing the public to see the complexities of the jail”. She instructed the projects’ contributors and collaborators to creatively find ways to critique the jail and criminal legal system that were not completely legible as critiques. If jail officials saw the projects as critical of the jail, they would not allow the projects to take place in or around the jail. In fact, at many times throughout her meetings with jail officials, they explicitly asked Maria if the artwork would be “bashing” Cook County Jail or the sheriff. Consequently, Maria had to use her knowledge of institutions and field logics, artistic jargon, and institutional credentials and position throughout all of her projects regarding how to frame the art projects and what content would be in the art pieces. She was highly successful, because she was able to produce critical projects while maintaining jail permission. None of her proposed projects were rejected by jail officials. When jail administrators and local officials shared their views of the projects, it became clear that they had a different understanding of what the projects’ goals were. They saw the projects as highlighting what they believe to be the jail’s necessary, important, and innovative work. However, community members who attended the projects shared how the artwork made them reconsider and question the role of Cook County Jail in their communities. These contrasting understandings show that she successfully deployed strategic (il)legibility.

Artists' strategic approach to social and cultural capital is based on the understanding that in order to continue to do their community-engaged work they will often need to secure mainstream funding and institutional permission to realize their counterhegemonic goals. Using artistic jargon, attaining academic credentials, and holding positions within mainstream arts institutions makes them legible as legitimate and valuable artists and increases their access to mainstream resources. Then, they can continue to do work that is illegible as legitimate or valuable artwork because it is collaborative, community-engaged, public, and/or political.

Latina community-engaged artists use social and cultural capital with a disidentificatory strategy. It leads them to engage with hegemonic artistic ideologies and institutions while also working against them. They reject the assimilation/rejection dichotomy that proposes if they really care about their community, then they will completely reject hegemonic institutions or else they are "sell outs" (as some have encountered). Latina artists have accumulated varying levels of social and cultural capital. However, those who rarely engage mainstream arts institutions (due to limited social and cultural capital in the field) might have major political qualms with these institutions and the field of cultural production but they still work with and respect those artists who do strategically participate in the field. They are aware of the fact that artists can disidentify and be *in* but not *of* or *for* the field of cultural production.

Latina community-engaged artists regularly use multidisciplinary and social and cultural capital simultaneously. For example, Nicole collaborated with high school students in the Pilsen neighborhood to produce ceramic representations of their gentrifying neighborhood and collages using archival images and documents. The use of ceramic and archival documents allowed her students to discuss the displacement of Latinas/xs/os from Pilsen and develop resistance strategies and solutions. At the same time, Nicole's choice of ceramics and collage as

mediums to engage with history also provided her students the opportunity to show their work in an exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center about the history of community protest in Chicago. She used her professional networks with institutional gatekeepers and other artists to secure space for her students. Multidisciplinarity and her use of social and cultural capital allowed Nicole to provide young Latinas/xs/os space within a mainstream cultural institution that they normally would not be able to show their work. It also allowed her to creatively intervene and bring anti-gentrification politics into a mainstream institution largely attended by tourist and white audiences.

C. **Conclusion**

This chapter contributes to the scholarship on social hierarchies in the arts and Latina/x/o community art in three ways. First, it examines the mechanisms by which Latina community-engaged artists are marginalized. Second, it illustrates the complexity of Latina artists' marginalization within mainstream art institutions and Latina/x/o communities. Lastly, it offers a framework to understand how Latina community-engaged artists may strategically use a mechanism of their marginalization as a means to resist oppression. Overall, I reveal the paradoxical role that legibility and illegibility have in Latina community-engaged artists' ability to produce their work.

This chapter has several implications for researchers, artists, and arts institutions. My research highlights the work of artists who are central to curating artistic experiences for and with communities, but who have not been discussed in the literature on Latina/x/o community art. The focus on public, documented community actors (Espinoza et al. 2018) and the requirement of artists to self-promote in order to receive attention and support (Banks and Milestone 2011; Scharff 2015) has led to Latina community artists to be underdiscussed by

scholars. This chapter centers the experiences and practices of Latina artists who may not always get the publicity of Latino artists yet are still engaging in important movidas (Espinoza et al. 2018).

Examining my Latina community-engaged artists' experiences and practices provides a more complex understanding of Latina community-engaged art and the relationship between Latina/x/o community artists and mainstream art institutions. First, I find that there is no already-available safe place of belonging for Latina community-engaged artists. They experience marginalization in both mainstream art institutions and Latina/x/o communities. Classism, sexism, and racism permeate mainstream art institutions and patriarchy permeates Latina/x/o community art spaces. Second, rather than community artists being in complete opposition to mainstream institutions, they are artists that bridge this divide. This is not to say that they live double lives nor that they are living contradictions. Instead, they have developed strategies for simultaneity. This position of in-betweenness places Latina community-engaged artists in Anzaldúa's (2012) *nepantla*.

Their liminal positions illuminate the mechanisms of marginalization that they encounter while artists. They regularly contend with the devaluation, denied/limited access, and stereotyping/pigeonholing, because their practices and work do not conform to hegemonic artistic values constructed around the archetypical white, male, independent artist (Miller 2016; Tator et al. 1998) and they "never get to represent more than their marginality" (Noriega 1999). However, past research has not yet provided a framework for their experiences of marginalization when individuals simply do not know how to talk about, understand, or engage with their work. As result, I introduce the concept of illegibility to explain these experiences.

Lastly, this chapter provides a framework for the differential, disidentificatory mode of resistance that I call strategic (il)legibility. It is a strategy by which Latina community-engaged artists use multidisciplinary and social and cultural capital to simultaneously engage the field of cultural production and actively work against hegemonic field logics and hierarchies. It is a third mode of dealing with the mainstream/community and assimilation/opposition dichotomies that are set up for them. As a result of their experiences of marginalization and social and cultural capital, they are able to understand the dynamics of any particular context to deploy strategic (il)legibility to best serve their goals. They will make parts of their work legible while intentionally keeping other parts illegible in order to best work against hegemonic logics and hierarchies built on race, gender, and class oppression.

In the following chapter I examine the alternative spaces, or third spaces, that Latina artists create and work within using practices of articulation and strategic (il)legibility. These spaces serve as alternatives to mainstream art institutions and community spaces that limit artistic practices. As I will show, Latina community-engaged artists' alternative community spaces open up possibilities for envisioning and enacting community in ways not possible in other spaces. These ephemeral, sometimes non-physical spaces are central to the power of Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago's Latina/x/o communities.

VII. CREATING SPACE, CURATING COMMUNITY: LATINA COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTISTS' THIRD SPACES

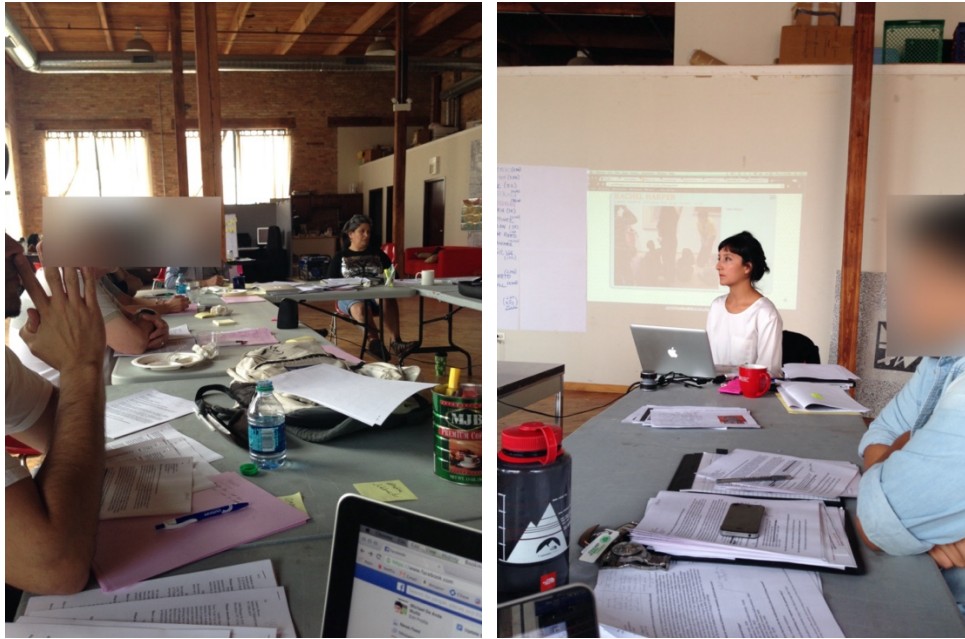


Image 7-1 – 96 Acres Project selection meeting (Photo by Author)

The 96 Acres Project, created in 2014 by Little Village-raised artist Maria Gaspar, is a community-engaged art collective that uses public art to generate alternative narratives about Cook County Jail, one of the nation's largest single-site pre-detention facilities. Cook County Jail sits on 96 acres of land or about 74 American football fields in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood, a predominantly working-class, immigrant, and Mexican enclave. In 2014, after two years of groundwork to build relationships with city and county officials and receiving necessary approval, Maria had secured funding to support several site-responsive public art projects around the jail. On July 31, 2014, 10 collective members, artists, educators, community

members, and myself gathered for a day to review project proposals. The application and review process, constructed by Maria, explicitly rejected the practices of mainstream arts foundations and institutions. The application (Figure 1) was accessible in its availability (free and online), language (no technical jargon and in both English and Spanish), and requested information (did not ask for institutional affiliation and credentials or past grants/exhibitions/shows). The application allowed for audio recorded answers to application questions, and the project also held free and open application workshops that interested applicants could attend to strengthen their proposals. During the review process, mainstream institutional credentials, language, and experience were not given priority. Instead, projects were chosen based on artists' connection and commitment to Little Village and those negatively impacted by incarceration. By the end of the review session, we selected eight projects to support. There was diversity in art mediums, intended audiences, artists' biographies, and forms of community-engagement.

