

Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

1-19-2023

## The Association between Civic Engagement via Participatory Art and Adolescents' Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Michaela Ann Hayes

Illinois State University, mahaye3@ilstu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd>

---

### Recommended Citation

Hayes, Michaela Ann, "The Association between Civic Engagement via Participatory Art and Adolescents' Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy" (2023). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1678.

<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1678>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact [ISUREd@ilstu.edu](mailto:ISUREd@ilstu.edu).

# THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT VIA PARTICIPATORY ART AND ADOLESCENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY

MICHAELA HAYES

47 Pages

Civic engagement refers to actions taken by individuals to address issues of public concern, which can come in many forms including engagement in art. Participation in these activities can have positive impacts on the individual, including improved mental and physical health, as well as on the community through increased appreciation for differences and acquisition of values such as tolerance. The Bioecological Model suggests that an individual's participation in civic activities is influenced by the various levels of their environment. These experiences may be particularly impactful for adolescents. Indeed, adolescents who participated in civic engagement activities have been found to have better academic and social-emotional outcomes, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, in emerging adulthood. The present study examines the relationship between civic engagement through participatory art and adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy using a convergent mixed methods design. The data examined were collected from a two-week community-based art mural project in a small town in the Midwestern United States in 2022. The study will involve both quantitative data collected in July 2022 from youth artists before and after the mural project and qualitative follow-up data collected between September and November of 2022. Results from a paired samples t-test of with pre- and post-survey data indicated there was no statistically significant difference in adolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy from the beginning to the end of the project. Then follow-up interviews were

phenomenologically analyzed to find common themes that were discussed by participants. Three major themes were identified: connection and collaboration, growth and development, and emotions. The quantitative and qualitative data had discrepant findings. The quantitative data did not show any significant difference in self-esteem and self-efficacy after participating in a mural project, but follow-up interviews suggested that participation in the project may have supported these outcomes. Participants reported feeling a sense of accomplishment, pride, and learning new skills such as painting and teamwork. Working towards a common goal can foster a sense of belonging and connection within the community, which can contribute to boosting self-esteem and self-efficacy. Despite the survey findings not supporting the hypothesis, the follow-up interviews showed possible ways that getting involved with art-based civic activities can increase outcomes likely correlated with self-esteem and self-efficacy.

**KEYWORDS:** Civic engagement, art, self-esteem, self-efficacy, adolescence

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT VIA PARTICIPATORY ART AND  
ADOLESCENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY

MICHAELA HAYES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Psychology

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2023

© 2023 Michaela Hayes

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT VIA PARTICIPATORY ART AND  
ADOLESCENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY

MICHAELA HAYES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Laura Finan, Chair

Jordan Arellanes

## CONTENTS

	Page
TABLES	iii
FIGURES	iv
CHAPTER I: PREVIOUS RESEARCH	1
Civic Engagement	2
<i>Art and Civic Engagement</i>	6
Self-Esteem	8
Self-Efficacy	9
CHAPTER II: PURPOSE OF PRESENT STUDY	14
CHAPTER III: METHODS	15
Data Context	15
Participants	17
Procedure and Analysis	17
<i>Quantitative Data</i>	18
<i>Measures</i>	18
Self-esteem	18
Self-efficacy	19
<i>Qualitative Data</i>	19
CHAPTER IV: ANALYTIC STRATEGY	21
CHAPTER V: RESULTS	23
Quantitative	23
Qualitative	23

<i>Connection and Collaboration</i>	24
<i>Growth and Development</i>	27
<i>Emotions</i>	28
CHAPTER V1: DISCUSSION	31
REFERENCES	38
APPENDIX A: SORTING TASK	45
APPENDIX B: MURAL QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP	46



## TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Paired sample t-test analysis for self-esteem and self-efficacy	23
Table 2. General themes from follow-up interviews	24

## FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Daily schedule of muralists	16
Figure 2. Convergent parallel design	22

## CHAPTER I: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Civic engagement is “individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern” (American Psychological Association, 2009, para. 2), can take many forms, including participatory public art. Participatory public art refers to art projects that involve the active participation of the community in the creation and/or exhibition of the artwork (Iannelli & Marelli, 2019). Previous research has shown that participation in civic activities, including participatory public art, is associated with increased self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescents (Catterall, 2009; Fertman et al., 1996; French, 2018; Grebe, 2017; Mak & Fancourt, 2019).

Self-esteem refers to the evaluation a person makes about themselves to express self-judgement, personal worth, and dissatisfaction (Rosenburg, 1965), while self-efficacy is the sense that a person has control of his or her on their own life (Bandura, 1997). Both self-esteem and self-efficacy are important components of overall well-being and can affect an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Bandura, 1982; 1977; Bandura et al., 1999; 2001; Greaves & Farbus, 2006; Proctor et al., 2009; Redmond, 2010).

This paper will explore the association between civic engagement via participatory public art and adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy with a mural project about ‘Creating Safe Spaces’. It will review existing research on the topic and discuss the potential mechanisms through which participatory public art may impact self-esteem and self-efficacy in adolescents. It will also consider the implications of these findings for the promotion of civic engagement and well-being in young people.

## **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement takes various forms, including collaborating with others to address an issue, raising awareness about social problems, or interacting with representative organizations (Eisenberg et al., 2009). Some of these opportunities include, but are not limited to, volunteerism and community organizing, such as electoral involvement in local, state, and national contests (Greer, 2021). These activities have been conducted in partnership with institutions such as schools, churches, and youth groups for youth living in urban areas (Hart & Kirshner, 2009). Although civic engagement can take place in more orthodox forms (e.g., voting, volunteering), art and cultural events can also be important activities in communities (Greer, 2021).

One useful model to understand civic engagement is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological model. This model suggests that an individual's development is shaped by the interactions between their biology and the social, cultural, and physical environments in which they live. The model identifies five levels of the environment that influence an individual's development: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem contains the immediate environments in which people live and interact, such as families, schools, and neighborhoods. The next level is the mesosystem, which is the linkages and interactions between microsystems, such as the relationship between a child's family and school. Next, the exosystem is larger systems that indirectly affect the individual but are not part of their immediate environment, such as a parent's workplace or government policies. Then, macrosystems are the cultural and societal values, beliefs, and norms that shape and are shaped by all the other systems. Lastly, chronosystems are the changes and transitions that individuals experience over time or socio-historical events, such as changes in family structure or a great recession (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). All these systems are interrelated and can influence each

other. The current study looks at the impacts of an individual adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy has before and after participating in an art-based civic activity and possible longitudinal impacts the project had on them months after participating.

Indeed, researchers have used the bioecological model to examine how an individual's involvement in civic activities is shaped by various environmental factors, ranging from close relationships and interactions within their immediate surroundings (i.e., microsystem influences) to the broader cultural and societal context in which they reside (i.e., macrosystem influences). For example, Silva and Krasny (2016) used the bioecological model to understand how urban stewardship programs could be designed to promote long-term engagement and positive outcomes. They found that successful programs often incorporated multiple levels of the environment, including the microsystem (e.g., providing support and training to volunteers) and the exosystem (e.g., collaborating with local organizations and institutions). Similarly, Wicks and Warren (2014) used the bioecological model to understand how young consumers' participation in political consumerism (e.g., boycotting products or companies for political reasons) is influenced by their environment. They found that individuals' participation in political consumerism was influenced by the microsystem (e.g., the influence of friends and family), the exosystem (e.g., the availability of information about political issues), and the macrosystem (e.g., cultural values and beliefs about social responsibility). As evidenced by this past research, the bioecological model provides a useful framework for understanding how an individual's development, including their civic engagement, is influenced by the various levels of their environment.

Notably, involvement in both conventional and non-conventional forms of civic activities can have a multitude of positive impacts both on the individual and on the community. For

example, Ballard and colleagues (2019) found that civic engagement positively correlates with future income and education. They also noted that volunteering and voting were associated with an increase in mental health and other health behaviors, and that activism was associated with fewer health risk behaviors. Not only are there individual positive health and behavioral impacts, but people who participated in civic activities also learned to appreciate differences in others (e.g., acquired tolerance, interpersonal trust, and improved attitudes towards others and government) (Theiss-Morse & Hibbings, 2005).

