Back in the Day, Shaping Tomorrow: Stakeholder Collaboration to Support Youth Learning About Local Public History

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Abstract: This paper analyzes how stakeholder collaboration may provide a space for storytelling as a form of learning about local public history. The focus is on a research and development collective involving a university research lab and a grassroots community museum that specialize in collecting and preserving different perspectives on the African-American musical heritage of a city neighborhood (Hall & Space, Learning and Mobility Lab, to appear). As stories were discovered, told, collected, and shared, counter-narratives to dominant public history narratives were revealed. Analysis is focused on two iterations of a design-based research study in which high school students researched, authored and shared historical stories as they walked through city streets, curated gallery spaces and visited the museum. We highlight discoveries participants made about their community, neighborhood, and family history, and discuss how collaboration contributes towards the collection, preservation and sharing of counter-narratives as a form of local public history.

Keywords: participatory design research, counter-narrative, public history, community museum

Purpose

This paper describes a research and development collective formed by participants from a university research lab and Jefferson Street Sound, a grassroots community museum, that specialize in collecting and preserving different perspectives on the African-American musical heritage of Nashville, Tennessee, USA (Hall & Space, Learning and Mobility Lab, to appear). Partners in the collective started from a shared commitment to invite, collect, and share untold (or under-told) stories about the intertwined history of civil rights protest and American Roots music. As these stories were discovered, told, collected, and shared, counter-narratives to dominant public history stories were revealed. Analysis in this paper is focused on two iterations of a design-based research study in which high school students researched, authored and shared historical stories about their neighborhood as they walked through city streets, curated gallery spaces and visited the museum. Mr. Lorenzo Washington, a community elder, founded the Jefferson Street Sound Museum at the center of a historically African-American neighborhood with the explicit aim to support young people in learning about local community history. The museum aims to preserve and pursue the musical legacy of the Jefferson Street neighborhood, with a particular emphasis on ensuring local youth hear the historical stories of their community.

The design collaboration between the university research team and the museum has developed over the past 6 years with the aim of creating a storytelling space where historical narratives about the local community can be captured, shared and preserved. Speaking about the project in the museum, the CEO and founder has described it as a "program that will first educate - that's the first thing. It will help me educate the community, family and friends. It will build from here – it starts here." (Washington, Interview, 2017). In this paper, we highlight some of the interactions in the museum space where youth have made discoveries about their community heritage, their neighborhood history, and their own family members' prominent roles in the community and American Roots Music history of Nashville, Tennessee. We describe how collaboration between community partners is contributing towards the collection, preservation and sharing of counter-narratives as a form of local public history.

Framework

This research comes from a multi-year study to develop a design framework called 'Digital Spatial Story Lines' (DSSLs). This framework includes a set of conceptual practices that support people to explore local public history at the neighborhood scale using archives, gallery spaces, mapping, digital tools, and learning on the move (Hall & Space, Learning and Mobility Lab, to appear). In recent years there has been a steady influx of social studies research on place-based learning and learning with digital tools (Kerr, 2016; Berson, Diem, Hicks, Mason, Lee &

Dralle, 2000; Resor, 2010). We extend place-based learning to place-making learning. A key element of the DSSL framework involves the physical and conceptual move students make when they leave their classroom to walk through neighborhood streets, gallery spaces and visit community resources, such as the museum (Leander, Phillips & Taylor, 2010). The grassroots museum is not only a tribute to American Roots music, but an effort to preserve the cultural heritage of the city neighborhood. In the museum, high school students consistently make discoveries about their locality and their family. Building on place-based learning broadly defined as an interdisciplinary activity (i.e. history and geography) (Resor, 2010; Sobel, 2004), the conceptual practices that constitute DSSLs leverage new ways of learning as people make places and spaces by engaging with local histories on the move (Kerr, 2016; Taylor, 2017; Taylor & Hall, 2013).

