

Community Planning with the Village Bloggurls

Incorporating planning concepts and inquiry into community programs with girls and youth

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“What experiences prepare children to value and care for their local environment and join in community decision-making?” (Heft & Chawla, 2006, p. 199)

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Abstract

This report documents four months of study with the Village Bloggurls, a community group for young girls in Lotherton Pathway, North York. The purpose of this project was to investigate the potential for community programs to be places of learning about planning and space. This research relied upon feminist methodology and methods, and occurred through three main workshop activities with the Village Bloggurls. Results found that young girls are interested in and capable of participating in planning processes, though they lack formal opportunities to do so. The participants also felt empowered to make changes in their community stemming from the work of this research. The report concludes with an assessment of challenges of working with youth in the context of planning as well as recommendations for future research in this area.

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Foreword

This research is the result of four months of work with the Village Bloggurls, a community group in Lotherton Pathway, Toronto. What follows is a description of my efforts to undertake a feminist exploration of concepts of urban and community planning with young women and girls. I did this by working with them to carry out workshops and activities intended to foster their knowledge and potential as urban citizens. I came to the Master in Environmental Studies (MES) Planning program to study spirituality and planning, but as a result of my experiences in different classes and with various students and professionals my focus has now landed on issues of public participation and civic engagement, specifically how we can pursue democracy and equity in planning decision-making. While there are many barriers to participation for many individuals within society, and thus many potential research subjects, my experience as an intern getting to know the Village Bloggurls made me interested in how young women and girls experience urban space, and how their desires and needs might be better accounted for. In reference to my Plan of Study learning objectives, this research connects with the following:

Learning Objective 1.3: To investigate and reveal alternative conceptions of cities and the planning process.

This research investigates feminist approaches to planning as a response to the male-dominated hierarchical approach currently employed by many professional planners.

Learning Objective 2.1: To discover the theoretical bases for citizen engagement and public involvement in planning.

In this report, I explore the theoretical bases for youth involvement in planning in particular.

Learning Objective 2.2: To acquire knowledge and skills around available and possible public participation methods to encourage citizen involvement in the planning process.

In facilitating the workshops described in this report, I became more experienced working with participants and public participation methods, specifically for working with youth.

Learning Objective 2.3: To understand and question barriers to greater participation of citizens in the planning process.

This research questions why youth are often excluded from the planning process, and attempts to discover ways they might become interested and involved in the process. Hung (2011) found that community-based organizations can be effective avenues for “identity development, meaningful participation, and political socialization” (p. 579), and my hope is that the work done here is the beginning of an ongoing process of learning and action with this group and others.

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Introduction

When I tell people I work in Lotherton Pathway, few can place it in their minds, because few people have been there. It is not a destination, like the Annex, or the Junction, or Yorkville.

Lotherton Pathway is a small residential street in North York, Ontario, consisting of four high-rise buildings surrounded by townhouses, all privately owned condominium units, though many people rent. Also on the street is a basketball court, daycare, convenience store, hair salon, and the community Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) office. Surrounding it are light industrial properties to the south and west, and single detached homes to the north and east. It is part of the Lawrence Heights priority neighbourhood despite its geographic distance from Lawrence Heights. Lotherton Pathway is like many other Toronto neighbourhoods, cut off from and in need of many essential services, a food desert, home to many low-income families and newcomers, and also an important hub of community organizing. People who live there refer to it as “the Village.”



Map of Lotherton Pathway



100 Lotherton Pathway

The Village Bloggurls is a four-year mentorship and media literacy program funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation and administered by North York Community House and Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC). Youth ages 9 to 17 meet every Friday evening for two hours to talk about issues important to them, from bullying, to body image, to online safety. A large room on the ground floor of one of the high-rises most often acts as the meeting place, with smaller meetings held at the ANC office. Some weeks, the 9 to 13-year-olds meet separately from the older girls (the latter called Mentor Girls, or Mentors) to allow for discussions more appropriate for their age groups (such as sex and romantic relationships for the older girls, and friendships for the younger girls). Mentoring is an essential component of the program, and the

mentors are responsible for creating and maintaining a relationship with the younger girls, and offering guidance and support along with program staff.