The adaptive role of civic engagement might be particularly important for adolescents given their developmental tasks of forming their identity and sense of self in their larger community (Steinberg, 2017). Indeed, these unique developmental experiences and tasks of adolescents foster their engagement in specific civic activities. For example, Dauer and colleagues (2021) found that adolescents' ideas for civic action were more focused on personal choices than advocacy. Adolescents were found to have a direct-action perspective with regards to their civic engagement and were more inclined to take part in acts that had a direct impact on their immediate well-being. Conversely, they were more disengaged in civic acts that were less directly linked to their well-being, such as electoral participation. This may be because their self-perception within the larger social system (i.e., macrosystem) focuses on decision-making that would impact their immediate well-being and not on a policy level. Similarly, civic engagement in the form of structured group activities (local associations, campus activities, political parties, religious activities, and protest and prosocial-orientated civic engagement) have been shown to correlate with an increase in social well-being and a sense of belonging among adolescents (Albanesi et al., 2007).

Broadly defined, adolescents' civic engagement is associated with positive behavioral, social, and psychological outcomes. Adolescents who participated in civic activities are less likely to engage in criminal activities (Chan et al., 2014) and have better academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes in emerging adulthood (Chan et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2007). Evidence also suggests there is a greater likelihood of participating in civic activities in the future among those who participated in civic activities (e.g., participation in service activities assisting organizations, assisting the environment or animals, and direct contact with individuals in needs) during adolescence (Schmidt et al. 2007).

Individual and contextual factors often influence who participates in civic engagement opportunities. For example, adolescents that volunteer tend to be female and are found to be more socially mature, more extroverted, and altruistic (Eisenberg et al., 2009). This can influence the values and the impact of the engagement. Along with gender being a factor, there is also race and ethnicity. There is limited access to participation in civic opportunities for marginalized youth due to other social factors (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Although there is a limited number of studies that examine the effects of civic engagement among minoritized and low-income youth, one study showed that racial minoritized young adults who took part in civic opportunities during adolescents were found to be more optimistic about the future, be more content with their life, acquired higher levels of education and were more likely to participate in civic activities during adulthood compared to those who did not participate in civic activities during their adolescents (Dauer et al., 2021). Further, others have shown the benefits of participating in civic engagement were more impactful for youth with lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

In essence, civic engagement encompasses a range of actions aimed at addressing public issues and can encompass both conventional activities, such as volunteering and voting, as well as non-conventional forms such as art and cultural activities (Greer, 2021; Hart & Kirshner, 2009). Although participating in civic activities are influenced by diverse contexts, evidence suggests that this participation is associated with a multitude of positive outcomes, including enhanced physical and mental well-being, higher education and income, and the cultivation of values such as tolerance and trust (Ballard et al., 2019; Theiss-Morse & Hibbings, 2005). These benefits can be especially crucial for adolescents as they go through the process of establishing their identity and sense of self within their community, which is a key developmental task at this stage (Chan et al., 2014; Dauer et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2007).

### ***Art and Civic Engagement***

One area of civic engagement that has received less attention in literature is civic engagement via participatory art. Art can take many forms including theater, literature, music, and painting; in the current study we discuss mural painting. Although most previous research focuses on art as it relates to art therapy and other art forms, work on the relationship between engagement with art and developmental and adjustment outcomes suggests it is a powerful tool for supporting young people (see Zarobe & Bungay, 2017 for a review). For example, art can influence an individual's outlook on future events, potentially leading to less antisocial behavior (Bone et al., 2021). Evidence suggests art-based projects offer opportunities to create exploratory images of resilience that are informed by adolescents' identity experience (Van Katwyk & Seko, 2019). Further, adolescents in art programs may gain opportunities to improve their communication skills and self-confidence (Hughes et al., 2005), and find a new way of self-expression (Gussak & Ploumis-Devick, 2004).



With art having many positive impacts, research has also shown that supporting arts and cultural civic opportunities play a key role in positive social outcomes by influencing the amount a person engages in civic opportunities (Greer, 2021). However, Bone and colleagues (2021) also found that there was an overrepresentation of White individuals compared to other racial/ethnic minoritized groups that were in attendance for art events, despite increases from 1993 to 2016. This increase in racial/ethnic inequalities in art event attendance was not related to other socioeconomic factors. According to Bone and colleagues (2021), people from lower income and social class groups, those in poor health, and those living in rural areas are less likely to attend art events. Bone and colleagues posit that these factors likely act as obstacles that prevent attendance or participation.

Although there is limited research with adolescents, there is a larger range of literature with adults participating in art-based civic engagement. For example, Phinney and colleagues (2014) conducted a study with seniors who participated in producing a collective art piece or performance for public presentation. The study concluded that involvement in this program was associated with improved physical and social well-being. They also found that the seniors felt physically and emotionally stronger after participation. Other research not only supports these findings but also suggests that after participating in community-based art programs, older adults report a better perceived health status, fewer doctor visits, reduced medication use (Cohen et al., 2007), being more physically active, and feeling less worried and concerned (Greaves & Farbus, 2006).

There is a dearth of research on how arts-based civic engagement may impact adolescents. However, given the previously described research on the benefits of art participation and civic engagement independently, and the research with older adults, it is likely that arts-

based civic engagement will similarly be linked with positive outcomes for youth. This current study utilized the positive association of art-based civic engagement programs to look further into some of the outcomes (i.e., self-esteem and self-efficacy) that are associated with participation and looks at a more diverse group of participants.

### **Self-Esteem**

Adolescence is a significant and evolving stage of development marked by transformations in biology, psychology, society, and cognition (Proctor et al., 2009). During adolescences, self-esteem emerges as a key area of change. It is supported by decades of theoretical development and research indicating the positive influence it can have on psychological health and well-being during adolescence (Proctor et al., 2009). Self-esteem has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including higher life satisfaction (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013), improved school performance, greater assertiveness in groups and resistance to peer pressure (Baumeister et al., 2003), and reduced alcohol use, abuse, and tolerance (Zimmerman et al., 1997) compared to individuals with lower self-esteem.

Along with these associations there are also group differences in self-esteem. Self-esteem during early adolescents differ between males and females. Moksnes and Espnes (2013) found that males score higher than females on self-esteem. Like Moksnes and Espnes (2013), Fua and colleagues (2017) found that adolescent girls reported a decrease in self-esteem over time, whereas boys reported no difference. Females may report lower self-esteem scores because of the significance of physical appearance and acceptance by peers compared to males. As well, these differences are more pronounced in White adolescents. Other research has found similar patterns in Hispanic adolescents, but not as profound in Black adolescents (Erkut et al., 2000).

Notably, an important predictor for whether individuals get involved in their community through civic opportunities is self-esteem. For example, Fertman and colleagues (1996) indicated some intrinsic outcomes of engagement in environmental projects, helping the elderly, homeless and poverty, promoting health and wellness, and cultural exchange are increase of self-esteem, moral development, identity, personal efficacy, and reinforced values and beliefs. In addition, art engagement may enhance self-esteem. Mak and Fancourt (2019) found that self-esteem increased with different art-based engagement, and it did not vary by the medium or the materials used to create a work of art. They also were able to conclude that the growth in self-esteem was more about the engagement in the activity than one's ability. Similarly, French (2018) conducted a case study on the relationship between participation in the arts and self-esteem and found that engaging in artistic activities can significantly improve an individual's self-esteem. Additionally, research on arts-based civic activities, although rare, has also demonstrated the ability to impact self-esteem. Lee (2020) conducted a study on youth-led arts-based research and found that such projects can increase self-esteem in young people. Further, Zarobe (2017) discusses how the increase found in research is due to the feeling of being valued, treated like an adult, overcoming challenges, and having a purpose. These studies suggest that incorporating the arts and arts-based civic activities into research on self-esteem will be a valuable addition. Overall, there is limited research on adolescent's self-esteem and civic engagement, especially with art-based engagement, which this study aims to look further into to support previous research.