One project that 96 Acres supported was titled, "Stories from the Inside/Outside," a two-night public video projection installation. From 8:30 PM – 10:30 PM on September 11-12, 2015, two videos were projected onto a section of the 25-foot-tall, 800-foot-long wall that surrounds Cook County Jail's compound. The first video, "Letters Home," was based on letters from a father to his daughter during his ten years of incarceration. The video included images, animations, and the daughter's narration to connect her father's letters to her experiences. The second video, "Freedom/Time," was a series of animations created by eleven men serving long-term sentences at Stateville Correctional Center, a maximum-security prison located about 35 miles southwest of Chicago. The artists used hand-drawn animations to share their understandings and experiences of time and freedom.

How can interested people or groups submit proposals?

Interested parties should submit proposals using this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1m1fEJ-pe_L3Kt1d7CH9Gw_kSA1fXwJlpAwOR5ymNGLQ/edit?usp=drive_web.

All applicants must complete the Basic Project Information section of this form. Applicants may choose to answer the Project Narrative questions (listed below) by filling in the text boxes provided OR by attaching a link to an audio or video response (up to 5 minutes long in the form of Vimeo, Youtube, Soundcloud, a website). Applicants will also have the option to submit up to three links with ADDITIONAL examples of artwork or relevant projects.

Each proposal should make the goal and message of the proposed project clear, and should answer these four questions:

- What is the concept of the public artwork being proposed? Describe how it will be presented.
- How is it reflective of the mission and work of 96 Acres?
- How does it engage the diverse communities, individuals, and families impacted by incarceration and/or the Cook County Jail?
- How will the project have a lasting impact beyond 2014?

All proposals must have an associated budget. Proposed expenses should fit into the following categories: Supplies, Equipment, Stipends, Transportation, Communications/Marketing/Media, Printing/Postage, Rental Costs, Professional Development/Training.

Budget text should be formatted like this:

Supplies: Brushes (10 x \$2.50 each) = \$25

Supplies: Paint (10 x \$5 per pint) = \$50

Stipends: Artist Pay (\$500 x 2 artists) = \$1000

TOTAL =\$1075

How will proposals be chosen?

A group of *96 Acres* Community Steering Committee members will review all submissions. Members of this review committee may not submit a proposal. Each project will be rated for potential impact; selected projects will be subject to blind review by the appropriate administrative bodies as needed. Some projects that do not receive funding in fall 2014 may be recommended for implementation in the future as additional funding is secured.

What do people or groups receive if their proposal is chosen?

Interested parties can apply for either a base grant of \$2500 or up to \$5000 to support the project. Selected applicants will be invited to participate in trainings with other applicants and *96 Acres* contributors, as well as a reflection session to be held in the winter of 2014 after projects are completed. Additionally, all artwork produced in connection with this RFP will be highlighted on the *96 Acres* website, social media sites, and other locations that offer opportunity for promotion.

What is the timeline for summer installations?

- July 1 RFP is released
- July 15 Info session and proposal writing workshop is held
- July 28 Proposals are due
- July 28-Aug 29 Proposals are reviewed and selected
- Aug 29-Sept 9 First round of selected applicants is contacted
- Sept 10 Cook County Board takes action at monthly meeting concerning proposed installations
- Sept 11 Final round of selected applicants is notified
- Sept and Oct Selected projects take place

How can interested people or groups get answers to questions?

An information session and proposal writing workshop will be held on Tuesday, July 15 from 6-8 pm at Enlace Chicago's office located at: 2329 S. Troy, Chicago IL, 60623. Interested parties should attend with project concepts and questions prepared. A video of this information session will be available on the *96 Acres* website for those that are not able to attend. Additional questions can be emailed to 96Acresproject@gmail.com with all necessary contact information provided in the email. *96 Acres* is committed to supporting applicants in developing strong proposals and, if funded, carrying out impactful projects.

Figure 1: 96 Acres Project call for proposals application

Maria Gaspar worked with jail officials to gain permission to project onto the wall and worked with a local business owner to use his property across the street from the wall as a gathering space for attendees. Each night about 30 individuals came specifically for the installation. However, the jail's location on the busiest thoroughfare in Little Village and the event taking place on a Friday and Saturday night attracted about 50 more attendees each night who were walking or driving by the installation and decided to stop. This installation was ephemeral and transformed an already existing space that was powerful for those in attendance and the contributing artists. Artistically, the event created a space for artwork and ideas that are largely absent in traditional artistic spaces, such as galleries and museums. For the community, the event created a public space for community members to reflect and discuss issues for which there are few spaces. Overall, Latina community-engaged artists create third spaces in order to curate alternative forms of community.

In this chapter, I explore the alternative community spaces, or third spaces, that Latina community-engaged artists in Chicago regularly create and work within, like the one detailed above. Why and how do Latina community-engaged artists create third spaces? I examine third spaces by building on scholarship about the production of space and the role of art in Latina/x/o communities. I show that these third spaces highlight the importance of Latina artists in creating spaces that curate alternative ways of being in community. Physical and non-physical third spaces, such as public site interventions, artist collectives, and community art shows, are alternatives to mainstream art spaces as well as traditional Latina/x/o community art spaces. I begin the chapter by discussing the different types of third spaces and their shared themes. I then move to elaborating a theoretical intervention that explains the implications and importance of third spaces.

A. **Space and Latina/x/o Community Art**

As discussed in Chapter 2, I draw from the spatial turn in the social sciences and the new sociology of art in which scholars argue that social space is the product of human labor and social interaction (Lefebvre 1974/1991) and art, through imagination and creativity, is a central constitutive of space (Eyerman 2006). Space is not simply a physical container of activities. Space is imbued with meanings produced by individuals (Bachelard 1958/1994). Therefore, I understand space beyond a physical location and view space as constantly being produced, even within the same physical location. Furthermore, I view space beyond the physical and conceptualize space as a non-physical entity that is created through social connections and affect.

Within Latina/x/o communities, art has been central to the ways that Latinas/xs/os have built their communities in United States cities and resisted their marginalization (Acosta-Belén 1992; Dávila 2004; Gube and Huebner 2000; Hurtado 2000; McCaughan 2012). My conceptualization of space as more than a physical location allows me to account for the Chicana/x/o attitude and taste called “rasquachismo” (Ybarra-Frausto 1989). Rasquaches use resourcefulness, inventiveness, bright colors, high intensity, and shimmers to challenge the ways urban processes like gentrification and urban removal seek to cleanse urban spaces of working-class people of color. Latina/x/o artists serve as creative placemakers and placekeepers that construct and preserve the cultural memories of their communities (Bedoya 2014). A rasquache sensibility constructs spaces that resist hegemonic white middle-class aesthetics and culture that seeks to mute and erase cultural difference or what Muñoz (2000:73) calls, “the ‘excessive’ affective that characterizes latinidad.”

Much of the research on Latina/x/o community art has focused on traditional public artforms (such as murals), traditional independent artists, or community arts institutions

(Cordova 2017; Dávila 2004; Donahue 2011; Lin 2019; Lowe 2000; Moreno 2004; Romo 1992).

Given the current political and economic context that has produced stagnate wages, neoliberal urban policies, divestment from and privatization of affordable housing, and the gentrification of Latina/x/o communities, permanent art and traditional community art spaces are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain (Feng and Owen 2019; Hammerl 2018; Lefebvre 2016). As a consequence, Latina/x/o community-engaged artists develop new forms of community spaces using a *rasquache* sensibility. It follows that researchers must expand their analyses of Latina/x/o community art spaces to include alternative conceptualizations of spaces.

Furthermore, as shown in previous chapters, the Latina community-engaged artists in my study have often found themselves marginalized within mainstream art institutions and community art spaces. So, while many community art spaces and practices serve as alternatives to mainstream arts spaces (Grams 2010), they still reproduced some of the hierarchies and marginalization that exist within mainstream spaces. Continuing from her discussion of “not being Mexican enough” or “too Americanized” for Latina/x/o community art spaces, Elvia explains:

“So, we started to try to support ourselves with shows in the neighborhood and alternative spaces. We started working together and creating opportunities. That’s where Polvo [an art collective] came from... We had people from all different kinds of backgrounds that said they were all feeling that same discomfort of like the institutions don’t see the value in what we do. And a lot of the folks that were part of Polvo were also immigrant or second-generation. So, they were still placed as outsider type of groups that gets imposed upon you as a migrant. We could look at each other’s work from different backgrounds and be like oh I get what you’re doing. I get what you’re grappling with here.”

Multiple instances of marginalization led Elvia and artists with similar experiences to work together to collaboratively build third spaces where they could support each other and allow their practices to flourish.

I use the concept of “third spaces” to signal the location of Latina community-engaged artists and their alternative community art spaces as in-between, liminal, in the borderlands, both/and, inside/outside, and pushing against hegemonic binaries (Anzaldúa 2012; Licona 2012). I draw from the tradition within queer and feminist Chicana and Latina feminist work that identifies a third location outside of hegemonic binaries and dichotomies (Anzaldúa 2002a; Anzaldúa 2002b; Cotera 2008; Espinoza et al. 2018; Sandoval 2000). Muñoz (1999) conceptualized disidentification as a “third mode” of dealing with hegemonic discourses. Queer and feminist Chicanas and Latinas have not been able to locate their experiences within hegemonic assimilationist or counterhegemonic discourses. Neither offered space for the intersectional, complex, and sometimes contradictory ways that racial, gender, and sexual minorities strategically survived and resisted their oppressions. As a result, these scholars and activists have located a third space that holds potential for freer futures. Latina community-engaged artists similarly have found the liminal spaces mainstream artistic spaces and community art spaces to be liberatory spaces. I call these “third spaces”. They engage with and work against mainstream institutions and the field of cultural production. They create spaces that are outside both mainstream art spaces and established community art spaces.

In the next section, I examine community art spaces that are alternatives to both mainstream art spaces, such as elite museums, galleries, and art schools, and traditional Latina/x/o community art spaces, such as community-based art organizations, galleries, and museums. While still engaging with these spaces, Latina community-engaged artists have found it necessary to build and work within third spaces. I detail the types of third spaces that they construct and work within.

