

Creative Hospitality:

Using Available Resources to Foster Hope in Youth and Families

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Introduction

Communities in the United States are desperate for a reminder of better days. Disengagement has become the norm, increasingly so throughout the COVID-19 quarantine. Unfortunate circumstances from personal choices and systemic barriers further hinder connections and provide resistance for creativity or future opportunities. These roadblocks become an experience of being trapped in the present. How can a city find common unity and foster creativity in its members, especially when many creative arts programs are cut out of schools due to funding shortages? Isolation and lack of resources disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, opening the door for even greater hopelessness. Often these vulnerabilities lie heavily upon families with only one caregiver in the home.

Up to fifty percent of youth come from homes with only one parent present (“Children in Single-Parent Families”). The percentage of mothers carrying the role as primary caregivers far exceeds that of the father, while the gender pay gap is almost twenty percent less for females (*Payscale*). The increasingly high pressure placed upon women and their families is evident. While the statistics on families with only one parent in the household do not fully represent every individual in these circumstances, they do offer insight into general vulnerabilities.

Underrepresentation of youth in single-parent homes often equates to financial instability and a lack of support necessary for these youth to succeed. Kuenkel declares the need for a people centered approach, yet clearly, a gap exists between at-risk youth and services to support them (3880). These missing resources include limitations on time, money, clothing, extracurriculars, and other necessities required for daily life, not to mention the emotional and physical detachment resulting from absenteeism.

Yet, hope prevails as creative problem-solving is utilized, serving to establish and promote a brighter future for struggling families. Creative problem-solving refers to acquiring the unique critical thinking skills needed to adapt to one's surroundings. At the same time, the term creative hospitality is both a principle of living and the subject of the attached thesis project. The Creative Hospitality Project (CHP) will host at-risk youth and families in need of support to build relationships and offers instruction to overcome systemic barriers through artistic endeavors. By learning how to think creatively about the resources on hand, futures can change, and opportunities are generated.

Through my fieldwork experience at Youth-Reach Gulf Coast (YRGC), the idea for creative hospitality was born. This thesis will begin by addressing the research and theory behind relational creativity and hospitality in community development. After which, the focus moves to the case study at YRGC and then concludes with the real-life application and attached CHP. A program built to support struggling families through building creative problem-solving skills, utilize available resources, and teach techniques for innovative ways to engage with the surrounding world.

Research

YRGC is a faith-based, long-term rehabilitation facility for young men ages eighteen to twenty-two. The 81-acre campus is located thirty minutes from Gulf Shores on the Alabama coast and is run as a multi-educational training facility with a type of laid-back farm atmosphere ("Restoring Lost Futures"). Most young men at Youth-Reach come from female-run single-parent homes without positive or supportive male role models. The need to address familial support in a fresh and relevant way is evident.

The fieldwork I participated in for this thesis took place at YRGC, during which time I noticed the staff modeled positive reinforcement during daily activities. From group workouts to pulling weeds in the garden, the Youth-Reach leaders encouraged and cheered one another on, building camaraderie between the team and the young men they served. Vogl encourages us, affirming, “communities function best and are most durable when they’re helping members to be more successful in some way” (4). Upon realizing that the creative, relational aspect of this site made it a viable solution to the vulnerabilities expressed, I began to focus on the elements of constructive and effective change.

As a result of viewing the successful processes at the YRGC fieldwork site, the dominant focus for the qualitative research undertaken was Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The AI design, grounded in the Positive Psychology method, allows for flexibility and “shares leadership in learning (“Generic Processes”). By following the 5-D Model of defining, discovering, dreaming, designing, and destiny, AI’s guided operation assists in answering the questions within local community development contexts (See Appendix C). Hammond expresses the essential task for “every human to have a voice and be heard, be seen as essential to the group, and be seen as unique and exceptional” (20). Appreciative Inquiry offers the vantage point of looking back to move forward.

This thesis exploration began with the following question: How can creativity best be applied to positively impact children and families within the community? I sought answers to this question throughout my numerous interviews and qualitative research from May through July of 2020. The fieldwork experience at Youth-Reach Gulf Coast led to the conclusion that creativity strengthens youth and their families by using available resources and developing

essential problem-solving skills. Without these tools, at-risk youth are more susceptible to falling through the cracks and ending up in places like rehabilitation facilities.

My experiences at YRGC brought about significant insight into the importance of creative problem-solving. Caring for youth and their families through building relationships while presenting issues and turning them into opportunities for growth is a preventative measure. Strengthening the communities through acquiring the skills to think outside of the box for solutions is vital for this generation.

Reflexivity

The impact of my fieldwork allowed me to see the need to address creativity throughout everyday circumstances. By applying copowerment (or learning from one another), communities are strengthened, and resilience is built rather than creating dependency. In the current stream of community development, where well-intentioned aid has often hurt rather than helped, creativity serves as a tool that is missing from current methodologies.