Being in and moving through places coupled with discoveries about local public history (re)makes place for young people. A key challenge for people learning history highlighted in the past decade by Calder (2013) is preserving the interpretive threads that give historical narrative its form. While we do not seek to engage learners in particular disciplinary practices, we know from Calder's work that his college history students have demonstrated a diminishing capacity for telling history in a way that demonstrates clearly interpretive thinking and adequate contextualization. Seixas and Morton (2013) argued for the value of history students telling historical fiction. Something we view as a way to encourage the retention of narrative quality and to build a story that includes rich character development with historically plausible events and encounters; though the story itself may not be entirely accurate, it demonstrates clearly the interpretive thinking of the author and makes adequately explicit the historical contextualization needed to make the story plausible. Locating fictional characters in space, time, and story adequately requires historical inquiry, and access to the material and intellectual resources for the practices associated with corroboration and sourcing (Seixas, 2015; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2011)

Blending historical inquiry with spatial inquiry, through the use of geo-technology tools and interdisciplinary practices, can lead to rich conceptual understandings and meaningful learning. Historical reasoning can be anchored in opportunities for students to write and read places in ways that leverage practices familiar to historical thinking. In many middle and high school history classrooms, narratives about historical phenomena are shared or constructed with a single, rather than, multiple perspective or voice. Solorzano and Yasso (2002) suggested that monovocal narratives leave positions of privilege unacknowledged in ways that perpetuate the status quo of oppression and marginalization of people from diverse and intersectional identities and communities. Counter-narrative can make these positions of privilege visible and highlight traditionally marginalized historic perspectives. Mitchell and Elwood (2012) used counter-mapping to challenge prevailing norms about urban segregation being natural or "normal" and Taylor and Hall (2013) designed tasks where young people in the city leveraged their own mobility and mapping tools to make compelling arguments for changes in the city to urban planners. Historical enquiry, as part of the DSSL frameworks, exposes the tensions between monovocal or 'official' accounts of history and local, counter-narratives leading users to question the *truth* or *myth* in a story. In other words, a monovocal historical narrative perpetuates myths about the past in that fail to consider varied perspectives or experiences. This line of thinking positions the museum's work as counter-narrative construction – a place to discover, capture and share stories about the community to ensure the historical legacy is preserved.

Participatory research design

Our stance as a research team has been to act as respectful partners in efforts to tell the intertwined story of music, social activism, and civil rights in the city, and in doing this work, to create and share public assets that can be used by community members (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). We are keenly aware that our affiliation with an elite private university has an uncertain relation to the communities and neighborhoods reflected in the DSSL framework and activity structure (Houston, 2012), as well as in the story lines that are created and shared in this activity. The role of the university research team has been to act as allies in partnership with community members (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016) and, we hope, to support opportunities for their rich history to be shared with those inside and outside of the community. Collaboration can be thought of in a variety of different ways, from isolated offers of general advice to active participation in long term projects, and the notion of collaboration may have different meanings for different people (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Downing-Wilson, Lecusay, & Cole, 2011). The process of collaboration and co-design raises possible tensions regarding power relationships and the division of labor (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). Building a collaborative design partnership between university researchers and the community museum has been an ongoing process for past 6 years. During this time, the collaborative partnership has been through various phases to develop and sustain the work of the university team and community organizations, including a downtown public library, local middle and high schools, and the grassroots community museum. The interacting phases of building the partnership include: gaining entry to the community, developing

and sustaining the collaboration, and recognizing outcomes and benefits for all stakeholders (Suarez-Balcazar, Harper and Lewis, 2005). This paper explores a particular collaboration between Mr. Washington, the museum founder and CEO, the university research team and teachers in a local high school. Our focus is on the participatory co-design work involving people associated with the museum
and the university researchers as activities within the DSSL framework were planned, carried out and evaluated. The DSSL design framework activity sequence is shown in table 1. The research presented in this paper aims to explore how and in what ways collaborative partnerships support youth in learning about local public history, with a particular focus on storytelling as a method of learning about the past.