B. Types of Third Spaces

Expanding my conceptualization of space has led me to identify multiple types of third spaces. In addition to physical third spaces, Latina community-engaged artists regularly discuss the importance of non-physical third spaces, such as digital and social spaces. While existing art spaces create closures, obstacles, and barriers, alternative spaces provide openings and possibilities. While they have developed strategies to produce art within the field of cultural production, it is within third spaces that they believe they are doing their most impactful and innovative community-engaged work. Therefore, I highlight these spaces in this chapter. While I name and describe these third spaces separately, there is much overlap among them. Physical and non-physical spaces often coexist, and Latina community-engaged artists are regularly present in multiple spaces. In fact, the existence of one type of space is often deeply intertwined with the existence of another third space.

1. Non-Physical

Two types of spaces best exemplify non-physical third spaces –artist collectives and digital spaces. These third spaces highlight the ways in which Latina community-engaged artists react to social, economic, political, and technological landscapes that make physical spaces more difficult or less desirable than non-physical third. These spaces are networks composed of strong ties of support, care, and resources. They provide Latina community-engaged artists with a social space in which they feel that they can most effectively practice and develop community-engaged art. Thus, while this is not a space that they *physically* go to, it is a space that they can *socially* and *mentally* go and advance their work. These non-physical spaces allow and require them to innovate how they conceptualize and enact community art.

The first type of non-physical third space, collectives, inherently offer a framework that is alternative to mainstream art values. Collectives are informal groups composed of artists who share common political, social, and/or artistic goals. Collectives provide members with a social space to share ideas, develop strategies, innovate and develop artistic practices, and build community. Some collectives are composed of artists within the same city or region and others include artists from different parts of the United States. Collectives often work together to produce collectively authored work, organize art events, engage in political organizing, distribute resources, and support members' independent practices. Contrary to many community art organizations, they are not structured by bureaucratic hierarchies. Instead, each member holds as much power and responsibility as another member. Collectives make explicit Becker's (1982/2008) argument that art is inherently a collective enterprise, because an individual piece of art is often the product of various individuals sharing ideas, techniques, and labor.

Latina community-engaged artists are involved in several collectives that do community-engaged art in Chicago. Some examples of collectives include: The 96 Acres Project, Las Artelitas, Marimacha Monarca Press, The Chicago ACT (Artists Creating Transformation) Collective, Instituto Gráfico de Chicago, For the People Art Collective, Mujeres Mutantes, Polvo, Multiuso Collective, and ChiResists. Some collectives like The 96 Acres Project, Las Artelitas, For the People Art Collective, Marimacha Monarca Press, and ChiResists explicitly tie their artistic production to political actions. For example, 96 Acres focuses on incarceration, Marimacha Monarca is a "creative space for and by nuestra queer familia," Las Artelitas and ChiResists focus on the Little Village neighborhood, indigenous rights, and anti-capitalism, and For the People Artists Collective is "a radical squad of Black artists and artists of color in Chicago. As artists who organize, it is our duty to create work that uplifts and projects struggle,

resistance, liberation and survival within and for our marginalized communities and movements in our city and our world.” Collectives like Multiuso, Mujeres Mutantes, Polvo, and Instituto Gráfico de Chicago prioritize the cultivation of art and artists among working-class Latina/x/o communities. All of these collectives were either founded by Latina community-engaged artists, are predominantly composed of Latina community-engaged artists, or have Latina community-engaged artists as active central members.

Vanessa Sanchez believes that joining artist collectives pushed her to have a more community-engaged artistic practice.

And what I’m grateful for being a part of the Instituto Gráfico de Chicago and ACT Collective [two Chicago artist collectives] is that I’m able to think about making work that’s for others and that’s not about me. Cause I’m sick of talking about myself. I want to make work that can be accessible to everybody. Everybody can get a feeling or feel connected to others. I like being connected with ACT Collective and IGC, because it’s more than just being an artist and being in the studio. It’s a different practice than what I was doing before [independent art].

Vanessa’s experience highlights the ways that collectives fundamentally impact artists’ independent practices. These spaces expose artists to possibilities for their own work outside of the collective. Collectives are more than sites of refuge. They are transformative spaces where artists can plan, rehearse, and act out alternatives.

The second type of non-physical third space is digital space. Social media and the internet have provided artists with new ways to build and practice community. These technological innovations have allowed for individuals to communicate faster over physical distances, a time-space compression (Harvey 1990). Diana Solis, a long-time community engaged artist in Chicago, noted that, in the 1970’s, community-engaged artists could only organize community events by talking on the phone or finding a time to meet in person at someone’s home. With the internet, community-engaged artists can hold discussions and events through email, Facebook groups, group instant messenger chats, Instagram or Facebook Live,

video chat, or Twitter threads. Latina community-engaged artists regularly create and work within digital spaces on platforms such as Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. These spaces allow them to quickly plan community events, share their work, share knowledge, meet other community-engaged artists, and build community without necessarily needing to be in physical proximity.

Silvia Gonzalez created a Facebook group called “People of Color Artist Space” (POCAS). This group has over 800 members. Most are artists of color from the Chicagoland area. Silvia created POCAS to provide a space that addresses the racial inequities in the mainstream art world. Members share their work, ideas, events, resources, and opportunities. Silvia regularly organizes POCAS in-person meet-ups during which members meet somewhere around the city to discuss works-in-progress submitted by group members, participate in workshops, and openly discuss the politics of art. These meet-ups have included established artists of color in Chicago, artists of color who had recently moved to Chicago and are looking to connect to a community of artists of color, and Chicago artists in the early stages of their artistic practices. Spoken word poetry, technological design, painting, performance, photography, and other art mediums are represented at POCAS meet-ups. These instances of physical spaces would not be possible without non-physical digital spaces. In the following section I discuss the three main types of physical third spaces that Latina community-engaged artists regularly construct and work within.

2. **Physical**

I find that Latina community-engaged art practices are strengthened by their relationships with three types of physical third spaces – self-sufficient spaces, public differential spaces, and undercommon disidentificatory spaces. In this section I will provide examples of each type of

physical space and discuss what makes each type of space unique. I call these physical spaces because they entail the construction or modification of a physical location or place. As a result, these spaces are accessible only to those that can go to or happen to come across that space at a particular time and place. In this way, while these types of third spaces challenge the structure and culture of mainstream and traditional community art spaces, they still can encounter similar limitations.

a. **Self-Sufficient Space**

The first type of physical third spaces are what I call self-sufficient spaces. These are do-it-yourself (DIY) spaces, because they do not rely on any institutional funding, such as grants or sponsorship. Instead, they use a *rasquache* sensibility to make do with resources existing within their communities. The physical space, labor, electronic equipment, food, drinks, materials, artwork, and promotion are all donated or done for free by community members. By doing so, self-sufficient spaces contest dominant portrayals of working-class Latina/x/o communities as defined by deficit and highlight abundance and creativity in these communities.

These spaces are often the temporary transformation non-art spaces into community art spaces.⁸ The artists often secure the physical spaces through personal relationships and networks. They share some characteristics with mainstream art galleries, such as hanging art on the walls, having themes for exhibitions, and advertising sale prices for artwork, but they do not attempt to

⁸ One example of a self-sufficient space that is permanent is Pilsen Outpost. This community gallery/art studio/art store was started by Teresa Magaña, Diana Solis, and Pablo Ramirez in 2013 and continues to be run by Teresa and Pablo. Pilsen Outpost started as a pop-up store at various festivals, markets, and art shows. By 2014, they had a permanent shop in Pilsen. In 2018, they took advantage of the opportunity to move into a storefront on Pilsen's main street, 18th Street. While Pilsen Outpost is very similar to more traditional community art spaces, they differ in their commitment to local artists and local community members. They do so by selling mostly local artists, providing space for local activists and community groups to meet and hold events, and keeping prices of artwork and workshops affordable for local community members. Teresa shared that there is economic pressure to appeal to mainstream art audiences and raise prices, she refuses to do so. For example, a landlord who runs Airbnb units in Pilsen, a community experiencing gentrification and decreasing affordable housing, requested that their guests receive discounts at Pilsen Outpost. Teresa refused.

replicate nor emulate mainstream art galleries. Instead, most aspects of self-sufficient spaces explicitly reject the cultures and structures of mainstream art galleries. In many ways, they are imagining and enacting new possibilities for art spaces. First, they reject the exclusive and elitist culture of mainstream art spaces. They create spaces that are primarily for and by their local communities. Artists and audiences for whom mainstream art spaces are not accessible are prioritized in self-sufficient spaces. All art is for sale at affordable prices and produced by local artists who are not always formally trained or full-time artists. There is no hierarchy of art mediums as visual art, sculpture, performance, poetry, music, zines, photography, and textiles are simultaneously present and given equal value in these spaces.

Unlike mainstream art spaces, art is not the *only* focus in self-sufficient spaces. These spaces become an amalgamation of the interests and needs of their communities. They support fundraisers for local progressive and revolutionary organizations, social movements, and political candidates. They support struggling community members with clothing, food, and school supply drives. Many provide forums for community discussions on current events and social issues. Understanding the need to joy and expression, social dancing, music performances, storytelling, and comedy are regularly featured. As alternative spaces, they also include local healers that provide alternative forms of health and spiritual care, such as tarot readings, reiki, and organic personal care items. Overall, these spaces are accessible because they reflect the language, affect, and energy of the local community who are often excluded from mainstream art spaces.

Las Artelitas, an “(almost) all Latina collective” based in Little Village, regularly organize community art exhibitions that are prime examples of self-sufficient spaces. On July 30, 2016, they transformed the back of a small furniture store into an exhibition titled “Mujer

Luchadora/Warrior Woman”. The 50-foot-by-50-foot space was only accessible by walking through an alley. I walked past discarded tamal husks, a stray cat, a rat, and neighbors passing time with each other towards cumbia music and the small crowd talking, drinking, and eating. Once I made my way through the back gate, I saw the walls displaying featured artwork such as zines about the everyday struggles of being a single mother, photography, textiles, paintings, and drawings. All of the artwork was about women and femininity. Featured artists included men and women who were formally trained artists and have shown their work in mainstream art spaces as well as part-time artists who have no formal training or regular artistic practice. Each piece of art had the piece’s title, the artist’s name, and the price (if for sale). To the right was a table with colored pencils, crayons, markers, backpacks, notebooks, and other donated school supplies. Next to the bathroom in the back, there were alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, chips, and other snacks available. Near the entrance were speakers and DJs playing cumbia, hip hop, house, freestyle, and other Latin American music. Attendees danced outside and in the middle of the room. One attendee happily remarked, “I feel like I’m just going to a family party rather than an art gallery.”