My own life serves as an example of the effectiveness of creativity to cultivate positive change. There were eight family members in my home growing up, and seemingly never enough money to cover all the bills. Yet, my father always stopped when he saw a need, whether it was buying someone a tank of gas, pushing a vehicle stalled in the middle of the road, or praying for someone as a nurse in the ICU for twenty years. I watched as my parents took in youth with AIDS, pregnant teenagers, and individuals without homes living on the streets. My father's creativity and sense of humor, united with my mother's resourcefulness and unwillingness to waste anything, produced an air of thoughtful abundance in our home. I never felt poor. The legacy my parents left when they passed away is of inestimable worth.

The example set for us six children has given us tremendous compassion toward those we meet. Being a single mother of four children, I understand the challenges families face with only one parent in the home and a desire to address these difficulties within my local context. The principles of creative hospitality make way for a life of abundance. Romans 12:11-13 instructs all to “be inventive in hospitality” (*The Message*). Overcoming obstacles does not have a cookie-cutter solution; it requires a commitment to relationships and ingenuity.

The Problem

Throughout the fieldwork experience in Alabama, I witnessed the scarcity of valuable resources for single-parent families and their children. Hardships these families face include financial and physical limitations and a lack of connection between parents and their youth. The impact on adolescents living in homes constrained by these shortages is evident in poor grades, tense relationships, and reduced participation in sports, music, and the arts. De Lange and Jaap comment on the inequalities in resources, employment, and policies for the parents of at-risk youth (125). The questions remain: How do we turn a drastic gap in assets and connection into an abundant surplus for the struggling youth and families living in our local communities? Does the ability to thrive depend solely on income? Can love change a culture from the inside out, as Vallotton suggests (“What it Takes”)?

The Solution: Creative Hospitality

For creativity to be used as a viable resource in community development sectors, it is crucial to have an overarching standard definition of the (often) ambiguous term “creative.” Runco and Jaeger offer a definitive point, “creativity requires both originality and effectiveness” (92). Runco and Jaeger explains the process, need, and function of creativity and specifies how

to guide work along these lines. For our purposes, the definition of creativity is the inspiration of both original and effective work.

In most industries, well-respected workers are not only motivated but also innovative, while others tend to be wallflowers, not seeking to improve circumstances, merely passing the time. This first group of employees is often more effective in their workplace because of their ingenuity to overcome obstacles. Oshins shares, “creativity is now the single most important leadership competency and is needed in all aspects of leadership” (3). Creative hospitality as a principle means going above standard outreach techniques by hosting those in need of support and utilizing available resources while offering tools that develop critical thinking skills. Looking for the opportunity to succeed by thinking of creative solutions to unique problems is an essential component of creative hospitality. CHP is a start-up model that seeks to remove the unrelenting burdens plaguing struggling youth and their parents by providing hope through training in the necessary skills of critical thinking.

Creative problem-solving requires learning how to think differently about present circumstances by tapping into the imagination. It requires asking the question: How can this problem be addressed using the tools already around me? As Parker Palmer declares, “community is abundance” (108). Seeking out and building solid relationships can address many issues simply because it offers abundance in a more meaningful way than monetary or physical increase. In community, we find love and hope.

Uncovering Hidden Treasure

Picture this: a group of heroin users sitting together reciting poetry, unconcerned for the moment on filling their addiction. Amar Dhand researched India’s homeless, heroin dependent population and the fusion of poetry into their lives. The participants practiced Sher-o-Shayari, a

form of rhythmic poetry, and inadvertently used it as a tool to integrate “both the society into the person, and the person into society, a fundamental function of social learning” (Dhand 138). The unorthodox poetry gathering remained an essential aspect for retaining underlying value. The moments of recitation offered those participating a reminder of better days (132).

Quite often, the inability to look beyond immediate unfavorable circumstances has people frozen in place, unable to remember better days, as is the case with my first interviewee at Youth-Reach, Nikolas Bailey. He was adopted from Moscow by a loving couple from the United States. In high school, his desire to fit in with his peers led him to a group of friends that spent most of their time partying and abusing alcohol and drugs. Without any plans after graduation and a lack of purpose, Bailey spiraled into theft to provide for his drug addiction.

Before being kicked out, Bailey left a note for his parents explaining his plans to commit suicide. He was desperate to take his own life but physically unable to do so. Later that night, his parents rejoiced at his homecoming and helped place him at YRGC in April of 2019. He explained how “being surrounded by people who want the best for you” and his strong faith led to his change of heart (Bailey). Today, Bailey is a missionary serving alongside Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in Africa. His story is only one of the dozens whose world has been turned right-side-up because of life-giving relationships.

Andy Wright, another Youth-Reach resident, shared his story with me during an interview. Wright is twenty-two years old and has been a resident at YRGC since December 3, 2019. After a break-up with his long-term girlfriend, Wright’s behavior became destructive, using whatever he could find to numb his emotions. His inability to rehabilitate himself led him to the doors of YRGC.