I first became involved with the Village Bloggurls as an intern during the summer of 2013. During that time, I saw the girls once a week, and more often during field trips or summer camp. I see this preexisting relationship as an asset to my research, as I had already established a level of trust with the girls and their families. In January 2014, around the start of this project, I was offered a part-time job as a community animator that I accepted and still hold at the time of this writing. I have endeavored to be aware of the ways in which my position as employee versus intern might influence the course of my research.

Throughout this report, I make many references to youth, children, and young people. I use these admittedly vague terms interchangeably, but in general I am referring to anyone under the age of 18 (itself an arbitrary cut-off not shared by all), who cannot vote, and who likely still live under the care of parents or guardians. I prefer the term youth, as I feel “children” excludes slightly older individuals such as the mentors (aged 14-18), who have increasing levels of maturity but still lack some ability to participate and/or be taken seriously in meaningful ways in the planning process. The authors I cite throughout this report may have different definitions of these terms depending on the groups with whom they work, though many do not define these terms in their studies.

Community is a word with many definitions. Evans & Advokaat (2001) write of community as

existing between private and state life, and of being more than simply membership in voluntary organizations. They also write, “at its most basic level, community is invested with meaning by those people who define themselves as members of a community” (p. 19). In this report, community is defined as *people within a shared geographical space who have a connection to that space and deserve to be involved in its change over time.*

The Canadian Institute of Planners defines planning as “the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities” (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2014). Planning is a vast subject, and this research focuses on general concepts of social and community planning (social planning being the development and implementation of social programs and services, and community planning being a process of planning that genuinely involves community members in decision-making) while also touching upon ideas of land use planning.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore opportunities to include feminist planning inquiry into community programming for girls and young women specifically, and to a lesser extent, youth in general. Until the start of my research, the focus of the Village Bloggurls program was not on spatial relations between people and place, but instead on personal attributes such as positive body image and healthy relationships. While this type of personal work is incredibly important,

I feel that there is also a place for work that considers relationships with one's environment and the broader community.

This research is also relevant as a work in feminism and planning, both in substance and methodology, which is a field that has in recent years been less and less the focus of planning scholarship and practice (Rahder, 2004). In my time as a planning student, I have had very little exposure to the intersection between feminism and planning in the formal school system.

While this is anecdotal, it was the trend observed by Rahder & Altilia back in 2004, and this suggests to me that more work still needs to be done to understand the particular knowledges and needs of women and girls in cities. If possible, this work will contribute to a better understanding of how young people, particularly girls, experience their environments, in order to pursue greater equity in planning.

Finally, this research will ideally affect the girls with whom the research was conducted – the Village Bloggurls. Hung (2011) writes, “as young people take on new ways of seeing their environment, this helps them see beyond that which is ‘given to them’ to that which could be transformed” (p. 579) and further, “a focus on spatial relations helps youth understand how the places of their everyday lives are constructed and how this affects their subsequent opportunities” (p. 590). By gaining a sense of awareness of their community, they can begin to take ownership of the spaces in which they live, study, and play, and ideally, feel empowered to make positive change around them.

Theoretical background

Youth and planning

The field of planning has many challenges to achieving meaningful public participation with a given population. One of the ongoing discussions in this area is the extent to which young people should be included in planning decision-making, and also the extent to which youth are capable of participating in planning issues. Forsyth (2002) writes,

Children and youth ... are excluded on multiple levels. They are not able to vote. They rarely own property. They are perceived as incapable of participation. They are considered adequately represented by adults. Children and youth may be acknowledged in analysis, but they are not seen as a core constituency for participation and participation is not tailored toward their specific interests and needs (p. 1, 5)

Indeed, youth are an often-overlooked group in community building and planning, though scholars and practitioners are increasingly realizing the unique perspectives and wealth of energy and creativity that they have to offer. It is important to consider the perspectives of youth, as youth who are engaged and taken seriously as members of their communities gain important skills and a sense of civic duty that they carry with them into adulthood (Engelman & Hazel, 2010, p. 1-2). Empowered youth are also more likely to develop the critical thinking skills that allow them to challenge authority (in a constructive way) and work toward more equitable systemic change (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 34-35). City planners also have much to learn from children that can improve the way public services are offered (Loukaitou-Sideris & Stieglitz, 2002). Youth also have the power to develop their own community building projects, and as a result they reap the practical, psychological and emotional benefits of doing so. Horelli (1997) and others have found that children as young as 7 “have a good grasp of scale,” and, “perhaps the most surprising result of the children’s planning is their ability to deal with a great

variety of issues and with the residential area as a whole” (p. 135). According to Morsillo & Fisher (2007), “youth do have ideas on what can be done to improve the community, if society is prepared to listen” (p. 48). In concluding their article “The Seven Realms of Children’s Participation,” Francis & Lorenzo (2002) consider, “is children’s participation a way to create a more democratic world? Or is it a way to simply ... create better places for children?” (p. 167). In my view, these things are not mutually exclusive, both being laudable and achievable goals.