Two weeks later at the August 14 closing of the exhibition and potluck, this middle space was filled with tables and chairs. During the closing, attendees had open, and sometimes contentious, conversations about educational inequities, gentrification, police violence, and social movements. A year later, Las Artelitas transformed a tattoo parlor into another temporary exhibition titled “Stoop Dreams”. This exhibition featured many of the same characteristics as the “Mujer Luchadora/Warrior Woman”. However, this exhibition included live band and spoken word performances, spiritual guidance, locally made self-care products, a fundraiser for a local undocumented artist who had his computer stolen, a silent auction for featured artwork, and

a raffle for donated jewelry, gift cards, and services. Las Artelitas' self-sufficient spaces push the boundaries of what community art spaces can be. Attendees experience first-hand experience of alternative ways of valuing, showing, and experiencing art in their communities.

b. **Public Differential Space**

The second type of physical third space is what I call public differential space. Much like self-sufficient spaces, these are DIY spaces. Unlike self-sufficient spaces, pieces of art are not the center of public differential spaces. Instead, the spaces themselves are created using art and creativity. Public differential spaces involve the activation of public spaces with a focus on specific political grievances. These spaces exist in, and sometimes interrupt, spaces that community members regularly enter in their everyday lives. In doing so, they seek to raise public awareness of particular social and political issues impacting their communities and gain the attention of public officials. By politicizing seemingly apolitical spaces, they make visible the social, economic, and political processes and structures that are largely invisible to many community members. My conceptualization of these spaces draws from Sandoval's (1991/2009) "differential mode of oppositional consciousness," which informs women of color feminists' fluid and coalitionary political activism. Public differential spaces come as a result of Latina community-engaged artists reading "the current situation of power and to self-consciously choose and adopt the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations" (Sandoval 1991/2009:348). Public differential spaces are created to address urgent community issues and come as a result of coalitions between various groups and individuals.

Most US public political actions (marches, rallies, protests, etc.) since the 1950s have involved some form of creativity and art (Reed 2005). For example, the civil rights movement had freedom songs, attendees of political actions design creative and sometimes humorous signs,

many at the 2017 Women's March created and wore pink "Pussyhats", and political rallies involve musical performances. Latina community-engaged artists' public differential spaces engage with this tradition in many ways. However, they differ in many important aspects.

First, the spaces are created by community members without the support of organizations or mainstream institutions. Public differential spaces are not created by individuals whose job it is to organize political actions. Instead, public differential spaces are developed by individuals who come together as a result of their shared concerns for their communities.

Second, public differential spaces do not have any financial support or sponsorship from external sources. All of the labor, materials, and money come from organizers themselves or are donated by local community members. These spaces are the result of community members contributing what they can, such as \$10, artistic skills, materials, personal networks, social media skills, community organizing skills, paper and printing resources, trade skills, etc.

Third, in addition to critiquing, contesting, and raising awareness about community issues, public differential spaces are composed of actions and relationship building that actually allow their communities to address their problems. In doing so, these spaces highlight the ability for working-class Latina/x/o communities to solve their own problems if certain institutions and structures would get out of the way. They not only identify the problem but also offer microlevel and macrolevel solutions. They address community members' immediate needs and concerns while also demanding governmental officials and private businesses make changes that impact their communities' social, economic, and political landscapes.



Image 7-2 – Joyful resistance march (Photo by Author)

The Joyful Resistance March is a prime example of a public differential space. It took place on July 29, 2017 in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood. Organized primarily by Latina and queer Latinx artists and activists, this march was to challenge the rapid gentrification of Pilsen. However, organizers rejected the idea that marches had to be “anti-something” and angry. Instead, they framed the event as pro-community and joyful. The march began at Plaza Tenochtitlan in the center of Pilsen where local activists and activists from other gentrifying neighborhoods in Chicago addressed the gathering crowd. Led by a large speaker playing cumbia, regional Mexican, house, and freestyle music, the march proceeded down Pilsen’s main street, 18th Street. Along the route, marchers sang and danced while inviting community members enjoying a beautiful Saturday to join.

At various locations on 18th Street, the march stopped for direct actions, knowledge sharing, and performances. For example, marchers shamed and “glitter bombed” businesses that facilitate gentrification, raised up and thanked long-time locally owned and community-centered businesses, listened to community elders share the histories and meanings of various fading murals, and performed a 43-second die-in to discuss the 2014 disappearance of Ayotzinapa

students in Mexico. The march also stopped at the former building of Casa Aztlan. This community center operated from 1970-2013 and housed art studios and classes, after school programming, meeting and operation spaces for activists, and health and immigration education and support. The building had been bought by a private developer who painted over historic murals with grey paint in order to turn the building into a co-living building for young professionals. Organizers created large paper-mache puppets in the likeness of the local alderman, the mayor, and a skeleton that represented developers. In front of Casa Aztlan, they invited children to perform the banishment of the local alderman, mayor, and developers by throwing money at the puppets as marchers shouted, “Fuera Solis [the alderman]! Fuera Rahm [the mayor]!”

The march ended in a local park with a community collaborative art piece, workshops and resources on health and housing rights, and food and drinks. The march created a space for community members to collectively air their grievances against gentrification, highlight their neighborhood’s culture, express what they love about their neighborhood, and meet other community members who share a love and passion for Pilsen. This also allowed community activists from Chicago’s segregated neighborhoods to meet each other, find commonalities in their struggles, and plan future coalitionary work. Overall, the Joyful Resistance March gave individuals a space to practice a form of activism and resistance that differed from acceptable mainstream and stigmatized grassroots forms of protest.

c. **Undercommon Disidentificatory Space**

The last type of physical third space, undercommon disidentificatory space, has the broadest audience and requires the most engagement with mainstream institutions. Like self-sufficient spaces, artwork is the primary focus of these spaces. However, the art is often public

site-responsive art, which includes art forms that are incompatible with the contextual and spatial limitations of indoor art spaces. Undercommon disidentificatory spaces exist within working-class Latina/x/o communities and aim to engage local community members but also engage public officials and publics across the city, state, and beyond. Unlike the previously discussed physical third spaces, Latina community-engaged artists create these spaces with the assistance of mainstream institutions' financial resources, institutional support, and bureaucratic permission. However, they do not seek to strengthen nor affirm the power and logics of those institutions. Like 96 Acres' "Stories from the Inside/Outside" that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, these spaces directly engage with while also intentionally working against dominant institutions. As a result, I draw from Harney and Moten (2013) who argue that the undercommons refuse the for/against binary that is set up by dominant structure as the only possible relationships to dominant institutions, and Muñoz's (1999) argument that disidentification is a third mode of engaging with but also working against dominant ideologies. Undercommon disidentificatory spaces involve Latina community-engaged artists being "in but not of" dominant institutions.



Image 7-3 - Radioactive: Stories from Beyond the Wall (Photo by Author)

Building on the strengths of “Stories from the Inside/Outside,” Maria Gaspar and I co-facilitated “Radioactive: Stories from Beyond the Wall”, a year-long series of public art workshops with men and women incarcerated at Cook County Jail, one of the nation’s largest pre-detention facilities located in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood. This culminated in a two-night public installation event in September 2018 that spanned the main thoroughfare of the predominantly-Mexican neighborhood, 26th Street. On one side of 26th Street, a vacant parking lot across from the jail was transformed into a community listening and conversation space. On the other side of 26th Street, the animations were projected, using three synced projectors, onto the concrete wall that surrounds the jail. The installation included 14 pieces produced by over 20 participants, or ensemble members. Attendees listened to the audio narratives as they were broadcast live on Lumpen Radio, a local public radio station. The event was fundamentally collaborative. All of the ensemble members’ drawings and audio recordings were edited by animator Giorgia Harvey and sound engineer Alex Inglizian. Projectors were run by Scrappers Film Group. Audio support and listening stations were provided by formerly incarcerated and court-involved youth at Free Write Sound & Vision. Four ensemble members, who were no longer incarcerated, spoke and performed at the event. Local artist William Estrada provided free screen printing on-site with his Mobile Street Art Cart where attendees designed and colored posters that said “Families Belong Together. Abolish ICE. Abolish Prisons.”

The event took place during the weekend of Mexican Independence Day celebrations. So, in addition to individuals from around the city and country who specifically came for the installation, community members who were driving up and down 26th Street and honking their

horns, or cruising, to celebrate Mexican independence stopped to witness the event. Those in attendance learned about ensemble members' experiences with Cook County Jail and incarceration and talked with other attendees about Cook County Jail's and incarceration's impact on their communities. Attendees were given the space to think about the jail in alternative ways and to view incarcerated individuals as members of their communities. Furthermore, Scrappers Film Group also produced video documentation of the event that has reached online audiences around the country and the world.

The project was only possible as a result of Gaspar engaging with mainstream institutions. Gaspar secured funding from the Rauschenberg Foundation's Artist as Activist Fellowship, the Creative Capital Award, and the Joan Mitchell Emerging Artist grant in order to pay for artists' and collaborators' labor, all materials for workshops, technology for the live event, and other miscellaneous project costs. She also worked with local business leaders and city, county, and jail officials to gain storage space, the parking lots, permits, and institutional permission to work with incarcerated people and hold the installation event. This required her to engage with institutions that the project was intentionally critiquing and individuals who may not agree with the project's messaging and politics. For example, ensemble members' pieces discussed the violence of Cook County Jail's and incarceration's isolation, family destruction, withheld services, and dehumanization. Also, a local business owner who allowed us to store projectors, chairs, and other event materials disagreed with abolitionist politics and critiques of the jail. In order to do so, she framed the project in terms that were palatable and seemed to not challenge the power of the various institutions involved (sheriff's office and the jail). Overall, "Radioactive: Stories from Beyond the Wall" exemplified the behind the scenes work and broad impact that undercommon disidentificatory spaces entail.