Wright spoke openly about his past and the importance of his relationship with his grandfather. He described the impact storytelling had on his life and his struggle between “logical processing versus artistic expression.” He had become immobilized by overthinking, which kept him on the fence between forward and backward progression. “In the journey of trying to figure it all out, I got to resolve a lot of stuff that had just been buried for a long time” (Wright). He is currently making arrangements to move toward a fulfilling and creative employment position. The honor he feels toward being considered for a job he is passionate about within the art field brings him further inspiration and hope each day.

Applying the arts as a foundational way of supporting individuals, families, and communities is indispensable. Including innovation into a rehabilitation program will not only provide transformative care in the present but future opportunities as well. The creative activist Tatiana Makovkin, states, “art is good for our communities, and artistic collaboration is a bonding experience. We make art together, not just because of the changes it can bring to the world around us, but because of the way it changes us internally.” When used in conjunction with community development, the arts provide a deeper connection and growth between self and others.

Self-expression offers the chance to learn from past mistakes but not get stuck there, and it acknowledges the space required for reinvented vision while engaging the heart, soul, and mind. Puccio et al. declaratively wrote, “creativity is a process that leads to change; you don’t get deliberate change without it” (xiv). When we look at the world around us, it can be hard to see the silver lining. Creativity allows us the expression to fill in those lines. Imaginative pursuits help individuals think differently about their struggles, solve problems, and gain strength for themselves, their families, and society.

Creative people tend to be more capable of critical thinking. WNC Baptist Children's Homes counselor, Tim Dailey, believes, "creativity energizes the process of finding solutions" (Personal Interview). Similarly, Arnaud D'Argembeau illuminates vision for the future and how life choices are not being random but undergirded by the goals, principles, and expectancies (360). These perspectives include dreaming of a different future as transformation takes place through deliberate contact with the imagination.

The connection between vision and potential growth should not be overlooked. As D'Argembeau explains, "...some imagined events are temporally anchored to future self-images, which may contribute to creating a coherent sense of self in the future" (364). If one cannot imagine a different tomorrow, it is impossible to dream or see the aspirations grow into reality. Kelley and Kelley recommend a "do something mindset" with application to real-life goals while quickly processing through from beginning to end (114). The tools and resources of creative development open up fresh possibilities.

We grow into more powerful citizens when we orient ourselves toward solutions rather than problems and teach our youth to think creatively about improvements in their schools, communities, and cities, providing necessary skills (Bornstein & Davis 86). Unique tools for problem-solving are vital in this present culture for overcoming the new challenges faced daily. Ingenuity can be employed as an instrument for moving forward together in unity. Merriam and Tisdell explain art "invites deeper meaning-making..." (66). Hope, healing, and problem-solving are qualities addressed through the creative process. At the same time, Bornstein and Davis defend the need to "create new configurations of people and coordinate their efforts to attack problems more successfully than before" (24). The first step toward transformation is knowing the direction in which we are moving and who will go the distance to accomplish this change.

Compared to many other rehabilitative organizations, the difference seen in Youth-Reach Gulf Coast is the strong relationships built. From staff taking relapsed adolescents into their homes to creating joy and celebrating every small victory, the life-giving change that stems from YRGC is evident. Dailey explained how these interactions are models of Jesus' ministry from over two thousand years ago. The time and attention given to these young men is nothing short of radical and creative.

Application

Jovarn Gueh is a young Liberian man living in Atlanta. After the COVID-19 quarantine shut down his work at a private school, he began to notice the adolescents in his neighborhood engaging in fights as there were no activities to occupy them. While searching for an answer to not only help the youth but to pay his rent as well, Gueh saw a few teens pushing a lawnmower down the sidewalk and went to talk with them. He quickly realized the need for adult direction and guidance and the three formed a business partnership.

The team started working together doing landscaping while Gueh took these youth, and many that followed, under his wing and began to mentor them out of his home and on the job sites. The Lawn Boyz were formed and the 2020 season saw such tremendous growth they had to stop taking new jobs! Gueh's ability to see a need and fill it with the available resources while helping to guide the vulnerable youth in his sphere of influence is a prime example of creative problem-solving.

This type of thinking provides support beyond the scope of standard programming while coming alongside youth and their families through the principle of copowerment. Finding direction through creativity requires a uniqueness displayed by divergent examination. Working towards sustainable solutions for the livelihoods of self and others became a holistic expression

for Jovarn Gueh, just like it will for countless others as well. Supporting single parents and youth does not take affluence, but a heart to serve and connect.

Hospitality is defined as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers” (*Oxford Learners*). Youth-Reach Gulf Coast (YRGC) is impacting the next generation just like Gueh, and this impact is seen through the organization’s creativity in filling the needs of each individual and the group as a whole. The qualitative fieldwork experience at YRGC solidified the foundation for The Creative Hospitality Project addressed in Appendix A.