Knowles-Yáñez (2005) provides four categories for existing work around youth participation in planning, stating that youth participation could include: “scholarly, practice, educational, and rights-based approaches” (p. 4). The scholarly approach focuses on theory rather than practice, and includes work conducted by academics and researchers. Scholarly work seeks to gain a better understanding of how children interact with their environments and develop tools that could be used by practitioners seeking to include youth in community building in a more meaningful way (Knowles-Yáñez, 2005). In the practice category, actual steps are taken to give youth some control over certain aspects of the community building process, by developing proposals for things like community gardens, to consulting on planning decisions, to participating in design charrettes (Knowles-Yáñez, 2005). The educational approach incorporates lessons on community building and planning into educational programming, within or outside of the formal education system (Knowles-Yáñez, 2005). Finally, the rights-based approach follows the line of thinking that children have a right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives (Knowles-Yáñez, 2005).

These categories are not exhaustive, and there is certainly some overlap between them. This research with the Village Bloggurls could in fact fit into any one of Knowles-Yáñez's categories – scholarly, as the research is taking place as part of this Master's major project; practice, in that both myself and the participants gained practical skills in participatory approaches to youth involvement in planning; it is mutually educational for both myself and the participants around issues of youth involvement in planning; and it is rights-based because that is what is driving this inquiry, the idea that these individuals deserve a voice at any age.

Feminism and planning

The broad field of feminism and planning underpins this research. Fainstein (2005) outlines several specific arguments made by feminists in relation to planning, and also describes larger ideological shortcomings of the profession. For example, she writes that in planning decision-making women were “until recently” left out of the process, and even now, individuals in senior positions at planning firms are largely male (Fainstein, 2005, p. 124-125). This in turn has affected how the built form responded (or not) to the needs of women. Transit planning operates according to regular commuting hours, which does not accommodate “the erratic movements of women responsible for both domestic duties and paid work” (Sandercock & Forsyth, 2005, p. 69). Fainstein also examines the feminization of poverty, or the fact that the majority of a city's poor are women with children, yet the focus of research remained on young men – “the difficulties of women were attributed not to their low earnings but to the paucity of marriageable men” (Fainstein, 2005, p. 127). At a theoretical level, feminist planning scholarship questions the way decisions are made, i.e., from a rational empirical standpoint. Fainstein (2005) writes, “Feminism applies intuitive, participatory approaches to gaining

knowledge and nonrational (although not necessarily irrational) contextual solutions to planning problems” (128). Feminism in planning forces one to question who has relevant and important knowledge in city building, and attempts to discover how we can better hear those people.

Also relevant to this research is the intersection between youth and feminism in planning. Cities impact male and female youth differently, and girls and young women face particular challenges not as often experienced by their male counterparts. For example, harassment in public spaces is an ongoing concern for many young females, which in turn affects their behaviour within urban environments (Garcia-Moreno & Chawla, 2011). Access to infrastructure such as basketball courts and sports fields run the risk of being dominated by men. In the past, the discourse was that young women and girls were less likely to be free to navigate space outside the home independently versus their male siblings (Valentine, 1997). Fears of violence and the need for girls to remain in the home to do domestic work contributed to this. More and more, however, the complexities of parental decisions around allowing their children to be out in the world alone to play or travel are emerging, and many factors such as age and maturity are contributing to a better understanding of how young people navigate space (Valentine, 1997). Despite this, some of the Village Bloggurls have expressed that this gendered divide still persists in some cases, and they do not share the same rights of mobility as their brothers.