Table 1: DSSL design framework activity sequence

Activity 1	**Activity 2**	**Activity 3**	**Activity 4**	**Activity 5**
Listening session featuring music from the Civil Rights Movement. Pre-task spatial storytelling activity.	Research session in groups using archival material in themed 'sandboxes' to plan a map-based story line.	DSSL making – students walk around their local neighborhood and visit the museum. They use smartphones to capture media and speak to community elders in the museum space.	Student groups geolocate media (gathered during activity 3) onto paper or digital maps as they build their historical narrative. Story editing and presentation rehearsal.	Groups share their story lines with peers, teachers and community elders. Listening session featuring music from students' story lines. Post-task spatial storytelling activity.

Data was collected during two iterations of a participatory design-based research project, at the end of the spring semesters of 2017 and 2018, at a large urban high school located in the southern United States. The first iteration involved 19 high school seniors enrolled in an Advanced Placement United States History class. The second iteration involved 35 high school juniors enrolled in a Global Literacies class. Both iterations followed a similar structure of activities as part of the DSSL framework (see table 1.) where students researched, authored and shared historical stories about their neighborhood. Participants worked with archival material in their classrooms, walked through city streets and curated gallery spaces, and visited the community museum. The museum visit occurred at the middle of the activity sequence in both iterations. Students had previously worked with curated collections of archival material in their classrooms. They had developed a central theme for their storyline and had begun to geolocate artifacts, including photos, songs, oral history fragments, newspaper articles and text, onto physical or digital maps. The aim of the DSSL authoring activities was to produce a walking-scale narrative tour where media assets have been attached to specific locations. Story followers then used the digital or paper-based maps to direct them along the walkable path, engaging with the media as they traveled. Mobility is leveraged in both story authoring and story following activities as it becomes both the method and content of learning (Hall & Space, Learning and Mobility Lab, to appear).

In both iterations, students had been introduced to Mr. Washington by reading his oral history interview collected by a local public library, visiting the museum website and watching a short video interview made by a local news channel. Following this introduction, the students had written questions to ask during their visit which they thought might elicit historical contextualizing information they could use in their storylines. This activity acknowledged Mr. Washington's position as a community elder with a unique personal perspective on the history of the neighborhood. Prior to both iterations, members of the research team met with Mr. Washington to co-plan the structure of the museum visit and the artifacts in the museum he felt would best support the students' story line development. During the 2017 iteration, Mr. Washington invited a fellow community member who had played at the historic music venues to also be present in the museum space when the students visited. Our respect of the indigenous knowledge (Sheehan, 2011) held by the community elders is central to the development and sustainability of the participatory design collaboration. This practice has been incorporated into subsequent design iterations as the interactions high school youth had with the community elders proved to be an important element of the museum visit.

Video and audio data was collected during all activities. Static cameras, audio recorders and Go Pro cameras were placed on tables whilst students worked in classroom spaces or were worn as they moved around the city. Additional artifacts, such as the finished story lines and copies of the interview questions written by the

students were also collected. All video data from both iterations was logged for content. The research team used the content logs to support cycles of interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Hall & Stevens, 2015), where emerging themes from the video corpus were noted. Critical events or 'hotspots' were identified for closer analysis during individual and group viewing sessions. Careful transcription was used to analyze structural patterns in students' interactions with peers, other adults, archival material, and walking the city neighborhoods. Taken together, this analysis aimed to generate grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) through the constant comparison of developing theories of contextualized learning with participants interactions between themselves, their physical environment, digital tools and archival material. As plausible relationships developed between concepts, video and audio data was reviewed to look for patterns in the interactions which were evidenced in the spatial story texts. The findings section of this paper presents the developing grounded theory related to how and in what ways storytelling get taken up during the DSSL framework as participants interact with people and media whilst walking through city neighborhoods and visiting the museum space.

Findings

Our analysis suggests that researching, authoring, sharing and following historical storylines offered an alternative way of learning about local public history where student mobility and agency is leveraged ways which contrast the traditional model of classroom pedagogy (Hall & Space, Learning and Mobility Lab, to appear). In this paper we explore interactions specifically occurring outside of the classroom as students walked through city neighborhoods, visited curated gallery spaces on the street and met with community elders in the museums space. We focus on these interactions as it is those which were specifically co-designed and youth learning about the musical heritage of their own neighborhood is the educational goal of the museum's CEO and founder, Mr. Washington. We suggest that high school youth engaged in storytelling moments to create narratives about local public history which centered around three main themes.