Project Integration

The CHP will serve the town of Franklin, NC, by inspiring and transforming communities while offering a place to gather and create while training youth and their parents in critical thinking skills. Initially the project will begin in shared community spaces but as funds are raised the plan is to have CHP in a building of its own. Local artists and entrepreneurs will lead participants through exercises and artistic endeavors while using opportunities throughout the process for talking about creative problem-solving, overcoming barriers and so-called “failures,” and how to move past those specific experiences of stalemates. Examples of these exercises include local entrepreneurs and nonprofit business owners who will teach cooking lessons, pottery, small business start-up, and artistic expression to the youth and their parents and offer instruction in creativity through these critical outlets.

Hosting or bringing in vulnerable community members in whichever setting is available, can be done in every situation one finds themselves in, whether it is in a home, a business meeting, at a local church, or working on the streets to share food and warm clothes with someone in need. The proposed project will serve people from all walks of life, through hosting,

building relationships, and working on projects together. The steps toward positive growth are established as access to art's rehabilitative effects and group connectivity are provided. The registration process will be a tool for intake, gaining better understanding and beginning the process of relationship building.

Working on projects and sharing meals bring one back to a familial-type setting. The isolation during COVID-19 left a great need for comfort and connection. As isolation is said to be the worst disease in America today (Friedman 450), learning how to look outside the box for creative solutions is more needed than ever. Beginning with those in leadership roles within Creative Hospitality, connections and critical thinking are addressed.

The team of artists are taken through exercises to increase their awareness of how to instruct in critical thinking through their artistic process, they will then offer classes. An interest survey is administered to better understand participants, and the project will seek to address trauma-informed healing through the arts and highlight other resources depending upon the needs of each individual. Through collaboration with local resources and foundational curriculum, clients will have the opportunity to work through creative problem solving as they apply the tools within each fostered experience.

To better help serve any community, it is imperative to have an understanding of its needs. Beginning with individuals and personality styles, CHP will address the uniqueness and similarities in connecting with others and why the arts can help more than just the "artistic" or "creative person." The intended research will help administrators process how best to serve the different personalities coming through Creative Hospitality and find optimal ways for uniting with specific needs.

Creative Cabins Case Study

Parker Palmer comments on true vocation seen by gravitating towards what calls you (10). Within the environment of Youth-Reach, the skills training on campus is primarily utilitarian. Necessary fixing of broken-down items or building projects, along with animal and farm care, are often enough to keep the youth busy from morning until night. Throughout the fieldwork with YRGC, the realization of the need for participation in inspirational and creative interests became evident. David Williams shared his desire to begin a project offering their youth greater empowerment and connectivity through the arts (“Re: Preliminary Proposal”). Specifically, Youth-Reach will build a creative cabin to host various activities incorporating imagination and hands-on experiences. This space will initially include pottery, painting, leatherwork, instruments, and more, as budget and space dictate.

The need for adding in the creative cabins at Youth-Reach came about due to the staff’s realization of a missing aspect in the young men’s healing process. While the work on the campus is extensive, the skill set does not cover creativity as much as the staff would like to see. Heavy lifting and manual labor abound, yet artistic expression is minimal. The organization focuses heavily on practical working skills and building relationships with one another.

Williams explained the need to offer their participants the ability to create with their hands something containing intrinsic worth, a tangible expression to flip the switch on all the destruction they had caused. Creativity is a chance for empowering the young men at Youth-Reach (Williams). The willingness to go beyond what has been done to bring about life-changing results is why Youth-Reach is effective. YRGC leaders dream big and are resourceful in their operations.

YRGC envisions building the Creative Cabins on their property to bring further restoration by offering growth and relationship building while generating problem-solving ideas with artistic pursuits. The young men are already working with hand-hewn wood and learning carpentry skills, and they are also shown relational truths while crafting cutting boards and drawing up their next logo for the latest YRGC t-shirts. The connection of these new endeavors through the Creative Cabin model will provide more significant opportunities to pursue innovative work. Yet, it is not restricted merely to what someone might think of as the traditional arts.

Many people do not consider themselves artistic yet can still benefit from this type of program by engaging in critical thinking. Contrary to popular belief, creative people work in diverse fields and across multiple sectors, often without realizing imagination is fueling their problem-solving. Kelley & Kelley declare how “figuring out what other people need is what leads to the most significant innovations” (85). Anyone willing to listen to the needs around them and apply themselves toward the solution can become an innovator.

The North Carolina, Creative Hospitality Project, is a loose depiction of the Alabama Creative Cabin concept. The idea is to take the Creative Cabin project specific to Youth-Reach Gulf Coast and utilize the techniques and tools to engage the underrepresented families in the local community of Franklin, NC. This prioritization of the family rather than singularly youth is more in line with an area of need and intentionally represents the desire to strengthen the entire family unit.