C. **Shared Themes of Latina Community-Engaged Artists' Third Spaces**

The different types of non-physical and physical third spaces within which Latina community-engaged artists create and work share fundamental themes. These themes highlight the importance of these spaces not only for their practices but also for their communities. In the following section, I detail the various ways that third spaces challenge mainstream and community art spaces. These themes allow third spaces to counter the limitations and oppressive structures of mainstream art and community spaces and be spaces of innovation and liberation. These themes are: ephemerality and fluidity; collectivity; accessibility; alternative ways of being in community; and the articulation of art, politics, and everyday life.

1. **Ephemerality and Fluidity**

Within our current neoliberal moment, major social, economic, and political decisions are made using for-profit corporate logics (Harvey 2005). As non-profit arts organizations and artists rely more and more on private foundations and businesses to support their work, they are often forced to mimic the logics and structure of their business-minded, corporate funders in order to sustain themselves (Smith 2007). This leads individuals and organizations to spend time on administrative work that justifies the value and existence of their work. For example, empirical quantitative measurements of outcomes, such as permanence, “impact,” number of people reached, demonstrated economic impact, etc., become more important than the quality of their communities’ often-immeasurable experiences with art (Mananzala and Spade 2008). As a result, permanent forms of artwork and art spaces are given more value by these logics, and ephemeral artwork and spaces are devalued.

Latina community-engaged artists reject our current neoliberal context in which arts funding is being increasingly determined by corporate logics of sustainability, growth, and

quantifiable outcomes and the demand for privatized spaces and artwork. Their third spaces are not invested in the permanence of individual artwork and spaces. Instead, the spaces and often the artwork within them are ephemeral and fluid. Paulina Camacho Valencia says, “With 96 Acres it’s this idea that ephemeral work isn’t valuable. Because we need something to prove. We need numbers. We need to quantify it rather than qualify it. I think that’s really hard.” In most mainstream and community art spaces, there is very little value or space for ephemeral work. Therefore, third spaces are where ephemeral work, feelings, energy, and complexity have a home. Third spaces can be fluid according to immediate and pressing community contexts and needs. They may be organized with a certain topic, structure, or goal in mind but will change when they are no longer relevant or useful to the community.

For example, Vanessa Sanchez is the director of a Little Village-based youth arts space called Yollocalli that initially began as a youth art education program. But its purpose for teens has changed. She says, “Yollo is about a space for creativity, being the other space for [young people] to be at. Because things can change for young people. So, we just want to be that other space for them.” While it is an arts space, it also meets the non-art needs and desires of the young people in Little Village and Pilsen. In fact, Vanessa says not too many young people go into art after being in Yollocalli. Instead, Vanessa says, “a lot of kids say in the surveys that ‘it was just a place that I felt at home.’” Yollocalli does this by organizing free, teen-only, teen-led community spaces, such as “chill sets” and “Anti-Valentine’s Day” where teens can eat, listen to music, dance, share their artwork, play video games, and get sexual health information.

This does not mean that Latina community-engaged artists do not value permanence and sustainability all together. They merely have a different understanding of what needs to persist. They do their work so that the communities that they love will continue, that community

members will be able to remain in their homes and communities, that the culture and community that working-class Latinas/xs/os have built will not be erased, and that their communities can live healthy, safe, dignified lives. While the artwork and physical spaces are not permanent, these spaces create experiences for those in attendance that individuals take with them outside of the space but are also reactivated when they later return to where those spaces once existed.

2. **Collectivity**

Mainstream art spaces often prioritize privatized spaces and individual artists. Third spaces are not created by or for individual artists. Individual ownership or authorship is secondary to collectivity. Collectivity is central to every third space, not just collectives. Third spaces reject the social and bureaucratic hierarchies that structure mainstream and community art spaces. These are “leader-full” spaces (NPR 2015; Ransby 2015). As spaces of horizontal leadership, organizers of third spaces share responsibility, accountability, and power. Therefore, labor is a collective responsibility and the benefits of that labor are dispersed among organizers and the community rather than accumulated by an individual. Latina community-engaged artists are not waiting for an individual messianic leader to create spaces and save their communities. They are taking it upon themselves to organize, strategize, communicate, and build.

Silvia González regularly works within mainstream art spaces and art collectives and she says:

“I like collectives way better and I don’t get paid. I wish that was my real grind. I think working in community, collaboratively this way is really beautiful and the fact that the energy is very casual. There’s no set power structure where someone has to feel a certain way in order for another person to be a leader. It’s like we’re all getting together, we all care about these things, let’s make some art about it, let’s have difficult conversations, let’s drink wine, let’s eat pizza, let’s just be in community together about this thing we all care about. I feel really free to think with these people and I can be open and vulnerable and feel understood with my practice with them. It’s just really nice to work with people that want to build with you and don’t necessarily want to figure you out. You know it’s just we’re going to be in community.”

As Silvia points out, Latina community-engaged artists are drawn to third spaces, because they counter the patriarchal logics of mainstream spaces. Third spaces do not have masculinist expectations of individual self-promotion in order to gain support, resources, recognition, and prestige. They reject gender hierarchies that often reproduce gendered physical and emotional labor exploitation. They are spaces where Latina community-engaged artists can be free to prioritize feelings, experimentation, vulnerability, and empathy. And most importantly, they can be spaces of support and recuperation. Amara says, “I’ve been doing a lot less [work lately]. So, you know in a way I feel like ‘man I could be doing more.’ But I realize I can’t take on everything myself. And so that’s why it’s good to work in a collective. And now I’ve just been participating more in other people’s things. So, I’m just trying to reorganize my thoughts.”

3. Accessibility

Elite art institutions operate as what Embrick et al. (2019) call “white sanctuaries”. They serve to reassure whites of their dominant position in society through the restriction of access. Working-class people of color, whether as artists, administrators, or audience, are overwhelmingly underrepresented in mainstream art spaces (Blackwood and Purcell 2014; Blankenberg 2016; Dávila 2020; Tator et al. 1998). Silvia explains how access is often understood in very narrow ways and does not reflect the complexity of inaccessibility. She says:

“you know you talk about access with people that work in museums and sometimes they’re like, ‘well, we let people in for free on such and such day.’ And it’s like ok but we need to unpack what accessibility means. Yes, it is certainly about [economic] capital but if you want to go at it from that angle, what about families that work at that time? What about kids that don’t have someone who can bring them? What if transportation’s an issue? What if they’re coming from super south side of Chicago and it takes them two hours? You know what I mean? But that’s only one of the accessibility pieces in museums. What about accessibility in terms of the type of content or the stories that are within these museums? And how these stories are told about the people that are coming but through a Western lens? What then? Or what about these teaching materials that guides will use and what if they’re triggering? Or what if they’re microaggressions... fuck micro, they’re all hella aggressions? So, what then?”

Third spaces address the complexity of accessibility. Yes, they are free. But they are also attentive and accountable to the cultural experiences, frameworks, and language of working-class Latina/x/o communities.

Third spaces reject the exclusivity of mainstream spaces' elitism and white normativity by being accessible to working-class Latinas/xs/os as artists, curators, organizers, and audiences. The attendance and success of these spaces also combat the white supremacist assumption that communities of color do not value or understand art. Third spaces' content, location, cost, and culture are primarily constructed for those who are often excluded by the culture of mainstream art spaces. Latina community-engaged artists create and work in spaces in which general members of their communities feel welcome, comfortable, and valued. They are also spaces in which institutional credentials, artistic background, and conventional measures of "talent" are not determinants of whether a local artist can participate and show their work. For example, third spaces include teen artists, first-time artists, incarcerated artists, and artists who do not consider themselves artists alongside artists with formal institutional training and credentials. As a result, third spaces often serve as first opportunities for many artists to show their work and have increased their access to mainstream spaces.

4. **Alternative Ways of Being in Community**

Race, gender, and class are foundational to the way individuals are ascribed social value (Cacho 2007). One's social value is based white racial normativity, gender normativity, and formal economic productivity and consumption. Working-class communities of color are structurally denied the ability to conform to these dominant logics and punished for their resistance and non-normativity (Ferguson 2004). However, many community-based organizations and spaces that receive funding and political support tend to uphold and/or coerce

community members to assimilate to dominant race, gender, and class discourses. The same social hierarchies that exist in white-dominated mainstream institutions can also be found in many community-based organizations. Although comprised of people of color, those with institutional credentials, corporate values, or men will likely be concentrated in higher positions. For example, Elvia has found that many community-based non-profits act like private corporations in the gender pay gaps, the exploitation of women and workers without college degrees, and the expectation that community engagement or “outreach” be done while staying in an office setting.

Third spaces provide alternative ways for individuals to connect and be in community with each other that are largely not supported or present in mainstream or community art and non-art spaces. While hegemonic institutions often define “community” by physical boundaries, third spaces define community by connections and relationships. These relationships are built and strengthened by reciprocity and mutual support. Exercising power over others based on economic, political, or social hierarchies is not welcome in third spaces.

Paulina Camacho Valencia says, “It’s about sharing food, sharing a feel, yeah. Yeah, sharing, being present, and listening. And I feel like that’s what artwork allows. It allows these spaces for that reciprocal giving and accepting.” Attendees bring what they can to third spaces and are provided what they need. There are no capitalist transactional rules where one must give something of equal value to what they take. Instead, community members are welcome to donate food, supplies, and labor or not. What they do or do not provide does not impact what aspects of third spaces are available to them. This runs counter to dominant capitalist definitions of commodity exchange and private property. Third spaces create alternative forms of community

that allow attendees to imagine and rehearse ways of being together outside of dominant economic, political, and social structures.