Also at the crossroads of youth and feminism, Speak (2002) writes, “participation by children can empower women,” (p. 23) arguing that one’s involvement in participation and decision-making affects individuals into adulthood. By encouraging participation at a young age, women are more likely to address this and other gender divisions as they grow up, divisions that still persist in many countries. Further, “children’s participation may be best facilitated by their mothers and grandmothers, thus engaging older women in the process” (Speak, 2002, p. 23). Work that values the participation and expression of youth voices is necessary to address gender inequality into the future.

Women, feminism, and planning have had a long history in Canada and Toronto. Hendler & Harrison (2000) write that the inclusion of women in professional planning in Canada had a slow start, and “by 1965, almost 50 years after the “birth” of town planning in Canada, women appear to have comprised only 7 percent of total enrollment in Canadian graduate planning programs... and it was not until the 1980s that ‘women began to enter the profession in large numbers’” (p. 149). On the level of “grassroots urban reform,” however, things were considerably different (Hendler & Harrison, 2000, p. 149). Many women were employed in “‘caring’ professions,” and others volunteered in areas such as “city beautification, health issues, children’s issues, and housing” (Hendler & Harrison, 2000, p. 149). While not acting directly as planning “professionals,” women played an important role in the creation and health of cities.

Today, things have changed somewhat, but more work needs to be done. In land use and urban planning positions in Ontario today, women make up 42% of total employment in the profession (Employment Ontario, 2013). At the same time, the grassroots and local community organizational aspect of women in planning also persists.

In Toronto, Women Plan Toronto (WPT) was a participatory research organization with the aim of “document[ing] how women coped in Toronto” (Modlich, 2012). To do so, WPT held 25 workshops with women asking them to map their experiences, express their challenges, and brainstorm solutions, resulting in the publication of the book *Shared Experiences and Dreams*. WPT was also involved in creating accessibility tools to encourage women to become involved in planning, commented on the 1991 Toronto Official Plan, contributed to the creation of the METRAC Safety Audit described in this report below, and championed other issues facing women including housing, transportation, and governance.

Since the successes of Women Plan Toronto and after its collapse in 2000, other organizations have emerged in its place. Notably, the Toronto Women’s City Alliance (TWCA) “promotes equity and equality by making audible and visible the voices and issues of diverse women in Toronto” (Toronto Women’s City Alliance, 2013). Their contributions to women and planning include producing the *Women’s Communities In which Women Count: The Women’s Equality Report Card Project*, and providing commentary on the Official Plan from a diverse group of women.

Women in Toronto Politics (WiTOPoli) has a mandate to “spark discussion in the broader public discourse about how city issues might have different impacts based on gender and other aspects of identity (e.g. race, class, ability, sexuality),” as well as “challenge the ways our existing civic discourse may be hostile to and/or dismissive of women as politicians, media workers and engaged residents,” and finally “create inclusive spaces, online and offline, for women and trans people to share ideas and discuss municipal politics and city-building” (Women in Toronto Politics, 2014). These organizations exist because there is still a pressing need for greater representation of women in planning, as well as the inclusion of different ways of learning and knowing that may not be nurtured by traditional urban planning methods.

Methods

This research was undertaken with a modified Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach. CBPR requires that research involve “the input and contribution not only from academic researchers but also from community members at each step of the research process, from defining the research topic to disseminating the results” (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013, p. 176). Further, CBPR is an approach that takes place within communities, which encourages participation from those who would not normally have access to the research process (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2012). This type of participatory practice in research is committed to critically analyzing power structures within society, discovering the knowledge individuals hold in their regular lives, and working toward collective action for improved communities (Ledwith & Springett, 2010; Hacker, 2013). I say above that this approach was modified CBPR as the youth I worked with were not involved in all phases of this project.

Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner (2012) quote Israel et al. (2005) to identify the phases of CBPR – “(1) partnership formation and maintenance, (2) community assessment and diagnosis, (3) definition of the issue, (4) documentation and evaluation of the partnership process, and (5) feedback, interpretation, dissemination, and application of results” (p. 179). It is not uncommon for CBPR with youth to only involve youth in a few of the five phases (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2012) and indeed the participants in this research were only involved in phases 4 and 5, for reasons I will discuss in the Challenges section below.