Through overcoming fears, taking action, and unleashing inner creativity, social entrepreneurship is realized (Kelley & Kelley 35). By beginning the contextualized project in North Carolina to aid struggling families, CHP fills in the gap with opportunities for viewing old

problems and worn-out ideas in a new light. Just as organic thinking will help solve familial challenges, it also offers aid to social justice issues and education goals for future visionaries.

In my own life, it was creative expression that has offered me a new perspective when I have walked through dark times. Likewise, it is a creative expression that has moved dozens of individuals to create new futures for themselves and is making a systemic impact as statistics are reversed, and our economy is improved. At both levels, creativity propelled broken circumstances beyond the immediate situation into a hopeful future.

Moe-Lobeda addresses society's movement toward "what could be," as our communities require radical change (113). The application for unity, dream-making, and connectivity is embodied within the context of Creative Hospitality. When engaging in the creative process, many enter into the flow and move beyond overthinking into what Palmer discusses as the "deep identity" often hidden from many, including oneself (9). As people begin surrendering control of their rigid thinking, internal change can occur, along with the need for perfection and the inability to see the concern from a new perspective. This internal change is the beauty of creative processes.

Both education and an increased understanding are required to extend this resourceful information to society, and it can begin with each respective community. When this information is spread, "creativity will not only be accessible to everyone, but it will essentially be the prime skill and talent for all human beings" (Corazza 258). Therefore, it is fundamental for community development to continue addressing the need for creative problem-solving, which helps imagine a different tomorrow. By integrating both the creative arts and hospitality into community development, communities are bolstered from the inside out. The key to CHP is contextualization, thereby offering effective and inspired support to families in need. Through

copowerment, families will use their imagination and dream once again thus creating opportunities for revitalization and abundant growth.

Creative Hospitality Values

Creativity is the catalyst for innovative and social enterprise concepts. When people singularly focus on allowing their hidden and deep-rooted passions to come into fruition, change and growth are affected. The town of Prattsville, NY was devastated by flooding in 2011. Through a program similar to CHP called Creative Placemaking, the city gained funding and improved open collaboration to increase the initiative of a “strategic approach to sustainable rural tourism” (Barton 118). Artists, residents, and development professionals came together to engage in “problem-solving and the search for nontraditional solutions” (Barton 118). The community recognized rebuilding Main Street from scratch offered a chance to imagine a new future. Reimagining potential tomorrows can begin with filling the needs of today.

In her thesis, Abijah Jeewa explains how healing through architecture and therapeutic communities better serves individuals seeking freedom from substance use disorders (v). Set in the context of Durban, South Africa, her research adequately depicts the need for intentional and aesthetically pleasing facilities. Improvement for aiding the vulnerable necessitates empowered healing, educational and behavioral skills training, while beautiful architecture and placemaking renew inspiration. Food and beauty draw people into community with one another.

Each individual in a community is vital to its survival and ability to thrive. Vogl writes, “...community building is an art” (4). The further we enter into community, the more we are loved and fulfilled (Vogl 87), while those in leadership are caring for the most significant number and are servants of all. Vogl explains, “the best inner-ring journeys teach us to care for increasingly wider circles of people” (94). The journey of discovery into a close-knit circle of

community takes time, and ultimately these relationships are the catalyst for social justice and change-making on the grassroots level.

Kelly Nelson is a friend and mentor who works with incarcerated females as a Head Chaplain in Northeast, WA. She volunteers her time as a life coach for these detained girls/women. During the interview on a windy day at the local park in Newport, Washington, Nelson spoke of the need for “breaking down God’s words and reinterpreting it in a way they can understand in real life.” Nelson acknowledges her faith in Jesus is what equips her to serve these young women. In the short time that I have known Nelson, her passion for relationships and change-making is evident. She holds a gift for engaging with each woman in front of her.

The act of connection can alter an individual’s perception and aid in rehabilitative work. The originality Nelson reveals in her work takes thinking on her feet quickly and adaptive responses to fit the need at a moment’s notice. Nelson employs creative hospitality every day. *Engaging Performance*, written by Jan Cohen-Cruz, calls for “engaged art-making,” not only as a way of expression but also as a tool for “a larger endeavor” of social change (195). Creativity communicates unmet potential and delivers on the deep internal need for expressing oneself.

Authentic relationships have the opportunity to build community and make a difference in revitalizing a broken system and revealing the possibility of transformation as people partner for a common goal. Developing creativity drives reform, builds hope, and offers a new frame of reference for future change-making. Therefore, it is incredibly vital to expand the mind’s eye through innovative training to challenge old unproductive thought processes. Hackbert et al. expound, “...innovation can drive productivity in any industry” (37). The desire to transform through imagining a different way forward is one of the most critical aspects of creative hospitality.