Community and cultural heritage

Our research draws on the historical and cultural knowledge of the local community, particularly the elders positioned as keepers of this knowledge. The museum, founded and operated by Mr. Lorenzo Washington, houses a collection of artifacts which "preserve and pursue the musical legacy that Historical Jefferson Street has fostered, hosted and entertained since the early 1940's, as the lively hub of Jazz, Blues and R&B in Nashville" (Jefferson Street Sound Museum website, 2018). Mr. Washington frames a visit to the site as an invitation into a historical conversation about the area, a chance to learn what really happened in this area:

> And what makes it a historical conversation was because we brought people in here and people that weren't legends at this point, like B.B King, Jimi Hendrix, Little Richard, Marvin Gaye. I always say Marvin Gaye you know, Jimmy Church, Johnny Jones who battled the guitar thing with Jimi Hendrix […] eventually they went on to be megastars [...] so Jefferson Street is a landmark in the country (Washington, Interview, 2017)

Partnering with the grassroots museum leveraged the knowledge the founder holds as a community elder, and positioned the site as a source of untold stories of the neighborhood (Sheehan, 2011). The community's memories contained within the walls exist as a counter-narrative to many of the dominant stories of city's history, as documented by official archival collections. The clear educational goal is to bring people into the museum to interact with the artifacts and listen to the stories, "to further the knowledge of the folk, to educate them to the point that they've got something here that they should hold on to" (Washington, Interview, 2017).

The narratives students uncovered and shared during the story authoring activities indicated that their interactions with community elders in the museum space prompted the young people to ask questions about why they have not had the opportunity to learn this local history before. We observed comments from students questioning why they had not heard about their own cultural heritage in their history classes. This speaks to the recognition that the school curriculum is seen as a more *official* history in that it is made visible to students and organized for them by someone unknown (textbook authors) or enacted by a known outsider to their generational, racial, and/or geographic community. Interestingly though, we noted that artifacts in a curated gallery space capturing the history of the neighborhood (visited by students as they walked from their school to the community museum) were also positioned as *official* history. This space was curated by unknown others and the students were led through the space by a teacher and research team not from their generational, racial, and/or geographic community. In these contexts, students were prone to critical perspectives about the authenticity or *Truth* of the narratives presented to them by others through questioning who the history is for, creating historical fiction on the fly, privileging first-hand accounts, and challenging the authenticity of artifacts of *official* history. For example,

one student in the 2018 iteration, Naomi, commented that to her, history felt like a "myth". Whilst walking through the gallery space with members of her project group, she vocalized that she felt as if "the only people who *really* knew what happened in the past are the people who lived through it". The goal of our research and design collaboration is to facilitate interactions between high school youth and elders from their local community inside the museum space that may challenge the dominant, monovocal versions of history students typically experience (Solorzano & Yasso, 2002). Prompting youth to question the historical accounts they are seeing and hearing may lead them to develop a curiosity about the historical legacy of their neighborhood and provide a space for them to enter the 'historical conversation' about local history.

Neighborhood history

During both design iterations, high school youth visited the museum and spoke to community elders who Mr. Washington had invited to be present in the museum space. One of these elders was Marvin (pseudonym), a member of a Grammy Award winning rhythm and blues group that played in the neighborhood during the 1960's. We captured an interaction between Marvin and a student, Nora, as he identified a photo of his signing group in the museum and told Nora about his recent experience working with the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Marvin:	We were with the Fisk Jubilee Singers ((*points to photo*)). A couple of months ago, around October, we worked with them.
Nora:	So there are actual still members like every year like of college and stuff like new members join the Fisk?
Marvin:	Fisk is the...
Nora:	Don't you have to try out to be a Fisk Jubilee Singer?
Marvin:	I think so. I'm not really familiar...
Nora:	And there has to be a minimum of eleven?