### **Self-Efficacy**

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy beliefs are developed from performance outcomes and vicarious experiences. Vicarious experience can come from social models, such as

family members, peers, teachers, influential community members, and employers. Performance outcomes provide a means of evaluating a person's ability to succeed, while vicarious experiences come from observing others who are similar to oneself and are succeeding.

Redmond (2010) recognized the influence of encouragement and discouragement on an individual's performance or ability to perform. Specifically, receiving positive verbal feedback while performing a more complex task can induce a person to believe they have greater capabilities to succeed. Emotional and physical well-being play a role in how a person may feel about their abilities. It is much easier to have higher self-efficacy when a person is feeling healthy and views their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance (Bandura, 1982; 1977). On the other hand, those with lower self-efficacy are overcome by self-doubts and regard their arousal as a hindrance to performance (Bandura, 1977).

Having a sense of control over one's life plays a role in many areas. Self-efficacy has been found to positively influence adolescents' relationships with their parents, lower likelihood of the engagement in antisocial behavior, lower likelihood of displays of depression (Bandura et al., 1999; 2001), better academic performance (Williams & Williams, 2010), anticipation about family life, more community participation, better personal health, and economic achievements (Cunnie et al., 2009). External factors as well as personal factors in an adolescent's life impact their self-efficacy. Adolescents place particular importance on the ability to rely on themselves, which is a key factor in the creation of their personality (Caprara et al., 1998). The evidence suggests that individuals with higher self-confidence are more inclined to pursue difficult tasks and challenges. Conversely, those with lower self-confidence tend to experience feelings of helplessness and are more likely to give up on difficult tasks. Consequently, adolescents with

greater self-efficacy tend to experience more positive interpersonal relationships and achieve better life outcomes.

Not only does self-efficacy foster positive impact on an adolescent, but it also influences their engagement level in the community. Self-efficacy is important in early development for civic engagement because successful civic engagement requires an individual to have continuous participation and motivation (Bandura, 1997; Pastorelli et al., 2001). Solhaug (2006) suggests that it is not merely knowledge of a civic opportunity that drives engagement, but rather a belief in one's own capabilities. They found that the thoughts and beliefs of one's self-efficacy had a high predictive power in the attitudes towards engaging in civic opportunities. While there are a limited number of adolescents who engage in civic activities (Chan et al., 2014), it is possible to support their engagement in classes by designing curriculum around supporting their understanding of civic systems, including the role of individual action can have and to get them more involved (Dauer et al., 2021) and by supporting their self-efficacy.

Although there is a limited amount of research on art-based civic engagement and self-efficacy, extant evidence suggests engagement in arts-based activities is associated with positive outcomes among young people. For instance, Catterall (2009) conducted an analysis of prior data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, which gathered information from secondary schools over a four-year period regarding the prolonged impact of sustained involvement in visual and performing arts during high school. Results indicated that adolescents who are engaged in the arts are more likely to volunteer in their communities in the future compared to their counterparts who do not. This may be because adolescents developed a comprehension and ownership of issues and challenges that are addressed by this engagement, or they developed a deeper understanding of social issues and awareness of the root of the problem (Grebe, 2017).

The adolescent also develops skills that are not always taught in schools (e.g., creative problem solving, cross-cultural communication, collaboration) to promote creative solutions. Also, when adolescents take part in art-based civic engagement, the cause being addressed is heard by more adults and the larger community, and in return their creative ideas are validated (Grebe, 2017). Similarly, Lee and colleagues (2020) found a positive impact on the adolescents' self-confidence, allowing them to feel more confident in expressing themselves and their ideas. The adolescents reported feeling more empowered after participating in the program and reported that the program helped them to develop a sense of hope for their future. Through the art-based civic engagement the adolescent can find strength and confidence in their work and voice which prompts them to have a higher level of self-efficacy.

Overall, we know civic engagement and engagement with the arts are important for adolescent adjustment outcomes. Previous literature has shown a strong association of civic engagement and engagement with the arts are important for self-esteem; while there is a lack of literature on the association between self-efficacy, previous studies have demonstrated that self-confidence, which is similar to self-efficacy, has an impact. Self-esteem has been found to be associated with greater life satisfaction (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013), better school performance, greater willingness to speak up in groups (Baumeister et al., 2003), and less receptivity to peer pressure over time, and less alcohol use, misuse, and tolerance (Zimmerman et al., 1997). Self-esteem is also an important predictor for whether individuals get involved in their community through civic opportunities (Fertman et al., 1996; Lee, 2020; Mak & Fancourt, 2019; Zarobe, 2017). Additionally, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the initial stages of civic engagement as it requires sustained participation and motivation (Bandura, 1997; Pastorelli et al., 2001). The higher self-efficacy within an adolescent the greater positive impact on interpersonal

relationships, lower likelihood of engagement in antisocial behavior, lower likelihood of displays of depression (Bandura et al., 1999; 2001), better academic performance (Williams & Williams, 2010), anticipation about family life, more community participation, better personal health, and economic achievements (Cunniën et al., 2009). Despite limited research, there is evidence suggesting that arts-based civic engagement may have a positive impact on adolescents. Given the well-established benefits of individual art participation and civic engagement, it is reasonable to assume that arts-based civic engagement will also be linked to positive outcomes for adolescents. However, there are considerable gaps in this literature and the present study aims to address some of these gaps.

## CHAPTER II: PURPOSE OF PRESENT STUDY

In this present study, I examined the association between civic engagement via participatory art and adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy using convergent mixed methods design. As previous research investigates this association, it focuses on a majority of urban areas and non-minoritized population. This present study will look at a more rural and diverse population. In the context of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, this study's results will help bridge the research gap on minoritized teenagers' civic engagement in participatory art, particularly mural painting, in a less urban setting. The study will contribute to developing a more comprehensive understanding of how participatory art impacts adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy in relation to their civic engagement. This thesis will address three research questions. First, does participating in civic engagement via participatory art change adolescents' self-esteem? Previous research has found a positive association between civic engagement and self-esteem (Fertman et al., 1996; French, 2018; Lee, 2020; Mak and Fancourt, 2019; Zarobe, 2017). As such, I predict there will be an increase in adolescents' self-esteem through civic engagement via participatory art. Second, does participating in civic engagement via participatory art change adolescents' self-efficacy? Previous research has shown people who participate in civic activities have higher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Grebe, 2017; Pastorelli et al., 2001; Solhaug, 2006). Therefore, I predict that there will be an increase in adolescents' self-efficacy through civic engagement via participatory art. Third, as an exploratory research question, I will investigate whether there are longitudinal effects on adolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy as a result of participating in civic art. Since there is a lack of existing research in this area, this is an exploratory question, and no formal hypothesis has been formulated.



## CHAPTER III: METHODS

### **Data Context**

Data from this convergent mixed methods study were derived from a two-week community-based art mural project that occurred in July 2022 and a subsequent follow-up interview in September and November of 2022. This mural project aimed to provide participants the opportunity to reflect on what “Creating Safe Spaces” means to them and their community, a small, focused metropolis in the Midwestern United States. The mural project was facilitated by a local nonprofit, whose mission is to provide youth and families with transformative learning through hands-on experience with visual arts. The muralist and project director were from Artolution, an international nonprofit, whose mission is “focused on developing local leaders in the arts to use collaborative artmaking as a tool for communities to share their stories with the world” (Artolution, n.d., para. 1). Artolution projects aim to build healthy, positive relationships among the community members, promote equal opportunity with power, and give participants a chance to have a voice. I was a part of the research team that was present throughout the whole duration of the project and after the project was completed. The collaboration offered almost 40 young artists from local school districts, nonprofits, community centers; more than one dozen police officers; and other community mentors and teaching artists the opportunity to create and manifest their shared and personal vision of safety, security, emotional and physical well-being, respect, identity, and more.