Society often has an outpouring of creativity during times of upheaval, and as Isaksen writes in “The Emergence of a Disciple: Understanding and Recognizing Creativity,” that “creativity does not exist in isolation” (255). Similarly, Kuenkel affirms the process of innovation takes “encounters, conversations, exchange of ideas, and inquiry” (3880). Held within a specific context, how and when does creativity occur, and are these moments replicable? Each person has countless tools in which to engage with their surroundings. Allowing for positive and life-giving acts of creating can meaningfully alter a person and shed light on difficulties. Within a community, we are stretched to empathize by viewing other perspectives via relationship building and move beyond insular thinking.

The creative economy as outlined by The British Council highlights the need to collaborate. Gaining an awareness of innovative development for change-making involves gathering. This community partnership is built to shape and share a creative and prosperous future (“The Value of Local Context”). Through groundbreaking design and pioneering entrepreneurship, the creative economy attends to modern society’s principal issues, bringing people together and cultivating innovative experiences.

The integration of experience and relationships within a community context builds a solid foundation for future growth. Vogl explains the need to “maximize total group (and family) success” rather than focus on one person’s achievement over another (234). The collective over individualism includes:

- Building a more robust social connection through utilizing compounded resources.
- Focusing on group projects.
- Engaging with community members, especially those who hold diverse opinions.

Thus, creative hospitality goes against the norm and actively collaborates with “the others” by breaking through barriers and sharing unknown cultures; as Beck conveys, “transgressing boundaries is integral to the act of embrace” (89). Designing opportunities for bringing unity into the common-place aids in overcoming systemic injustices.

Cross-Cultural Creativity

Multi-cultural gatherings help to break through the mold of separating oneself from differences. Speaking with Khalid Siddiq, my interviewee at the Al-Farooq Masjid (mosque) in Atlanta, one point became evident. Implementing an inter-faith dialogue within the context of the business plan for CHP is necessary for community growth and wholeness. Siddiq and I talked in length about the topic of understanding the Muslim religion. The CHP will work to serve all recipients by building greater awareness and community/interfaith relationships within the program. Human beings, in general, want comfort, and part of the growth process is becoming wary of comfort, which can lead to complacency within our homogenous groups. Moving into the unknown requires crossing through barriers of long-held cultural divides.

Culture, growth, and the creative economy build upon multiple experiences, equipping people with the necessary tools to overcome hardship and bolster in times of need. Drawing on “local expertise to contextualize” intended projects will further the creative economy (“The Value of Local Context”). The concept of creative economy, which states everyone has something to offer and that we learn best from one another, opens up pathways for individuals’ copowerment. No longer will the focus be on a singular man standing on a podium, but all are giving and receiving. The voice of one join in the melody of many, and without its sound, something is amiss. Copowerment is essential because without it, the vital element of ownership is absent, and social justice agents become the “savior.”

The focus must first be on healthy individuals to sustain and carry the collective strength, not on any one facilitator being or bringing the answer for everyone else. How does this connect to the experience of creating art and change-making? The entire human body and spirit are connected; disregarding any part of it is detrimental to the whole system's well-being. Connecting with the heart and true identity has the opportunity to take place as individuals enter into imaginative spaces. Creativity has a way of transforming people and places. The creative arts are multi-faceted in how they play out in the lives of others. Copowerment and the ability to view the world from a different angle are only the beginning of engaging with beauty and the environment we share. Yet, society is commonly stuck in front of a computer and inside most of the day.

As a result of readily accessible knowledge through technology, the creative arts are becoming even more essential because of their originality and effectiveness. The process of creating works through the fear of failure and finds resourceful clues often missed. The inconclusiveness in expressing oneself will enable individuals to sit with their work and judge what they have done based upon their own merits of personal effectiveness. Rehabilitative work, including the creative arts, is intrinsically subjective and need not be imposed upon by outside sources to deduce the efficacy. The act of engagement alone can alter an individual's perception and aid in developmental work.

Rewriting the Narrative

Creative hospitality goes beyond instant gratification and changes lives as new realities are discovered when people step into their dreams. Corazza expresses the comprehensive need for creativity to view humanity's progression, originality, and effectiveness as the most significant elements required to thrive:

The centrality of humans in the future will depend fundamentally on their adaptive performance related to non-routine tasks, requiring flexibility of mind, capacity to make decisions based on incomplete information, intuition, problem solving ability, artistic and aesthetic sense: in a word, on their creativity. (258)

As Corazzo indicates, societies ability to thrive involves ingenuity. Through copowering others to imagine a different ending, the process of failure can lead to success by perseverance and imagination.

Narratives of creative problem-solving abound when one begins to keep their ears open and take notice and equipping leaders to train others to tell their stories presents a hopeful opportunity to rewrite a different future. Dailey suggested "people who can't tell stories can't solve problems" (Personal Interview). The act of engaging in problem-solving begins with collaborating partners who are trained in the CHP model.