The interaction between Nora and Marvin, as prompted by the photo of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, indicated the co-construction of knowledge between the student and the community elder (Wertsch, 2002). Nora clearly had some background knowledge about how students at the university become members of the singing group and was trying to draw on Marvin's first-hand experience of recording with the choir. When Marvin seemed unsure about the membership requirements, Nora offered another fact, 'there has to a be a minimum of eleven', as a detail which was perhaps easier for Marvin to verify. Given that Marvin and his group are featured in the museum as examples of the musical heritage of the street, his physical presence in the space may have added to the authenticity, or truthiness, which the high school students felt about the historical narratives which were on show. This moment of storytelling lead to relationship building between Nora and the community elder, which further developed as Nora continued her exploration of the artifacts in the museum.

The artifacts in the museum and the interaction with a community elder allowed Nora to put a voice and a story to the archival material, bringing the narrative to life. The presence of Marvin in the museum space afforded Nora the chance to confirm some of her existing historical knowledge about her local community. Exposure to the museum and community elders as part of the DSSL framework can be seen as opportunity to layer information from multiple sources and multiple perspectives (Solorzano & Yasso, 2002) as participants gather information to build their own historical narrative. It appeared that Nora felt that the community elders could provide verifiable accounts of history, they told the truth. The co-construction of historical contexts between Nora and Marvin is an important feature of the storytelling practices we observed as high-school youth were positioned as legitimate historical authors alongside community elders (Becker, 2007; Sheehan, 2011; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016).

Family history

As Nora continued to explore the artifacts in the museum, another member of her class (Lakesha) alerted Nora to a photo of a famous boxer dining at a club on the historic street which has since been demolished due to urban renewal. Lakesha attracted Nora's attention by saying 'your granddaddy would probably know him' as Lakesha knew that Nora's granddaddy used to be a boxer. When Nora looked at the photo, she recognized it as being the same image that her grandparents have at their house. Lakesha suggested taking a photo of the image to use in the story line their group was authoring themed around athletes who have contributed to the history of the neighborhood.

Lakesha:	I got to take a picture of him... for our thing.

Researcher:	Take a picture and ask your grandparents what it is.
	((*Nora bends down to look at picture with her smartphone*))
Nora:	Yeah I got that picture. ((*reads caption with photograph*)) I bet [Marvin] knows my granddaddy.
[...]	
Nora:	Hey, do you know um someone, er a boxer named, [grandad's name]?
Marvin:	No but I've heard of him. I didn't know him.
Nora:	That's my granddaddy.

The museum space, artifacts, community elders, fellow students and teachers all provided perspectives and information to build out the story line, enabling Nora to weave her family history into the existing narrative of the neighborhood. Remembering about the past is an active process which is situated within a social and cultural context (Wertsch, 2002). The narratives which people tell about historical events come to represent the past as they are retold and passed on. The museum offers a place and space for remembering the past, whether that is first-hand memories of events on the street from the 1960's, memories of being told about the events by family members as a way of passing on the legacy of the neighborhood, or creating new memories as youth reconceptualize their developing historical understanding of local history. Returning to the goal of history education, providing an intellectual toolkit containing conceptual tools for making sense of their place in the world is especially relevant to students who have developed master or schematic narratives from interactions with only dominant accounts of the past. Equipping students with the substantive knowledge and conceptual tools which challenge their preexisting schematic narratives may enable them to develop a more sophisticated understanding of history and their place in the historical present (Wills, 2011; O'Neill, Guloy & Sensoy, 2014).

After Nora shared some more memories about her grandparents, her teacher followed up with a question about whether her grandad had gone to a local university.

Nora:	I don't know. I really don't know that much about my granddaddy.
Teacher:	Isn't it funny how like you've never thought to ask that?