Over the two weeks, the participants and volunteers would work on the mural for three to four hours a day. Each day included daily activities which included check-in and check-out shown in Figure 1. Each day also included themes within the mural, which encouraged discussions about the issue of the day and create sketches that could then go into the mural, first

using chalk then paint. As the project progressed each day there would be a variety of mediums and techniques used to help advance the mural to the finished product and to keep the participants engaged (Figure 1). The finished mural was titled “Journey of Hope” and is displayed at the most predominant local public park.

**Figure 1.** Daily schedule of muralists

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Check in	Get the group together to assess the mood of the group and address any issues or concerns related to the mural. This is the time to give an update on the project and inform participants on activities for the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you enjoying?</li> <li>• What would you like to see improved?</li> <li>• What is something you want to learn?</li> </ul>
Brainstorm using daily theme	Each day focuses on specific subject matter. Participants and volunteers may be encouraged to discuss the issue of the day and a chance to sketch out drawings on paper before painting on the mural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your life struggles or the challenges in your community?</li> <li>• What positive activities help you overcome challenges?</li> <li>• Create your dream community.</li> <li>• What is an animal that is significant to you, or that you feel represents you?</li> </ul>
Start painting using a variety of mediums and techniques	While painting uses different approaches to help keep participants and volunteers engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abstract background</li> <li>• Portraitures</li> <li>• Outlining</li> <li>• Geometric pattern</li> </ul>
Clean up	After the painting is finished for the day, participants and volunteers will help to clean up materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning brushes</li> <li>• Putting paint back into containers</li> <li>• Putting equipment (i.e., ladders, step stools, buckets, brushes) back into storage.</li> </ul>
Check out	Gather the group together to reflect on the day and address any issues or concerns that have come. This is the time to reflect on the day and what is still yet to come for the following day(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s something you’ve learned in the project?</li> <li>• What’s something you painted that you are proud of?</li> <li>• If you could have a superpower, what would it be and why?</li> <li>• Who do you admire and why?</li> </ul>

## **Participants**

The adolescents who participated in the project were recruited from the local school districts, community centers, and nonprofit organizations. Participants were required to apply to participate in the Mural project. The participants had to fill out an application and draft a short essay about why they were interested in participating in the project. All the participants that applied to the project were admitted. Of the 41 adolescents who were admitted for participation, only 26 adolescents attended the mural project and assented to participate in the research. Further, two were excluded from the study: one due to age and the other due to a delayed parental consent form ( $N = 24$  for quantitative data).

The participants were, on average, 12.96 ( $SD = 1.43$ ) years of age. The sample was predominantly female (54.2%), followed by male (20.8%), gender fluid (8.3%), non-binary (8.3%), transgender (4.2%), and demi X (4.2%). Participants mostly identified as multi-racial/-ethnic (33.3%), followed by African American/Black (29.2%), European American/White (16.7%), Hispanic/Latino/Latinx (8.3%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (8.3%), and Native American/American Indian (4.2%).

## **Procedure and Analysis**

This mixed methods study combined pre- and post-mural quantitative data and follow-up qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected from youth artists before and after the mural, and qualitative follow-up data were collected between September and November, months after the mural was completed. Consent was collected from parents and guardians upon registration for the project. At the start of the mural project, the adolescents were asked to assent to participate in a pre- and post-mural survey and a follow-up interview about their experience with

the project. If assent was given, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire before starting the mural activity that day. Specific data collection procedures are described below.

### ***Quantitative Data***

Pre-survey (Day 1) questionnaires were collected before the adolescents could start their participation in the mural project. Post-survey data (~Day 12) were collected in a similar fashion. On the last day of the creation of the mural project, the adolescents who participated in the pre-survey were asked to complete the post-survey questionnaire. Adolescents who were not in attendance on the last day of painting but were in attendance for the community mural reveal (~Day 14), the weekend following the mural completion, were asked to fill out the questionnaire after the reveal was completed.

### ***Measures***

**Self-esteem.** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) is a widely used 10-item self-report scale for evaluating an individual's self-esteem, both positive and negative feelings about oneself for their global self-worth. The scale consists of 5 negatively worded items and 5 positively worded items, all answered on a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Questions 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are reverse scored when calculating the sum of all ten items, with a higher score indicating a higher self-esteem. Past research has shown that this scale is reliable and valid for identifying common factors, separate self-confidence, and self-depreciation factors (Gray-Little et al. 1997). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a short and convenient method for measuring global self-esteem, making it a popular choice among psychologists.

In terms of temporal consistency, Fleming and Courtney (1984) reported a 1-week test-retest reliability of .82 and an internal consistency coefficient alpha of .88. This indicates that the scale has good consistency over time and that the items are highly related to each other.

**Self-efficacy.** The 10-item measure General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) was created to assess a person's general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the goal of predicting coping with daily challenges and adaptation after experiencing stressful life events. Self-efficacy, or the belief that one can perform novel or difficult tasks or cope with adversity, is considered a positive resistance resource factor and is measured by ten items on the scale, each referring to successful coping and implying an internal-stable attribution of success. The items are answered on a 4-point Likert scale format that ranges from 1 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*extremely true*), with the total score being the sum of all ten items. A higher score on the scale indicates a higher level of self-efficacy. The validity of the psychometric scale has been confirmed through meta-analysis across various countries by Luszczynska and colleagues (2005). The scale has been found to have high reliability, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .75 to .90 in samples from 23 countries and is available in 33 languages (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

It is important to note that while the General Self-Efficacy Scale is considered relevant for clinical practice and behavior change, it cannot be used as a substitute for domain-specific self-efficacy. The development of self-efficacy beliefs is influenced by performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, encouragement, discouragement, and emotional and physical well-being (Bandura, 1997).

### ***Qualitative Data***

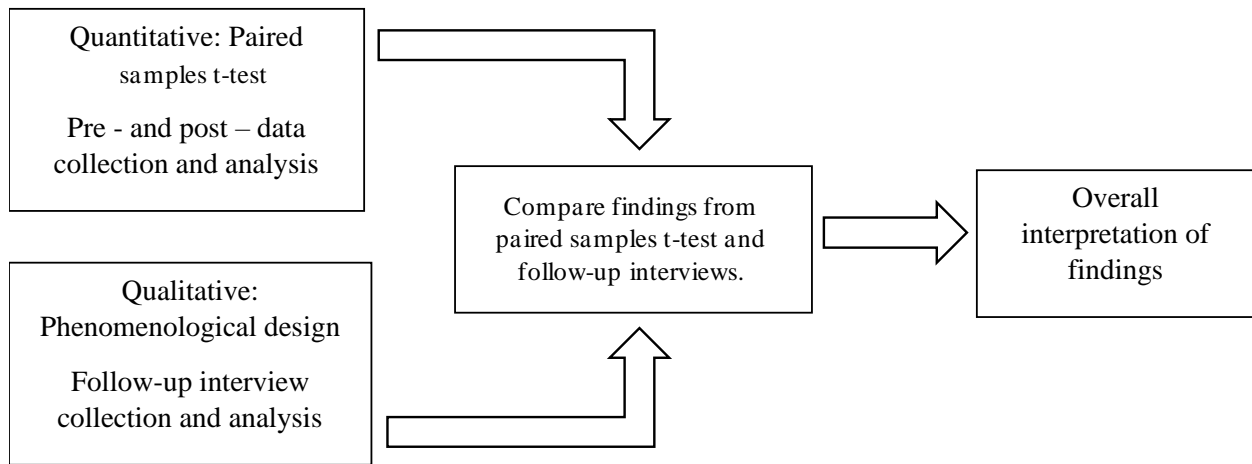
Qualitative data were collected via a one-time 30-minute follow-up interviews with interested participants. The parents and guardians of the adolescent participants were contacted

through email approximately two months (~Day 74) after the conclusion of the mural project. The email thanked the parents for allowing their adolescents to participate in the mural project and reminded parents that there was a follow-up interview about the adolescent's experience in the project. For those that volunteered, 30-minute appointments were set up at a time most convenient for the adolescent via Zoom. At the interview, rapport was built before the recording started. They were reminded the purpose of the interview was to give the participant a chance to reflect on and share about their experience participating in the mural project, thanked for participating, and reminded that they will not be associated with their data for the audio recording and transcript. Once recording, the adolescent was asked to complete an electronic sorting task with words (e.g., happy, joy, pride, shame, fear, excitement, stress, hopeful, friendship, justice, equity) that best represent their experience with the mural project most accurately (Appendix A). This task was designed to initiate conversation about general descriptive words about the experience they had while participating in the mural. They highlighted or bolded the words on the list and then were asked to elaborate on why they chose that word and if they could give an example. Through the expansion of the words, they picked or added to the list with examples, a general overall depiction of their attitudes, emotions, and opinions about the project would be displayed. Following this task, more questions were asked which aimed to provide the adolescent the opportunity to further discuss their experience (Appendix B). At the completion of the interview, the interviewer asked if there was anything else they would like to add and then thanked them for their time and participation in the project.