Often people get stuck in a thinking rut, and no matter how many times the circle is repeated, there is no change. Therefore, circumstances have no hope of getting better. Through a series of exercises in various engaging art forms, CHP will help end cycles of futility and realize different results. For example, when there is no vision for how to scale an insurmountable wall impeding progress, creative journaling can bely insight otherwise buried; this simple action provides a different perspective for forward progression.

All of society and its sectors must understand the absolute unavoidability of creative expression. Thus, copowerment is integrally tied to innovation. Without the ability to think outside the box and strengthen one another, communal restructuring facets are nil. During the COVID-19 outbreak alone, those who could not redefine their lives and restructure accordingly have had an increasingly more difficult time, rather than those able to adjust inventively.

Barriers to Creative Hospitality

An additional concern within the sector of creative development is the obtainability of quantitative data. The lack of significant numerical statistics to support the arts keep funds from being distributed or projects from being maintained. The skills are often seen as dispensable. Yet, most national educators explicitly recognize the teaching of the Four C's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) as vital 21st-century skills and essential for preparing students for the workforce (Floyd). Overcoming obstacles is within grasp as the creative hospitality principles are applied. There are solutions to each problem faced when looked at through the lens of creative development. Preparation for the future begins with addressing the vulnerabilities of the present.

As CHP becomes more scalable, the need for growing relationships through understanding, respect, and accepting differences will increase. Hofstede cautions us against the second barrier of "hidden ethnocentrism" and advises those working with other cultures to find "relevant and professionally collected databases" when considering learning about unfamiliar societies (48-49). Creative engagement must happen between different cultures and within inter-faith collaboratives for more significant growth and reconciliation while meeting other members of diverse groups and serving alongside local needs.

Mindfulness is vital when incorporating creative economy or appreciative inquiry as a standard, especially when working with diverse people-groups. The ethnographer Seth Holmes verbalizes, be wary of the "positivist science" (115). Similarly, De Beukelaer indicates, "the creative economy debate that favors positive outcomes over a critical engagement [comes] with challenges. The focus on positives reveals not only a desire to be upbeat but also to hold together a complex and flimsy coalition" (31). It is vital to address more than positivity as many

programming currently suggests; both Holmes and De Beukelaer offer an important reminder to undertake the necessary research required for social projects and entrepreneurial endeavors; not only to acknowledge but evaluate and work through even the most challenging subjects.

Conclusion

Pursuing creative hospitality as both a principle and a project will take ingenuity and perseverance, but the outcomes are more than worth it. As Bornstein and Davis share, “the social entrepreneur helps others to envision a new possibility” (25). CHP will encourage people to re-encounter their imagination and break down previously held barriers to change tragic circumstances into fulfilling, creative, and hopeful futures.

For the voices of countless adolescents and single parents to be heard, it is essential to set a foundation for resilience, hope, and healing. Through reintroducing the innate sense of imagination via relationship building and innovative programming, families are bolstered, and youth are engaged in developing original answers to personal challenges. New possibilities exist when individual narratives begin to shift, and change takes place due to creative problem-solving.

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Appendix A

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The Creative Hospitality Project:
Integrative Instruction in Creative Problem-Solving



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Hanson, Erin. *Aspen Trail*. 2015, *Open Impressionism Vol. 2.*, Red Rock Fine Art Inc., 2016, p. 187.

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Introduction

“One of the most effective ways to improve the quality of life and to live in prosperity is to educate individuals as individuals who can think creatively and find creative solutions to problems” (Dolmaz & Ilhan 61).

In many homes, there is not enough time to do anything other than essential activities. Day after day, life has a way of pushing people around and wearing them down until choices are gone, and passionate pursuits have been given up for more practical money-making alternatives. What if this didn't have to be the case? What if you could go to a place and breathe fresh mountain air, dream new dreams and see life from a new, childlike perspective?

The Creative Hospitality Project (CHP) is a program to help support underrepresented families through instruction in critical thinking skills. These tools empower individuals and assist in overcoming life's barriers. This project will serve the town of Franklin, North Carolina, in the Blue Ridge Mountains while working with youth and families to gather tools through curated experiences of creative endeavors. Marquis Cabrera, the founder of the successful social enterprise, Foster Skills Inc., declares, “Life is too short to build things that don't matter” (00:15:43-00:15:46). By utilizing available resources to host underrepresented community members, this project will offer the time and space to create while bolstering the relationships of vulnerable youth and their families.

Background

Isolation and a lack of resources including financial, educational and environmental disproportionately affect at-risk youth, opening the door for even greater hopelessness. Often these vulnerabilities lie heavily upon families with only one caregiver in the home. Up to fifty percent of children in the United States come from single-parent homes (“Children in Single-Parent Families”). This project seeks to help alleviate the pressure placed upon these often-

underrepresented families. For these youth to succeed, it is necessary to address the financial instability and lack of public and private support.