This interaction draws on the theme of exploring untold historical stories which the museum founder is trying to preserve and share, "we want to trigger the minds of these young people and cause them to go to their parents and other folk in their families" (Washington, Interview, 2017). Being in the museum space with historical artifacts and community elders prompted Nora to question her family history further. This may have then initiated conversations outside the walls of the museums if she did go to her parents to find out more about her family history. The DSSL framework positions participants as authors of under-told historical narratives, which add layers to local public history (Wills, 2011; O'Neill, Guloy & Sensoy, 2014). The partnership here between university researchers, high school teachers and community resources, such as museums, libraries, community elders and local experts, provides multiple viewpoints for youth to engage with perspectives on the past as they develop their own storylines situated in their local neighborhood (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016; Bang & Vossoughi, 2016).

Importance of the scholarship

As high school students made discoveries about their own family history as it is connected to the broader cultural heritage of the community and the stories of the neighborhood, public history came to life. We found that student engagement with these activities bolstered learner agency, curiosity, and relevance in the social studies curriculum. Encounters with archival material in gallery and museum spaces elicited and mediated storytelling events. Interactions with community elders added new perspectives to historical narratives and youth were afforded space to weave their neighborhood and family narratives into the layers of public history in their local community. As we plan for further design-based research iterations, voices and stories will be foregrounded in the museum by capturing and displaying oral history video interviews with artists and musicians who were part of the Jefferson Street community during the 1960's through 1980's. Members of the research team have been working alongside museum stakeholders to identify, interview, transcribe and edit oral history interviews which can be displayed on TV screens for visitors to view as they tour the space. We see this as an example of social design work (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016) as the multiple voices of historical actors from the community are positioned as the expert storytellers of the local history. This media will also available to participants in the DSSL

design framework activities to include in their own story lines. As a research team, we intend to further explore how agency and identity make be expressed, developed and shared during DSSL framework activities. Conversations inside the museum, such as Nora's discovery of her grandaddy, suggest a process of identity building as youth may come to see themselves in new ways through learning about their family, neighborhood and community heritage (Nasir, 2011). We posit that community elders may also engage in this work as they draw connections between their own lived experience as a young person in the neighborhood and the perspectives shared by the youth they interact with. An important goal for the museum is creating links for young people to see how "the past meets up with the present, your past becomes a part of your future as the present builds into tomorrow. We take the stories from the past forward as we pass them on" (Washington, Interview, 2017).

Just as the high school students came to see local history in new ways, the founder of the museum also described a change in thinking as to how historical narratives contained within the museum relate to stories told as people move around the neighborhood. Mr. Washington explained that he was coming to see the role of the museum as extending outside of its own walls. He framed this as history both pulling people into the museum as they become curious and want to know more about the cultural heritage of the neighborhood and also pushing museum visitors outside as they discover something within the exhibit space that they want to pursue further by visiting the associated location. Personal curation, mobility and digital mapping tools, as leveraged with the DSSL framework, provide new ways of thinking about the porous nature of the museum walls - both in soaking up the memories and stories from the community and also allowing those multivocal narratives to run out onto the neighborhood streets. We intend to build on this change in thinking during further phases of our design collaboration as museum staff wish to work with local youth to make music in the recording studio situated in the attic of the museum. The design partnership is looking to develop a musical makerspace where young people interested in the musical heritage of the area can write and record music which would be associated with specific historical locations as layers over digital maps. Incorporating musical compositions from youth into their storylines marks a new iteration of the DSSL design framework research which will be driven by the desire of the museum stakeholders to reinvigorate the music making heritage of the community.

In this paper we argue that stakeholder collaboration, in the form of participatory design research (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016), provided rich opportunities for youth to engage in learning about the history of their community. Exploring material at the community museum, alongside local residents, enabled students to connect in meaningful ways to the intertwined histories of their family, their neighborhood, and their local community, thus preserving and sharing the legacy of the area. This speaks to the tag line of the Jefferson Street Sound Museum which hopes that the artifacts, stories and memories from 'back in the day' will engage youth in the process of 'shaping tomorrow' (Jefferson Street Sound Museum website, 2018). Our research and development collective are committed to positioning youth as historical actors to make these connections between the history of their community's past, their place in the present and the role they could play in creating and shaping the future for themselves and their community.

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