## CHAPTER IV: ANALYTIC STRATEGY

A convergent mixed methods design will be used to analyze these secondary data (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). Through this design, I will use both quantitative and qualitative through separate analysis to study and understand the outcomes associated with adolescents' self-esteem and self-efficacy. After analysis, I will mix the results during the overall interpretation, as shown in Figure 2. The quantitative data from the pre- and post- surveys will be explored with univariate descriptive statistics before performing inferential statistics. Specifically, a paired samples t-test will be used to compare the means of the pre- and post-mural self-esteem and self-efficacy scores. Then separately for the qualitative follow-up interview data, I will use a phenomenological research design to identify and analyze the meaning the project had for each participant, and report patterns or themes within the data using MAXQDA 20. This will allow me to find themes or patterns through the participants' lived experience that also may also align with the findings of the quantitative data. When finding possible themes that emerged from the interviews, I started with memoing possible general codes and themes that arose. Then after I uploaded the transcripts to MAXQDA 20 I started to code. Once all interviews were coded, I checked the codes by going back over the interview's multiple times. Once that was finished, I discussed the codes found with thesis chair to check for accuracy and my approach. Finally, I consolidated the codes into major themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Once both data sets are separately reported I explore the findings for shared and discrepant results.

**Figure 2.** Convergent parallel design (referenced from Creswell, 2010)





## CHAPTER V: RESULTS

### Quantitative

A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare participants' self-esteem before and after participating in the mural project and indicated no significant differences (Table 1).

Similarly, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare participants' self-efficacy before and after participating and indicated no significant differences (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Paired sample t-test analysis for self-esteem and self-efficacy*

Title	Pre		Post		<i>t</i> (16)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Self-esteem	23.41	5.03	22.53	6.18	0.72	0.48	0.65
Self-efficacy	29.71	4.34	28.41	5.16	1.84	0.08	0.94

### Qualitative

Through the findings presented below, I will summarize how the young artists experienced their participation in the mural project using both their own words and descriptive narrative, guided by a phenomenological approach. This will allow the focus to be on the commonality of what the participants experienced while participating in the mural project. The interviews were on average 15:47 minutes long and ranged from 11:26 to 17:13 minutes. Throughout the interviews there, 11 different codes were identified and organized into three major themes (Table 2). Participants' descriptions were used to illustrate these themes below.

**Table 2***General themes from follow-up interviews*

Theme	Description	Frequency, n (%)
Connection & Collaboration <i>Teamwork</i> <i>Community</i> <i>Friends &amp; Peers</i> <i>Adult(s)</i> <i>Social</i> <i>Belonging</i>	Importance of working together towards a common goal, supporting one another, and creating relationships	109 (59.6%)
Growth & Development <i>Learn</i> <i>Future</i>	Acquiring knowledge and skills and application of those skills, as well as thoughts about how to use or exercise those skills in the future.	10 (5.5%)
Emotions <i>Positive Emotions</i> <i>Accomplishment</i> <i>Nervousness &amp; Stress</i>	Emotions experienced before, during, and after the mural project participation	64 (35%)

*Note. There were 5 participants who opted into the follow-up interviews. The number and percentages displayed in the table represent the number of times the codes occurred across interviews.*

***Connection and Collaboration***

The first theme that emerged from the data was connection and collaboration. The participants tended to talk about establishing relationships and working with others toward a common goal or purpose. The criteria used to identify connection and collaboration included participants discussing teamwork, community, friends and peers, adults, social aspects, and belonging. For example, Participant 1 (female Asian/Pacific Islander, age 15) expressed how the mural project was “something [she] can share with the community.” Throughout the interview she talked about how the mural project gave not only her but others the space to be a part of something and something that everyone there would be able to share with the community. She also discusses her thoughts on the theme of the mural project. She talked about how the idea of

having the police officers help the young artists was a “very strong and great idea.” She expresses how she was:

Fortunate enough to where if I was in a situation where I needed help, I would feel comfortable with calling the police for help. But there are people out there who don't. So, to be able to have this collaboration and be more well versed with one another.

Through this experience she thought it would benefit those involved to see another side of the officers, as well, she expressed how it created a space where volunteers and participants were “on like an equal playing field like everyone was working together for this and no one had more power than someone else.” She explained how seeing the officers’ humane side can be beneficial, as it allows individuals to feel like they are part of a cohesive and collaborative community. This can help create a sense of trust and understanding between law enforcement and the community, which in turn can help improve communication and collaboration by people may be more likely to work together towards common goals and find effective solutions to problems.

Similarly, Participant 3 (female African American/Black, age 13) discussed how she was excited to do “something for the community for the first time.” When discussing the long terms impacts that the project had on her, she expressed how she would share her experiences with others when she was at school and with her family. Taken together, responses suggested that doing something that was part of the community or for the community was something that they looked forward to.

Participants also discussed relationships with friends, peers, and adults that stemmed from participation in the mural project. One respondent (Participant 2: female European American/White, age 13) talked about the how the adults and volunteers there “actually cared

about the painter's health [and] well-being." She proceeded to discuss how the project gave her the chance to create these relationships with her peers and adults. The interactions that she had were positive and she was "able to create new friends and [relationships] that went quite well." This experience gave her a safe space to foster those relationships, further illustrating the theme of connection and collaboration.

Comparably, Participant 5 (male European American/White, age 12) discussed the reason he joined the project because of his friends and how he made new friends. He discussed how one of the reasons he got into the project was because he discussed it with his friends, and they were also going to join. He described how there was a lot of "teamwork [with everyone], like working with each other and communicating." Not only was he able to work with his friends, he shared that he also made new friends. His overall impression of the mural focused on being a part of something bigger than him with his friends and being able to share it with other participants, as well as with his family. Likewise, Participant 4 (female African American/Black, age 12) shared how the mural project was a time she was able to "hang out with [her] friends." She also shared how it gave her the chance to make some new friends, highlighting the social connections that steamed from engagement in this project.

All the interviewed participants talked about the connection and collaboration that they experienced through participation in the mural project. Through this experience, the participants were able to form new friendships and connect with adults. They also shared the sense of community and belonging that was created through participating. The mural project gave them a chance to share their voice with peers, friends, adults, and the community while being in a safe space where they felt comfortable to do so. It gave them the space to be heard and get involved with something that they could share with others.

## *Growth and Development*

Another major theme that was shared through the interviews was growth and development. This theme was characterized by learning new skills and applying them, as well as future application of those skills. The basis for distinguishing this theme throughout the interviews were quotes centered around learning and implementation of skills in the future. For example, Participant 2 expressed how the mural project was “a social experiment before school started to get used to talking to people more and having good interactions with people.” She continued to talk about how the relationships she was able to create with the people at the mural helped prepare her for social interactions at school and trusting other peers and adults. She shared how she learned:

Just because I think I’m going to mess up with interactions or that people are going to be rude in some sort of way, doesn’t mean that it’s true and I need to be patient... if something happens, then it isn’t my fault necessarily. If someone doesn’t want to be friends or talk with me whatsoever for no reason whatsoever, it isn’t my fault.