Kuenkel declares the need for a people-centered approach, yet clearly, a gap exists between at-risk youth and services to support them (3880). These missing resources include limitations on time, money, clothing, extracurriculars, and other necessities required for daily life, not to mention the emotional and physical detachment resulting from absenteeism. The Creative Hospitality Project will address these issues with creative problem-solving techniques to generate long-term success.

Goals

- Support at-risk youth and their families.
- Build relationships for long-term solutions.
- Copower families in creative problem-solving.

Products and Service

Successful projects require services that are timely and relevant. Reconnecting people to their passions is a large portion of the integrative approach. Bill Johnson, a respected author, and pastor remarks, “We never reach our potential apart from the capacity for dreaming” (00:08:59-00:09:03). The first step to CHP hosting vulnerable individuals is ascertaining the needs and desires of those coming into the program. Along these lines, this project is cultivating the ability to dream again for those wholly shut down by life’s circumstances.

An interest survey will be given to applicants as an introduction and relationship development tool between CHP and those looking to enter this program. Discovery into multiple avenues of artistic pursuits assists in applying critical-thinking skills, during which time The Creative Hospitality Project will host the participants in a conducive setting.

CHP is a collaboration of local creatives from all different sectors. Through the following resources, space and times will vary depending upon the specifics of participants. Variations include the size of groups, projects, and needs to be met.

A partial list of classes offered:

- Animal Husbandry
- Cooking
- Drawing
- Entrepreneurial Design
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation
- Gardening
- Guest speakers: open invite
- Mixed-media projects
- Mosaic
- Music
- Painting
- Pottery
- Photography
- Team-building exercises
- Wood/leatherworking
- Writing

The Creative Hospitality Project initially provides training for the artistic instructors on how to use their skill set to open up pathways of creative problem-solving for the participants. After the preparation phase is complete for the instructors, community members are welcomed and guided through the process.

Operations

CHP will host the artistic design collaborative within local networking sites. This weekend-long model along with its various artisans, therapists, and social entrepreneurs, aid in equipping the youth and their families with daily, hour-long sessions. After this intensive training, participants are given time to work independently and then join in a family meal while discussing the work in progress. Through shared time, resources, art, meals, and entrepreneurial design, clients are copowered via the process of creativity. Resources such as trauma-informed care are utilized to intrinsically strengthen each participant. Relationships are fostered to produce a safe atmosphere for innovation and a place to dream again through the required attention, time, and instruction.

Market

The Cowee Community Arts Center is an excellent resource because of its group centered approach. Preparation is already underway to connect with this local organization. Yet, the addition of a family and youth-oriented creative, collaborative needs realization. Arts programs are often the first to be cut in a small-town budget. Therefore, this project will begin with a low overhead to imbed sustainability within its framework by using churches and businesses on days and evenings when they sit empty.

By working around the schedules of local organizations and alongside local artists, we more fully utilize available resources, therefore, creating a more sustainable program. The partnerships also serve as a tool for inter-faith networking, thereby strengthening the community. The economic value is greatly enhanced by the stories behind the commitment to the instruction of creative problem-solving.

Events for funding programs include:

- Online Presence, social media, sponsorship/partnership programs
- A monthly gathering for the artists and participants to share with the community, highlight progress, and get a chance to auction off their work.
- Workshops incorporated to teach interested supporters and community member's creative problem-solving skills.

Participants of CHP will have a chance to serve the community and share their stories and artwork during these engagements. An Open House offers a tri-fold benefit in raising awareness of the challenges underrepresented families face, building partnerships, and helping to finance future programs.

Strategy

In the past, there have been limited plans for follow-up with clients receiving the services or goods within aid organizations. This project seeks to reverse this gap and provide noteworthy customer service. Bornstein and Davis explain how businesses are “compelled to listen to their clients in a way that charities are not” (54). Creative Hospitality has an iterative approach within its programming and development. Seeking to move forward at all stages and continually learn from success and failures, these main strategies will be followed,

- Feedback survey
- Follow-up: CH staff contact participants one week, one month, six months and one year after project's completion.
- User critique
- Round table discussions bringing staff, sponsors and participants together

The “empathy part of the design cycle (is) understanding a product from the vantage point of the end-user” (Kelley & Kelley 111). Therefore, CHP will constantly look to address design flaws and areas of growth.

Management

Recruitment of effective management and resourceful team members is necessary for this project to work. In the meantime, a precursory crew of stakeholders will supply administrative support. Innovative partners are vital to the productivity of CHP. This project has established organizations within the local community and those already working within youth and family services to help build the framework of strong leadership and connection with a preliminary board of directors.

Summary

The Creative Hospitality Project will host hearts through the creative arts. This model will serve at-risk youth and their families while building critical thinking skills as a means to addressing life's problems by utilizing creative outlets. Hope is renewed as the underrepresented are offered the time and space to learn how to dream again. Through receiving these guests into homes, churches, and community centers, CHP is building relationships which form the foundation of community development.

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