5. **Articulation of Art, Politics, and Everyday Life**

Lastly, third spaces are manifestations of Latina community-engaged artists' practices of articulation. As discussed in previous chapters, mainstream arts spaces are structured by separation and isolation. For example, art museums separate art from other aspects of life. Within them, art is further divided and separated by tradition, genre, geography and time. Under the hegemonic gaze, third spaces are unorganized, contradictory, and messy. Third spaces reject the siloing of art from other aspects of social and political life. Instead, they reflect the complexity of their communities' realities. They highlight the both/and nature of life and reject dichotomies and boundaries. Third spaces recognize and emphasize that art is integral to economics, health, education, politics, safety, and other aspects of everyday life. As a result, third spaces actively draw connections between aspects of social life that are often segregated from each other. Therefore, art is integral to third spaces but not the only purpose or focus. These spaces draw connections across hegemonic boundaries that separate art/non-art, and use multidisciplinary practices to curate holistic community spaces that reflect and speak to the complexity of members' everyday experiences. As a result, third spaces' articulations simply make sense to Latina/x/o communities. In the next section, I discuss the meaning and implications of third spaces as a theoretical intervention.

D. **Third Spaces**

My analysis of Latina community-engaged artists' third spaces contributes to Bourdieusian field theory by highlighting locations for which past scholars have not accounted. Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of the field has been foundational to the sociology of art and

culture. However, in order to explain third spaces, I have to extend his work. More specifically, Latina community-engaged artists often construct and work in third spaces that engage multiple fields but are also outside of those fields. These include the physical and non-physical third spaces of collectives, digital spaces, self-sufficient spaces, public differential spaces, and uncommon disidentificatory spaces. Bourdieu does not provide a satisfactory explanation for these spaces and their relationships to fields. Gil Eyal's (2013) work on the "spaces between fields" contributes much to my intervention. However, there still remain limitations. I view "third spaces" as a possible theoretical solution to locate Latina community-engaged artists' alternative spaces within Bourdiesian field theory. Third spaces extend Bourdieu and Eyal using Chela Sandoval's "differential consciousness," José Esteban Muñoz's "disidentifications" and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's "undercommons" to account for spaces that engage with, yet remain outside of and against, hegemonic fields. Third spaces are spaces of rehearsal, fugitivity, and resistance.

Latina community-engaged artists' practices of articulation and strategic (il)legibility lead them to construct and operate within third spaces that are neither seeking recognition and inclusion nor seeking to reform mainstream art spaces. These spaces operate on logics that differ from those that structure the field of cultural production. While they have no blueprint for what these spaces should look like, their construction and participation in these spaces are motivated by the desire to create art spaces that are more accessible, just, egalitarian, and transformative than mainstream and community art spaces. The liminal, both/and, between, fluid, differential, and disidentificatory characteristics of these alternative spaces is why I called them "third spaces" (Licona 2012; Muñoz 1999; Sandoval 1991/2009). They reject already-provided hegemonic options for how to create and run spaces.

As discussed earlier, Bourdieu argues that fields are social spaces of competition that are structured by rules. Actors occupy hierarchized positions within field and struggle for the monopoly of legitimacy and resources (Bourdieu 1996:166). The production and reproduction of the *illusio*, or the collective investment (consciously or unconsciously) in the legitimacy and existence of the field (Bourdieu 1996:167). According to Eyal (2013), this investment is often taken to spaces between fields where those activities that involve two different fields but are not fully nested in either field. Spaces between fields are strategic spaces in which actors may improve their positions with fields and shape fields in their favor by making alliances and exchanges and accumulating resources and capital (Eyal 2013:178). The space between fields can also be valued for its own sake as a way for actors to disengage from hegemonic fields.

Unfortunately, Eyal's interventions do not go far enough to explain third spaces. In his description of spaces between fields as being either invested in changing fields or wanting to stay liminal, he creates a new distinct boundary between two types of spaces between fields – the invested and uninvested. What about those hybrid spaces in which actors actively engage with fields but do not use the space between fields in order to improve their position within fields or (re)shape fields? I believe Latina community-engaged artists' third spaces are examples of hybrid spaces that require further extension of Bourdieu's fields and Eyal's spaces between fields.

Bourdieu defines all fields as spaces of struggle. The structure of fields is determined by the internal conflicts between positions. Each agent in the field is struggling to either maintain or improve their position within the field. Latina community-engaged artists do operate within the competitive field of cultural production but they also operate in third spaces outside of fields. And these spaces are not spaces of competition. Although Eyal's space between fields is closer

to explaining third spaces, third spaces are not his “spaces of opportunities” nor purely liminal spaces. So how do I conceptualize third spaces? The work of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013), Chela Sandoval (1991/2009), and José Esteban Muñoz (1999) become important complements to Bourdieu and Eyal. Specifically, I use Harney and Moten’s concept of “the undercommons,” Sandoval’s “differential consciousness,” and Muñoz’s “disidentifications” to extend Bourdieu’s “field” and Eyal’s “space between fields” and conceptualize third spaces. Third spaces are where Harney and Moten’s undercommons can be found.

Harney and Moten (2013:6) proclaim, “If you want to know what the undercommons wants... it is this – we cannot be satisfied with recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was every broken and b) the we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls.” The undercommons includes people of color, queer folx, and poor people. It includes those who have been labeled as “the problem” by dominant structures. Those who have been broken by dominant structures and blamed for their own brokenness. The undercommons understand that dominant structures are bad for everyone no matter “however much more softly” it is killing some (Harney and Moten 2013:10). However, the undercommons is not a place for standard critique or open rebellion against dominant structures. The goal “is not to end the troubles but to end the world that created those particular troubles as the ones that must be opposed” (Harney and Moten 2013:9). The undercommons refuse the “for/against” binary that is set up by dominant structures as the only possibility positions. The undercommons are neither trying to maintain dominant structures nor

trying to change dominant structures. They engage in fugitivity while also engaging dominant structures.

The undercommons are “unprofessional, uncollegial, passionate and disloyal” (Harney and Moten 2013:9). They do not want to carve a space for themselves in dominant structures. Instead they steal from dominant structures. They engage in a fugitivity that is “not only about escape,” it is “being separate from settling. It is a being in motion that has learned that ‘organizations are obstacles to organising ourselves’ and that there are spaces and modalities that exist separate from the logical, logistical, the housed and the positioned” (Harney and Moten 2013:11). The undercommons seek and embrace a state of collective “homelessness,” a state of dispossession in which they refuse what has been refused to them. With respect to the university, “the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one,” in which one steals what one can while being “in but not of” the university (Harney and Moten 2013:26). The undercommons refuse to be “pragmatic”. They “[hide] from this interpellation, neither agrees nor disagrees but goes hands full into the underground” (Harney and Moten 2013:28). Therefore, they are always in hiding and always at war (Harney Moten 2013:30).

This neither assimilating to nor completely disassociating is an act of what José Esteban Muñoz (1999) calls “disidentification”. It is a “survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously” (Muñoz 1999:5). Therefore, it rejects the two paths provided by hegemonic ideologies – either identify with and assimilate to dominant ideology or counteridentify against and reject it. “Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz

1999:11). It is a hybrid strategy of both/and rather than the either/or that is presented by dominant ideology.

What I conceptualize as third space is a space born of the differential mode of oppositional consciousness (Sandoval 1991/2009). This strategic, non-assimilationist, intersectional, coalitional space has no internal hierarchy. Positions within third spaces are not determined based on dominant forms of valuations (credentials, wealth, normativity, masculinity, etc.) There is no competition, because third spaces are not a zero-sum field. Individual positioning is not a goal. Third spaces are defined by abundance rather than scarcity (as with mainstream fields). Individuals in third spaces are valued by what they contribute to the collective. Although those in third spaces carry various forms of capital, they are not used against others. The capital brought to third spaces is taken from other fields and shared. There are no formal rules or consequences that maintain the priority of the collective, because seeking out and finding third spaces requires one already reject individualism valued in other fields.

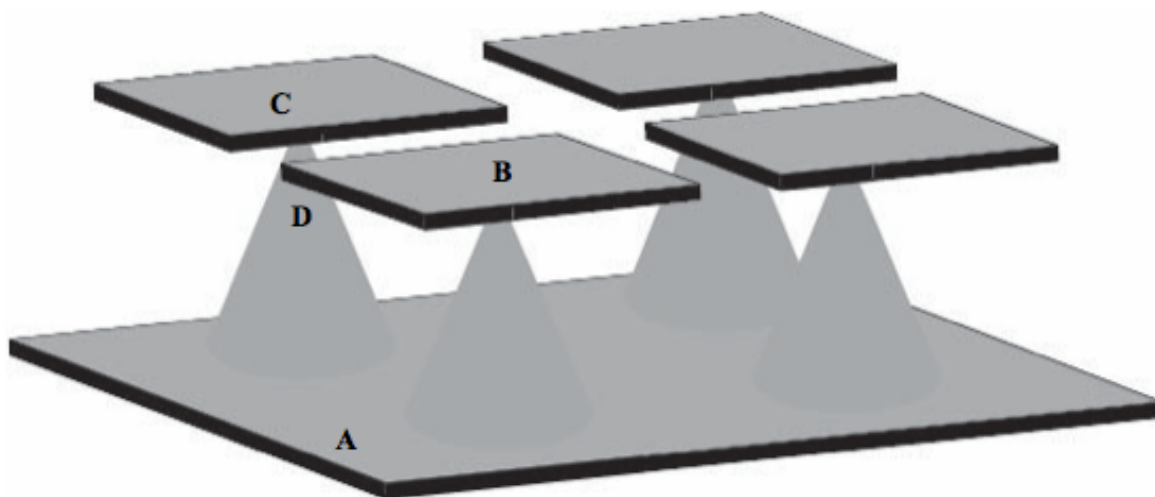


Figure 2: Illustration of third spaces in relation to fields

Third spaces (A) are fluid. As a disidentificatory space, it is strategic. Actors use a differential consciousness to strategically choose which fields to engage with and how (Sandoval 1991/2009). Located under fields (B & C), artists travel (D) between fields and third spaces at various moments. The nature, existence, and shape of these connections are always shifting. Connections between field and third spaces may not exist with all fields and may only exist with some fields at particular moments. These connections signify that individuals can move between third spaces and fields while bringing capital and resources to third spaces.

Third spaces contain an active realization of the world that the undercommons want to build after fields are dismantled. Individuals in third spaces are acting and being together in ways that fields do not allow. To borrow from Augusto Boal (1985:122), third spaces are not the revolution, “but it surely a rehearsal for the revolution.” They are not spaces of destruction and war but active generation and love. In this way, third spaces are utopic spaces. They are rehearsals for the time when hegemonic fields are destroyed and a new world must be built. It is not the primary goal of third spaces to actively alter or destroy hegemonic fields. They may produce an experience for individuals to act in ways that will destroy the environment that created many community issues.