The mural gave this participant a safe space to form those positive relationships with peers and adults, as well as understand the nature of forming relationships with others. The skills she learned through creating these relationships at the mural can later be used in forming other relationships through her life. By fostering those relationships, she can apply those skills in the future when forming new connections with other people or peers. She shared how she was able to make some new friends and then in school, she is more confident in fostering relationships with her peers, teachers, and counselors because of what she learned during her mural participation. Relatedly, as mentioned in the connection and collaboration theme, Participant 1 discussed her thoughts about having police officers there as volunteers at the mural. She

mentions she believes how this “will possibly help a lot of kids in the future” being able to see the police officers outside of uniform and as a person. Seeing the officers as more than just a uniform can foster collaboration for understanding. Getting involved in the community helps to develop skills to build valuable connections and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Additionally, Participant 2 shared her love for art and the kind of art that she usually does, which was pencil drawing in a sketchbook. She expressed that the mural project was a way “to learn more towards painting and also do something big... [she] enjoyed the size difference and also just being able to work with paint more.” This participant also noted that after participating in the mural, she explored different subjects to sketch not previously explored in her art. In other words, the mural inspired her to discover new topics for her art expressions. She also noted how this experience opened the door to possibly pursuing more opportunities like one.

Overall, all the participants talked about how they learned more about painting in particular and then being able to use those applied skills throughout the mural project and possible art projects. Participants were also able to learn about forming relationships with peers and adults that could then be later used throughout life. Through the mural project the participants were able to explore social and art skills that they used after the mural and planned to use in the future.

### ***Emotions***

The last major theme identified was emotions. This theme included the various kinds of emotions that were expressed throughout the interviews. The criteria used to distinguish this theme were positive emotions, accomplishment, nervousness, and stress. For example, Participant 5 shared how at the beginning of the project he felt “anxious [and had] fear.” He

expressed that these feelings were at the beginning of the mural project when he was unsure about what was going on. However, these feelings “stopped after [he] caught on to what was going on.” He then went on to talk about “being proud to be a part of something the whole community was excited about... [and] happy to participate in something for the community.” When describing the emotions of his overall experience with the mural project he expressed that he felt happy, joy, scared, pride, and anxious.

Similarly, Participant 2 disclosed how she “was quite worried about meeting and talking to people...because [she] was worried that [she] was going to mess up something, but then few days later [she] realized that it was going great and [she] had nothing to worry about.” She described her overall experience with the mural project as a positive experience, using emotions to describe her experience as happy, hopeful, joyful, and anxious. The positive emotions she experienced were also shown in her personal artwork outside of the mural. She shared that it “inspired [her]... to make more positive [art] once [she] got back because... after finishing the mural [she] went straight back to sketching and [she] began to draw and paint more positive things.” Through participating in the mural project, she had a more positive view of imagery that she wanted to share in her own art. Not only did the project give her a more positive view, but the project also gave her confidence in herself to be able to make mistakes, as discussed above in growth and development. She also mentioned since her experience was so positive that she was looking forward to getting involved in the community more and involved with other projects like the mural.

In addition, Participant 1 shared her feelings towards the project and her thoughts about how the other participants were also feeling. She revealed how the positive atmosphere

surrounding the mural was the reason she kept coming back and was looking for similar opportunities to get involved in. She expressed how:

The mural project was good, a lot of people feel very prideful in the work they've done because it's not only like a great piece of art, but it's a great piece of art that the entire community gets to see and something to share our voices... I [take] pride in the fact that I was able to be a part of it and I was able to have my voice be put out in the mural as well.

She mentioned the sense of pride that she had in herself throughout the entire interview.

Much like how Participant 1 continued coming back to similar mural projects, all the participants expressed how the mural project not only met their expectations but exceeded them. Participant 3 shared how "it went over [her] expectations." As well, Participant 1 expressed that participating both and "especially the unveiling of [the mural]" exceeded her expectations. There was an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment that each of the participants experienced during and after participating in the mural project. Overall, there were a lot of emotions that were shared when discussing each of their experiences with the mural project, and most of those feelings started with feeling anxious but then became positive.



## CHAPTER V1: DISCUSSION

This study collected data from a two-week art mural project that took place in July 2022, followed by interviews in September and November of the same year. The mural project was conducted in a small corporate-focused metropolis in the Midwestern United States, with the aim of exploring what "Creating Safe Spaces" means to the participants and their community. This study used a convergent mixed methods approach to analyze the data collected from pre- and post-surveys, as well as a follow-up interview. Results from mixed methods data are summarized in the following.

Results from quantitative data revealed no statistically significant change in adolescents' self-esteem after participating in the mural project. I hypothesized that there would be an increase in adolescents' self-esteem through civic engagement via participatory art, given previous research. For example, previous research suggests that engaging in artistic civic activities can support and improve young people's self-esteem (Fertman et al., 1996; French & Jones, 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Mak & Fancourt, 2019; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017). Similarly, I hypothesized that there would also be an increase in self-efficacy through participating in the mural project, which was not supported. This hypothesis was proposed given previous research indicated self-efficacy plays a significant role in fostering positive engagement in the community and increased as a result of participating in civic activities (Fertman et al., 1996; Lee, 2020; Mak & Fancourt, 2019; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017). It has also been found that successful civic engagement requires an individual to have continuous participation and motivation driven by their belief in their own capabilities (Bandura, 1997; Pastorelli et al., 2001; Solhaug, 2006). Supporting adolescents' self-efficacy through designed curricula and understanding civic

systems can increase their engagement in civic activities (Dauer et al., 2021). Also, art-based civic activities are associated with higher levels of self-efficacy (Grebe, 2017; Lee et al., 2020).

There are several potential reasons as to why the current study's findings of the null relationship between arts-based civic engagement and self-esteem and self-efficacy do not align with past research. First, previous research has investigated the arts as a general umbrella term, and there is very limited research on mural painting with adolescents. For example, most of the research with art-based civic activities with adolescents focused on community service and smaller scale artwork (i.e., college, role-playing, music, dance, and writing; e.g., Fertman et al., 1996; French & Jones, 2018; Grebe, 2017; Lee et al., 2020; Mak & Fancourt, 2019; Zarobe & Bungay, 2017). There is little research that looks at the impacts of mural painting. The difference in scale of the mural project may be associated with the discrepant findings because large scale and public projects are open for more people to see, where smaller scale projects may be kept to oneself. Perhaps the scale or public nature of the project was the reason the current study did not find that participation was associated with adolescent's self-esteem changes.

Second, the findings from this study also may not align with previous research because of geographical differences. This study took place in a small corporate focused metropolis in the Midwestern United States, where previous research has looked more urban areas, and many took place outside of the United States (e.g., United Kingdom, Egypt, and Iraq; French, 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Mak & Fancourt, 2019). This discrepancy could have to do with cultural differences or norms in other countries that impacted their findings that were not presented in the present study. Third, related to cultural differences, perhaps the type of volunteers or mural theme affected the participants. The topic of the mural (creating safe spaces) and the fact that both community and law enforcement agents served as participants is unique to this study. Future research should

examine law enforcement or different kinds of volunteers that are involved and how that could possibly affect the participants' outcomes.

Fourth, the data were collected within a smaller period of time in the current study compared to other research, which, for example, collected longitudinal data that spanned up to four years (i.e., Catterall, 2009; Grebe, 2017; Solhaug, 2006). The current study was only a two-week-long period that participants were involved in the study. Two weeks may not have been enough time to see a change in self-esteem within the participants. Fifth, discrepancies with past research may stem from the age of the participants. Previous research also collected data from participants in later adolescence (i.e., Cotterall, 2009, Dauer et al. 2021; Solhaug, 2006), whereas the present study included early adolescents. Future research should examine the effects of early adolescent duration of participation in art-based civic engagement on self-esteem and self-efficacy with a larger diverse range of adolescent ages. It should also look at the length of time the engagement occurred and look at the differences in the length of the project and possible impacts of the time spent within the project, as well as the type of project engaged in. Finally, and importantly, the sample size of the current study may have played a role in the findings due to being underpowered. Future research should examine a larger sample size to see if there are discrepant findings from previous literature.

In addition to quantitative data, I also conducted follow-up interviews with participants to obtain qualitative data. Specifically, these interviews gave the adolescents a chance to share and reflect on their experience participating in the mural project. Through the exploration from the follow-up interviews with the adolescents, three major themes emerged: connection and collaboration, growth and development, and emotions. Participants emphasized the importance of establishing relationships and working together towards a common goal through discussing

connection and collaboration. The project provided a space for the participants to be heard, to get involved in their community, and form new relationships. The experience fostered a sense of community and belonging and allowed them to share their voices with others. Additionally, participants shared their experience of growth and development through learning new skills and their future application. Lastly, participants shared how they initially felt nervous and anxious, but these feelings dissipated as they became more comfortable and prouder of their involvement in the project. The participants expressed a desire to continue participating in similar projects in the future. Much like previous research, the qualitative interviews showed that participating in arts-based civic activities was associated with positive outcomes among the participants months after their involvement (i.e., Catterall, 2009; Grebe, 2017; Pastorelli et al. 2001; Solhaug, 2006). More specifically, research has shown that participating in civic activities can increase a sense of belonging (Albanesi et al., 2007), a greater sense of self within the community (Chan et al., 2014; Dauer et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2007), and an opportunity to learn new skills (i.e. appreciate others, interpersonal trust, tolerance, etc.; Theiss-Morse & Hibblings, 2005). Results from qualitative findings are well aligned (and extend; see below) past research.

There are several discrepant findings across the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data did not show any significant difference in self-esteem after participating in the mural project, but the follow-up interviews did hint that participation in the mural project supported this outcome. For example, in the follow-up interviews the participants discussed feeling a sense of accomplishment and pride from participation. The sense of accomplishment and pride may boost self-esteem and provide a sense of pride in one's ability to complete a task. Similarly, self-efficacy did not increase after participating in the mural project, but the follow-up interviews pointed to a greater sense of self-efficacy. The participants talked about learning new

skills from the mural project such as painting and teamwork. As these skills develop the participants feel more confident in their ability to take on new challenges, traits or perspectives that may correlate with self-efficacy. Similarly, the participants contributed to the mural project, which allows them to see the positive impact their effort has on the final artwork. This may help them feel more confident in their abilities. Indeed, working with other people towards a common goal can foster a sense of belonging and connection within the community, which can contribute to boosting self-esteem and self-efficacy (Catterall, 2009; Cunnien et al., 2009; Fertman et al., 1996; Zarobe, 2017; Zimmerman et al., 1997). Although, the findings from the surveys told a story that did not support the hypothesis, the follow-up interviews showed possible ways that getting involved with art-based civic activities can increase outcomes (e.g., emotions and perceptions) likely correlated with self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Although previous research has shown that engagement in arts-based civic activities are associated with sense of self outcomes, several noteworthy additions to from this literature stem from the current study. For example, I extended quantitative examinations of art-based civic engagement and conducted follow-up interviews to look at possible long-term impacts of participating in an art-based mural civic activity. By having follow-up interviews after the involvement in art-based civic engagement it is possible to see novel longitudinal impacts. Notably, the sample from this study examines a more diverse racial/ethnic and gender sample. Previous research has examined predominantly individuals who identify as female and white (Bone et al., 2021; Eisenberg et al., 2009). This study focuses on a new population that expands previous research knowledge and sheds light on smaller marginalized groups not extensively researched.

Like all research, this study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. One of the limitations mentioned was the small sample and had a unique set of gender identities. Unlike previous research, the participants reported to have a wider range of gender identities than just male and female. There were six gender identities reported including male and female. For this research, the sample may not be a representation of the larger adolescent population and therefore cannot be generalized. Due to the small sample size of this study, I was unable to see if there were possible effects between the different gender identities. As well, history effects were not taken into consideration. This may not have been the first time these adolescents participated in an art-based civic activity. For example, one of the participants interviewed shared how it was her third time participating in a mural project. The project could have a different impact on participants who have engaged in a similar project compared to those who are participating in a project like this for the first time. Another limitation to consider is the types of volunteers that were there. The project wanted to focus on bringing together adolescent youth, people in the community, and police officers. The police officers participating in the mural could be the reason that some youth may not be completely comfortable sharing their views. Also, I was a volunteer at the mural project. This could present experimenter bias; when analyzing qualitative data my own expectations and beliefs could have influenced how I coded the interviews. Lastly, this study could be difficult to replicate. The project was in a unique setting and a unique time where police brutality was high. The topic also could be a factor in how an adolescent's self-esteem and self-efficacy could be influenced by participating. Finally, the follow-up interviews' questions were not focused on self-esteem and self-efficacy but on the impacts the project had on the individual in the short- and long-term. This resulted in challenges with data mixing. Future research may align quantitative and qualitative interviews to a greater

extent to capture the ways arts-based civic activities contribute to adolescents' sense of self outcomes.

Although there are many limitations as outlined above, the present study contributes to the current body of literature. Future research should examine different gender identities and how participating in art-based civic activities impacts those marginalized groups. Along with that, it should examine the topic or kind of activity the participants are engaged in. This study looked specifically at participating in a mural project, which is a more public forum to get involved with an art-based activity. Also, the topic on which the activity is based can also influence the kind of impact participation has on an individual. With that, future research should also conduct follow-up interviews with participants after their participation that is focused on addressing specifically the impacts on self-esteem and self-efficacy.

This study examined the association of civic engagement via participatory art in adolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy. An important and unique contribution of this work is the attention to a diverse sample of adolescents, a different geographical location, and providing insight on some possible impacts the adolescents shared through telling their stories in the follow-up interviews. By examining the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the mural project and follow-up interviews, I was able to see possible ways participating in an art-based civic activity are associated with an adolescent's self-esteem and self-efficacy. Although there were discrepant findings, I argue that adolescent participation in civic activities via participatory art can benefit their overall well-being. Importantly, this study adds to the current body of literature on adolescent participation in art-based civic activities, by helping further examine mural painting specifically in adolescents and exhibiting a unique sample.

## REFERENCES

- Albanesi, C., Cicognani, E., & Zani, B. (2007). Sense of community, civic engagement and social well-being in Italian adolescents. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *17*(5), 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.903>
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Civic engagement*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved November 12, 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/education-career/undergrad/civic-engagement>
- Artolution. (n.d.). Retrieved November 12, 2022, from <https://www.artolution.org/>
- Atkins, R., & Hart, D. (2003). Neighborhoods, adults, and the development of civic identity in Urban Youth. *Applied Developmental Science*, *7*(3), 156–164. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0703\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0703_6)
- Ballard, P. J., Hoyt, L. T., & Pachucki, M. C. (2019). Impacts of adolescent and young adult civic engagement on health and socioeconomic status in adulthood. *Child Development*, *90*(4), 1138–1154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12998>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.84.2.191>
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, *37*(2), 122–147. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.37.2.122>
- Bandura, A., Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Pastorelli, C., & Regalia, C. (2001). Sociocognitive self-regulatory mechanisms governing transgressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*(1), 125–135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.1.125>



- Bandura, A., Pastorelli, C., Barbaranelli, C., & Caprara, G. V. (1999). Self-efficacy pathways to childhood depression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*(2), 258–269. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.2.258>
- Bone, J. K., Bu, F., Fluharty, M. E., Paul, E., Sonke, J. K., & Fancourt, D. (2021). Who engages in the arts in the United States? A comparison of several types of engagement using data from the General Social Survey. *BMC Public Health*, *21*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11263-0>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. *International Encyclopedia of Education*, *3*(2), 37–43.
- Caprara, G. V., Scabini, E., Barbaranelli, C., Pastorelli, C., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (1998). Impact of adolescents perceived self-regulatory efficacy on familial communication and antisocial conduct. *European Psychologist*, *3*(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040.3.2.125>
- Catterall, J. S. (2009). Is it the Arts? Would high school sports have the same effects? Is intensive engagement during high school the main issue? In *Doing well and doing good by doing art: The long-term effects of sustained involvement in the visual and Performing Arts during high school: Results of a 12-year national study* (pp. 73–104). essay, Imagination Group/I-Group Books.
- Chan, W. Y., Ou, S.-R., & Reynolds, A. J. (2014). Adolescent civic engagement and adult outcomes: An examination among urban racial minorities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43*(11), 1829–1843. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0136-5>