Third spaces are for those who wish for a world in which our current dominant structures of oppression are not possible. They include individuals of different skill sets, professions, and capital, but all unite with a shared desire and a shared refusal of that which has been refused. “If there is no church in the wild, if there is study rather than knowledge production, if there is a way of being together in brokenness, if there is an undercommons, then we must all find our way to it. And it will not be there where the wild things are, it will be a place where refuge is not necessary and you will find that you were already in it all along” (Harney and Moten 2013:12).

Some might consider third spaces to be nothing more than what Bourdieu (1996:51) called “bastard institutions.” Bourdieu argues that bastard institutions, like the salon, serve as a space where members of the artistic field solicited the support of those with power in other fields in order to increase their own ability to determine the consecrated artists in the artistic field, thus consecrate their own dominant position within the artistic field (Bourdieu 1965:51). Even though it is an articulation between fields, third spaces are not spaces for backroom deals. They are not spaces in which individuals seek to increase their own individual position within the field of art. Third spaces do not seek to maintain or change the logics and structures of hegemonic fields. Salons “distinguished themselves more by whom they exclude than by who they include,” and third spaces are defined by those they include with no desire to exclude (Bourdieu 1996:52).

Like those of the “second bohemia” (Bourdieu 1996) who have to live off of a second job that sometimes had no connection to their art practice, most individuals in third spaces do not make a living based on their art practice and have to take on multiple jobs to support themselves. But the similarities end there. Bourdieu argued that bohemian artists found themselves pushed towards artistic lives as a result of not being able to find prestigious jobs due to a lack of financial means and social capital. Third spaces are not spaces for those who “couldn’t hack it” in more prestigious positions. Many in third spaces actually occupy prestigious positions within hegemonic fields. They are university professors. They are given awards and prestigious grants. They are not all pushed to third spaces as a result of rejection from hegemonic institutions and fields. Third spaces are not a dominated subfield, as Bourdieu portrays bohemian artists (1995:54-55). They are not spaces defined by rejection.

E. Conclusion

This chapter examined the third spaces that Latina community-engaged artists create and work within. Art has an important presence in urban Latina/x/o communities and community art institutions have provided a space for Latina/x/o artists denied access to mainstream urban art spaces. However, for Latina community-engaged artists, many have found themselves having to construct and work in new spaces that exist outside of both mainstream and community art spaces. These physical and non-physical third spaces reject the oppressive logics and structures of already-existing spaces. Often overlapping and reinforcing each other, different third spaces share fundamental themes. These themes highlight third spaces as collective, non-hierarchical, accessible, and utopic community spaces. Third spaces provide Latina community-engaged artists the ability to practice art and community building in ways that are largely not possible in mainstream and community art spaces. Lastly, third spaces theoretically contribute to Bourdieusian field theory. Unlike past scholarship, I suggest that my conceptualization of third spaces accounts for those spaces that engage with hegemonic fields while not seeking to impact them. This allows me to locate Latina community-engaged artists' alternative spaces within existing Bourdieusian fields.

VIII. CONCLUSION

“We are the artists
 We are the image makers
 We are the creators
 We are the makers of magic
 We are the makers of illusion
 We are the creators of reality
 We are the creators of the unreal
 We make things to seem what they are not.
 We make things to see what they are.
 We have the power to produce
 Both to seen and the unseen.

We are the artists
 We are the recorders
 We are the historians
 We are the story tellers
 We are the dreamers
 We are the artists
 We are the children of the Universe.
 We are the children of the Cosmos.

We are the communicants
 We are the celebrators
 Our subject matter is the essence of humanity.
 Our medias are lines, forms, colors, and textures.
 Our medias are words, rhymes, verses, and paragraphs.
 Our medias are tones, rhythms, melodies, and movements
 Our instruments are sound and sight and feeling

We are the artists
 We are the creators
 Our art is a time capsule
 What we set down today is for the future
 Those unborn and generations hence
 Will learn from and build on what we have done
 We are the artists we are the creators.
 We are the architects and the builders
 We are the enemies of destruction
 We are the cleansers and the purifiers
 We are the enemies of pollution
 We are the artists.
 We are the priests and the priestesses
 To the people.”

“A Poem for the Artists” by Margaret Burroughs (1976)f

Throughout her prolific career as historian, educator, and activist, Dr. Margaret Burroughs had a profound impact on Chicago’s arts scene. In 1920, her family moved to Chicago from Louisiana when she was five years old. She earned her Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in art education from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1946 and 1948. Reflecting her belief in the transformative power of art and culture for the oppressed, she co-founded the South Side Community Arts Center in 1939 and the Ebony Museum of Chicago, now known as the DuSable Museum of African American History, in 1961. For over 30 years, she taught creative writing and creative arts at Stateville Correctional Center, a maximum-

security prison about 35 miles from Chicago. Her contributions continue to reverberate throughout various communities since her death in 2010.

Dr. Burroughs poem highlights the role of the artist in society. Gloria Anzaldúa (2012:109) said, “Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads,” and it is artists who are at the forefront of shaping images, collective identities, and shared meanings (Lo et al. 2006:78; Mesa-Bains 1991:132). Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot stated as much in her campaign platform:

“The arts are powerful. Now more than ever, it is essential that we lift up and invest in our unparalleled Chicago artists. A robust Chicago arts community inspires us, engages us, questions the status quo and has the power to bring our diverse city together in conversation around the critical challenges of our day.”

Art’s power is understood by various entities with differing interests. Social movements, private business, city governments, and non-profit organizations have all found art to be key to the advancement of their interests. Activists use music, protest signs, films, and performance to express their grievances and goals. Corporations commission artists to produce artwork that promotes their brand and their products. Mayors recruit businesses, tourists, and new residents by highlighting their cities’ cultural landscape and creative class (Florida 2002). Non-profit organizations turn to artists to donate their labor and artwork to fundraisers and decorate their offices. They all recognize the power of the arts.

The current context of the COVID-19 pandemic provides additional evidence of the central role that arts plays in people’s lives. Stay-at-home orders and mass layoffs have required people to find new ways to be entertained, maintain social connection, and otherwise fill their time. In addition to chain-watching television shows and films on streaming sites, people are taking up new creative hobbies. They are crocheting, painting, and writing, and they are often learning to do so with online tutorial videos. They are reading books and attending in online arts

workshops and lectures. Parents have been using creative projects to keep their children busy and to meet their children's educational needs. People of all ages are staying connected with each other through online games like Animal Crossing, Fortnite, and Minecraft. Behind all of these important sources of joy and growth are artists.

Despite this, the arts are regularly under attack. Each year of his administration, Donald Trump has proposed to eliminate federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Art programs and educators are often the first to be cut or downsized in K-12 and higher education during times of financial crisis. With respect to the needs and demands of capitalism, the arts and humanities are derided as wastes of time and unproductive, and young people are pushed away from creativity. Due to limited, precarious, and contingent funding, arts institutions have become more exclusive and have narrowed their missions and content.

These prevailing discourses and processes highlight the need and necessity of a sociological analysis of the arts. They underscore that the arts and culture are a site in which power is established, maintained, and challenged. This dissertation makes the case that examining the practices and experiences of artists reveals field-specific dynamics that are also inextricably related to larger social inequities and processes. As a result, the experiences and practices of Latina community-engaged artists are relevant to scholars who study non-Latina artists and non-artist Latinas/xs/os. My findings and analyses contribute much theoretically to numerous scholarly fields, such as Latina/x/o studies, sociology of art, urban sociology, and field theory. However, before I detail the scholarly interventions of this dissertation, I wish to discuss the relevance it has for non-academic audiences.

For the art world, this dissertation emphasizes the need for deconstruction, transformation, and abolition. As museums, galleries, and art schools put out statements in support of diversity, inclusion, and social justice, they often do so to avoid fundamental alterations to the discourses, ideologies, hierarchies, and institutional practices that are at their institutions' foundations. As sociologists, we understand that institutions are highly resistant to change. This is especially the case for those institutions that hold prestige and power in their fields. We need to remember that institutions are built to serve the interests of groups who were involved in their original formation. For most powerful arts institutions, these were built by and for elite, white men. Consequently, reformism will not create new possibilities for groups historically marginalized in the arts.

Instead, abolition of museums, galleries, and art schools as we know them are the best way to ensure the end of inequities in access and value. Currently, resources and opportunities are concentrated among few elite institutions. Abolition is the step needed to ensure the redistribution of resources to communities who have long been excluded from full participation in the arts. These new resources would allow for art spaces to be created in, by, and for communities according to their cultural history, needs, and standards. This would ensure that every person in the United States, young and old, has a local space where they can go to learn, to teach, to share, to think, to grow, and to create. This does not currently exist in most communities, especially marginalized ones.

For artists, especially those findings themselves and their practices marginalized in the arts, my research demonstrates that this is common and necessary in the field of cultural production. It is through making artists feel isolated in their marginalization, that the field can maintain its hierarchies and exclusions. I hope artists who identify with those in this dissertation

seek to create community with other artists and create their own third spaces. I also hope that by sharing the knowledge, experiences, and strategies of Latina community-engaged artists, that other artists can develop ways to actively and strategically resist their own and their communities' marginalization. In the end, it through collectivism that we will transform an arts world so heavily reliant on individualism.

For community leaders and organizers, my research emphasizes that more resources and support should be provided for women of color artists working with their communities. While third spaces are powerful, they do not necessarily have to be necessary. It is not a good thing that artists must use DIY methods to construct temporary spaces of liberation. At a time with ongoing social, environmental, political, and economic crises, artists are needed to pose difficult questions to the public – questions that are not being asked or are being silenced – so that we may collectively come to new solutions and new futures for our communities and societies. With community-engaged art we can develop new frameworks to understand our past, present, and future and be together in community. It is necessary that community-engaged artists be given the funding, space, and time to more regularly create alternative community art spaces.

Examining Latina community-engaged artists' practices, this dissertation highlights race, gender, and class hierarchies in the field of cultural production, strategic forms of artistic resistance, and the power of alternative community art spaces. No sociological study has specifically examined Latina artists who regularly produce art with and in their communities. As a result, my dissertation not only has a novel focus but also identifies and fills scholarly gaps in the sociology of art.

First, I contribute to scholarship on marginalization with the arts. While past research has found that women and people of color are marginalized in the arts as a result of inaccessibility,

devaluation, and pigeonholing, I find that illegibility serves as another mechanism of marginalization. When artists and their work are rendered illegible in the arts, they are coerced into extra labor to make themselves legible or are neglected out of the arts. “Burning out” is not just a coincidental or universal outcome but an intentional consequence of an artist’s illegibility. An artist is rendered illegible as a result of race, gender, and class hierarchies within the field of cultural production.

Second, I intervene on scholarship about fields by proposing the theoretical location of third spaces that Latina community-engaged artists construct and work within. I propose that third spaces that simultaneously engage and work against hegemonic fields are conceptually different than what past scholars have theorized. These are spaces that provide actors the ability to collectively rehearse social relations that will exist once hegemonic fields and social hierarchies are abolished.

More generally, my research theoretically intervenes in debates regarding Latinas/xs/os and belonging. Throughout United States history, laws and social practices have excluded groups from legal and social belonging based on race, gender, and class (Glenn 2002). As a result, contemporary national narratives and hegemonic institutions hold middle-class white men as the implicit reference by which groups’ belonging is determined. Structural assimilation and legibility to hegemonic ideologies have been the mainstream approaches to end Latina/x/o marginalization. As Dávila (2008) argues, this only serves to reinforce dominant and conservative structures and ideologies of oppression (capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy). It also exacerbates hierarchies internal to Latina/x/o communities (immigration status, class, and sexuality). It makes Latina/x/o belonging only partial.

Latina community-engaged artists' strategic (il)legibility offers an alternative these assimilationist strategies and requires us to critically reassess belonging, legibility, and illegibility. Should Latinas/xs/os seek to belong to a society and institutions built on white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and classism? Does legibility necessarily lead to full and equal inclusion for Latinas/xs/os? Does illegibility always have to be a mechanism of marginalization or can it serve as a source of Latina/x/o resistance? Are currently options of assimilation or opposition the only options for Latinas/xs/os? My dissertation argues for the role that artistic resistance has in collectively exploring these questions. The creativity, fluidity, collectivity, and inventiveness central to artistic resistance allow Latinas/xs/os to question assumptions and formulate new, complex relationships to hegemonic discourses and institutions.

Lastly, strategic (il)legibility counters mainstream tactics that seek to facilitate permanent Latina/x/o inclusion and belonging in hegemonic institutions and discourses. For Latina community-engaged artists, belonging is intentionally temporary, because belonging to institutions and spaces that are not built for Latinas/xs/os is not liberating, healthy, or affirming. Instead, belonging is a strategic means to redistribute resources from mainstream institutions to marginalized communities and to challenge existing hegemonic structures. This *nepantla* (Anzaldúa 2012), a liminal place, can facilitate new, creative possibilities for Latinas/xs/os outside of already-existing institutions and discourses.

The artistic resistance of strategic (il)legibility asserts that legibility may not necessarily lead to full belonging, and illegibility is not only a mechanism of marginalization but can also be used to resist oppression. Latinas/xs/os can have more complex relationships with dominant dichotomies and binaries. Refusing the options that have been provided because those options often require the refusal of Latina/x/o complexity, strategic (il)legibility provides a third mode of

dealing with mainstream/community and assimilation/opposition dichotomies that are set up for Latinas/xs/os.

APPENDIX A

Examples of Interview Guides

Life Story Interview

- Life history (What was your path? How did you get to where you are now?)
- Introduction to art
- Childhood and Family
- Influences
- Education
- Importance of art
- Spaces of production
- Mediums
- Content Themes
- Major changes
- Examples of self in work
- Artist statement
- Intended Audience
- Goals of work
- Income from artwork
- Funding for practice

Follow-Up Interview

1. Tell me about your experiences with non-profits and traditional/mainstream art institutions?
 - a. How do race, gender, and class impact your experiences in these spaces?
 - b. Have you had experiences of you and your work being devalued, pigeon-holed, not seen as legitimate, or simply not legible or understood?
 - i. How have you responded?
2. Tell me about your experiences with alternative art spaces such as collectives and community spaces.
 - a. Why are these spaces necessary?
 - b. How do these spaces engage with and reject mainstream traditional art institutions, norms, and ideologies? How have you strategically navigated this?
 - c. What are the opportunities and limitations of alternative spaces?

Follow-Up Interview

1. After your past work like *Peeling off the Grey*, what are the opportunities and limitations of traditional art institutions?
 - a. How has *Peeling off the Grey* impacted your work?
 - b. Art, social justice, and arts institutions?
2. How did Pilsen Outpost come about?
 - a. Why did you find it necessary?
 - b. Was there a model for POP?
3. What kind of beliefs about art and community are at the foundation of POP?

APPENDIX A (continued)

4. How is POP different than other art spaces?
5. What has been difficult about running POP?
6. Has your understanding of or goals for POP changed while running it?
 - a. Any unexpected but important changes?

APPENDIX B
Artists Interviewed

Name	Age (Estimated)	Ethnicity	Education	Times Interviewed
Amara Betty Martin	35	Puerto Rican	Some college	2
Maria Gaspar	40	Mexican	MFA	3
Silvia Gonzalez	31	Mexican	MAAE	3
Nicole Marroquin	49	Mexican	MFA	3
Victoria Martinez	31	Mexican	MFA	2
Vanessa Sanchez	37	Mexican	BFA	1
Diana Solis	64	Mexican	BFA	1
Teresa Magaña	40	Mexican	Some college	1
Paulina Camacho Valencia	33	Mexican	MAAE	2
Elvia Rodriguez Ochoa	49	Mexican	MA	1

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Education

B.A., Sociology, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, 2011

M.A. Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2013

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Publications

Articles

Muñiz, Michael De Anda, Janaé Bonsu, Lydia Dana, Sangeetha Ravichandran, Haley Volpintesta, and Andy Clarno with Reyna Wences, Rodrigo Anzures, Rosi Carrasco, and Tania Unzueta. Forthcoming. "From Graduate Practicum to Activist Research Collective: A Roundtable with Members of the Policing in Chicago Research Group and Our Community Partners." *Radical History Review* 20(137).

Muñiz, Michael De Anda. 2018. "The Power of Latina/x/o Studies Beyond the Ivory Tower and Inside Prison Walls." *Latino Studies* 16(4): 531-541.

Ruehs, Emily, Regina Pessagno, Rachel Lovis, William Scarborough, Michael De Anda Muniz, Maximilian Cuddy, Jesse Holzman, and Dennis Kass. 2018. "A Relevant Pedagogy: Outcomes from a High School Sociology Research Practicum." *Journal of Public and Professional Sociology* 10(2): Article 2.

Presentations, Panels, and Interviews

Academic Presentations

American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, New York, NY August 2019
"The Underfield: Extending Bourdieu's Field."

Society for the Study of Social Problems Annual Meeting, August 2019
New York, NY, "E-race the Database: Big Data Policing in Chicago."

Ethnography Workshop, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL February 2019
"The Policing in Chicago Research Group"

Imagining America National Gathering, Chicago, IL October 2018
"Critical Labor: Resisting Carceral Logics and Practices on Campuses"

Latina/o Studies Association Biennial Conference, Washington, DC July 2018
 “The Power of Latinx Studies Beyond the Ivory Tower and Inside Prison Walls”

Latina/o Studies Association Biennial Conference, Washington, DC July 2018
 “Social Class and U.S. Latinxs: Accounting for Upward Social Mobility”

American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL November 2017
 “Contextualizing Pedagogies of Dissent: Experiences Across Institutional Settings”

American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, August 2017
 Montreal, Canada. “Brown Brilliance: Latinx Knowledge, Sociology, and Society”

American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, August 2017
 Montreal, Canada “Policing in Chicago: A Social Justice Ethnography Workshop”

Latina/o Studies Association Biennial Conference, Chicago, IL July 2014
 “Racial Frames in the Neoliberal Era: Race, Class, and Citizenship in A South Texas Boomtown”

Midwest Sociological Society Annual Conference, Chicago, IL March 2013
 “Divided We Were, Divided We Remain: Race & Class in a 21st Century South Texas Boomtown”

Chicago Ethnography Conference, University of Chicago March 2013
 “The Embers Continue to Burn: Race & Class in a 21st Century South Texas Boomtown”

Awards & Grants

2019 Lee Student Support Fund May 2019
 Society for the Study of Social Problems

2019 Student Forum Travel Award May 2019
 American Sociological Association

2018 Abraham Lincoln Fellowship (\$22,000) May 2018
 University of Illinois at Chicago

2017 Graduate Student Council Travel Grant November 2017
 University of Illinois at Chicago

2017 Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship Alternate and Honorable Mention List	April 2017
2015-16 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship (\$5000) University of Illinois at Chicago	August 2015
2014 Carla B. Howery Teaching Enhancement Fund (\$2000) American Sociological Association	May 2014
David P. Street Master's Paper Award Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago	April 2014

Teaching Experience

University of Illinois at Chicago

Sociology of Latinos (Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2018)
 Racial and Ethnic Groups (Summer 2014, Summer 2015, Summer 2016)
 Social Problems (Fall 2013, Spring 2014)

DePaul University

Qualitative Research Methods (Spring 2017, Winter 2018)
 Quantitative Research Methods ((2x) Fall 2016, Winter 2017, Winter 2018)
 Introduction to Sociology (Winter 2016, Spring 2016, Fall 2017)
 Gender and Society (Spring 2017)
 Immigrant Experiences (Fall 2015)
 Social Problems (Fall 2015)

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Culture and Society (Fall 2016, Summer 2017)
 Culture and Power (Fall 2018, Fall 2019, Summer 2020)

Professional Affiliations

American Sociological Association
 Latina/o Sociology Section
 Sociology of Culture Section
 Latina/o Studies Association
 American Studies Association