- Cohen, G. D., Perlstein, S., Chapline, J., Kelly, J., Firth, K. M., & Simmens, S. (2006). The impact of professionally conducted cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social functioning of older adults. *The Gerontologist*, *46*, 726–734
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. (2010) “Chapter 4: Examples of Mixed Methods Design,” in *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. London, UK: SAGE, p. 118.
- Cunnie, K. A., Martinrogers, N., & Mortimer, J. T. (2009). Adolescent work experience and self-efficacy. *The International journal of sociology and social policy*, *29*(3/4), 164–175.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/01443330910947534>
- Dauer, J. M., Sorensen, A. E., & Wilson, J. (2021). Students’ civic engagement self-efficacy varies across socio-scientific issues contexts. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.628784>
- Eisenberg, N., Morris, A., McDaniel, B., & Spinrad, T. (2009). Moral cognition and prosocial responding in adolescence. In R. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.). *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, *3*(1), 229-260.
- Fertman, C. I., White, G. P., & White, L. J. (1996). *Service learning in the Middle School: Building a culture of service*. National Middle School Association.
- Fleming, J. S., & Courtney, B. E. (1984). The dimensionality of self-esteem: II. Hierarchical facet model for revised measurement scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*(2), 404–421. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.2.404>

- French, J., & Jones, L. (2018). Positive you: A self-advocate's arts-based approach for building self-esteem. *Disability & Society*, *34*(2), 189–203.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1539649>
- Gray-Little, B., Williams, V. S. L., & Hancock, T. D. (1997). An Item Response Theory Analysis of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*, 443-451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167297235001>
- Greaves, C. J., & Farbus, L. (2006). Effects of creative and social activity on the health and well-being of socially isolated older people: Outcomes from a multi-method observational study. *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, *126* (3), 134–142.
- Grebe, A. M. (2017). The Arts, Civic Engagement, and Urban Youth. In L. Hersey, & B. Bobick (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on the Facilitation of Civic Engagement through Community Art* (pp. 294-319). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-1727-6.ch014>
- Greer, M. (2021). Civic Engagement and inclusion through art. *National Civic Review*, *109*(4), 30–34. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.32543/naticivirevi.109.4.0030>
- Gussak, D. E., & Ploumis-Devick, E. (2004). Creating wellness in correctional populations through the arts: An interdisciplinary model. *Visual Arts Research*, *30*(1), 35–43.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20716098>
- Hart, D., & Kirshner, B. (2009). Civic Participation and development among urban adolescents. *Engaging Young People in Civic Life*, 102–120. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16f6dbw.10>
- Hughes, J., Miles, A., & McLewin, A. (2005). *Doing the Arts Justice: A Review of Research Literature, practice and theory*. Unit for the Arts and Offenders and Centre for Applied Theatre Research.

- Iannelli, L., & Marelli, C. M. (2019). Performing civic cultures: Participatory public art and its publics. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5), 630–646.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877919849964>
- Lee, L., Currie, V., Saied, N., & Wright, L. (2020). Journey to hope, self-expression and community engagement: Youth-led Arts-based participatory action research. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 109, 104581. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104581>
- Luszczynska, A., Scholz, U., & Schwarzer, R. (2005). The general self-efficacy scale: multicultural validation studies. *The Journal of psychology*, 139(5), 439–457.  
<https://doi.org/10.3200/JRLP.139.5.439-457>
- Mak, H. W., & Fancourt, D. (2019). Arts engagement and self-esteem in children: Results from a propensity score matching analysis. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1449(1), 36–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14056>
- Marsh, H., & Kleitman, S. (2002). Extracurricular school activities: The good, the bad, and the nonlinear. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 464–515.  
<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.4.051388703v7v7736>
- Pastorelli, C., Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Rola, J., Rozsa, S., and Bandura, A. (2001). The Structure of Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy: A Cross-National Study. *Eur. J. Psychol. Assess.* 17, 87–97. doi:10.1027//1015-5759.17.2.87
- Phinney, A., Moody, E., & Small, J. (2014). The Effect of a Community-Engaged Arts Program on Older Adults' Well-being. *Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillessement*, 33(3), 336-345. doi:10.1017/S071498081400018X
- Redmond, B.F (2010). Self-efficacy theory: Do I think that I can succeed in my work? Work attitudes & motivations. The Pennsylvania state University; World Campus

- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schmidt, J. A., Shumow, L., & Kackar, H. (2007). Adolescents' participation in service activities and its impact on academic, behavioral, and civic outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *36*(2), 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-006-9119-5>
- Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). General self-efficacy scale. *PsycTESTS Dataset*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t00393-000>
- Silva, & Krasny, M. E. (2016). Parsing participation: models of engagement for outcomes monitoring in urban stewardship. *Local Environment*, *21*(2), 157–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2014.929094>
- Solhaug, T. (2006). Knowledge and self-efficacy as predictors of political participation and civic attitudes: With relevance for educational practice. *Policy Futures in Education*, *4*(3), 265–278. doi:10.2304/pfie.2006.4.3.265
- Steinberg, L. (2017). *Adolescence*, 11th edition. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education
- Theiss-Morse, E., & Hibbing, J. R. (2005). Citizenship and civic engagement. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *8*(1), 227–249. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.082103.104829>
- Van Katwyk, T., & Seko, Y. (2019). Resilience beyond risk: Youth re-defining resilience through collective artmaking. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *36*(6), 609–619. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0590-0>
- Wicks, R. H., & Warren, R. (2014). Modeling political consumerism among young consumers: An ecological systems approach. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *58*(6), 738–754. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515991>

Williams, T., & Williams, K. (2010). Self-efficacy and performance in mathematics: Reciprocal determinism in 33 nations. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(2), 453–466.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017271>

Zarobe, L., & Bungay, H. (2017). The role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people a rapid review of the literature. *Perspectives in Public Health, 137*(6), 337–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913917712283>

Zimmerman, M. A., Copeland, L. A., Shope, J. T., & Dielman, T. E. (1997). A longitudinal study of self-esteem: Implications for adolescent development. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26*(2), 117–141. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024596313925>

## APPENDIX A: SORTING TASK

Instructions: These words may or may not be relevant for describing your experience participating in the Mural Project. Look over the words and highlight or bold the ones that are relevant descriptions of your experience. You can also add words that are not represented already.

Happy

Joy

Pride

Shame

Fear

Excitement

Stress

Hopeful

Friendship

Justice

Equity

## APPENDIX B: MURAL QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Prompt: *The goal of today's conversation is to give you the chance to reflect on and share about your experience participating in the mural project earlier this summer. Remember, your name will not be associated with your data, and we will delete the audio files once this conversation has been transcribed.*

(Interviews began with a pile-sorting exercise in which participants are asked to categorize different words (e.g., happy, joy, pride, shame, fear, excitement, stress, hopeful, friendship, justice, equity, etc.) into relevant and irrelevant piles. A Google Doc was shared with them to highlight or bold the words or add words to the list. This exercise was used to stimulate conversation about their experience participating in the mural project.)

Sorting task: *Let's start with a sorting task. In the chat I am sharing a link to a Google Doc.*

*There is a list of various words that may or may not be relevant for describing your experience participating in this project. Look over this list and highlight or bold them for which words are most relevant to your experience. You can also add your own words to the list that are not represented already.*

1. *Tell me about the piles you created (and, if applicable, the new cards you made).*

(Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).

2. *Generally, how you would describe your experiences participating in the mural project this past summer? (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).*



3. *What drew you to participate in the mural project?* (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).
4. *When you joined this project what did you expect or hope for?* (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details). *Do you feel your participation in this project met our expectations? How so?* Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).
5. *What did you like most about participating in the project? What was your least favorite part? Can you give me some examples?* (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).
6. *In what ways has participating in the project impacted you in the short-term and long-term? Can you give me some examples?* (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).
7. *Is there anything else you would like to share about participating in the project?* (Follow-up probes will be used to extract rich details).