Another methodological tool for this research is place-based education practice, which is the idea that engaging and effective learning takes place when information is connected to young people’s local environments. It has been discussed in the context of many different subjects, including language, math, science, and history (Smith & Sobel, 2010). In the case of this research, I use place-based education to share basic planning concepts with the girls using the environments in which they live and play. While the literature about place-based education focuses on the incorporation of this practice into the formal school system, much of the rationale behind it is shared in this research. For example, place-based education can foster a connection with place, and therefore a sense of responsibility to care for and protect it, and it can provide the resources for youth to address community-based challenges (Smith & Sobel, 2010). These are goals shared by this research with the Village Bloggurls.

To carry out this research, I designed a series of workshops and activities intended to better understand the relationship that the girls’ had to their environment, what they felt about it,

and what they thought could be improved upon. To develop the activities described in this report, I relied on the knowledge and insights of professionals I have met as well as existing literature. I felt it was important to gather insights from those who have come before me, and it is common in community work with youth to utilize and adapt existing resources to create workshops. In developing the activities in this report, I also drew upon Heft & Chawla's (2006) four conditions that support the development of environmental competencies among youth ("environmental competencies" being an awareness and connection to space, place, and community). They are: "(1) affordances that promote discovery and responsive person-environment relationships; (2) access and mobility to engage affordances; (3) guided participation that supports perceptual learning and action; and (4) opportunities for meaningful participation in community settings" (p. 206). Each of the activities described below contribute in some way to one or more of these conditions. Heft & Chawla (2006) also write, "perceiving and acting are basic and intertwined processes of knowing, and that through action, individuals simultaneously discover properties of the environment and possibilities for their own emerging environmental competencies" (p. 199). This emphasis on action was significant, as knowledge alone would have been insufficient in achieving the goals of this research.

Finally, I relied on two additional methods to gather data for this report. First, participant observation allowed me to gather additional data about the girls' thoughts and feelings about their environment, and their ideas for change. This was an essential component of my research, as it allowed me to capture unexpected insights at times when I was otherwise not in "principal investigator" mode. Second, to understand the impact of this research I conducted informal

group interviews with the girls to assess the extent to which they have adopted and understood the ideas and concepts explored in the activities central to this research.

One challenge for participatory projects with youth in general is that “it is evident that children’s positions as citizens or urban planners is dependent on adults, who are willing to work on the preconditions for children’s participation” (Horelli, 1997, p. 135). Forsyth (2002) addresses this idea that children must work with adults in saying “this creates a delicate balance where participation needs to be carefully designed to be interesting and also give power to youth directly, not only through adults” (p. 5). How I approached this “delicate balance” in this research was to employ a feminist methodology to each interaction and activity. A feminist research methodology places importance in reflexivity of the researcher, voice of participants, positionality and acknowledgement of non-neutrality, and diversity (McLafferty, 2002, p. 265). Feminist research rejects the dualism of passion/rationality that devalues certain ways of knowing (Sandercock & Forsyth, 2005). I chose to consider the girls the primary knowledge holders in each activity and to design the process with a sense of their interests in mind. My main role throughout was to facilitate the sharing of their knowledge, not only to create it.

Workshops and activities

Planning concepts – introducing the basics

An important element of this research was introducing the Village Bloggurls to basic planning concepts to ground the remaining activities in an existing field of practice. Planning concepts

are not commonly taught at the elementary level, despite having such a profound impact on our everyday lives. The first way I introduced planning concepts to the girls and mentors was through informal conversations in specific situations and locations around Toronto. For example, during a trip downtown with the mentors, we found ourselves in the Annex exploring the famous department store Honest Ed's. I used this opportunity to talk to the girls about the future of this iconic place within the city, how the land is proposed for redevelopment in coming years, and what that could mean for the surrounding area. This became a discussion about what we can do as citizens to speak out about what we want and need. Another similar circumstance arose during a field trip with both youth and mentors, when a change of plans led us to the St. Lawrence neighbourhood. We talked about the history of the area geographically, politically, and culturally, including the brownfield redevelopment of the 1970s and the cultural significance of the market. These moments became important to understanding the ways in which cities can change over time.



The Village Bloggurls at St. Lawrence Market

Another way I introduced basic planning concepts was through a scavenger hunt activity in Lotherton Pathway. The scavenger hunt idea was a resource I found from the American Planning Association (American Planning Association, n.d.), which I then augmented to be suitable for Lotherton (see appendix A). The scavenger hunt took place as part of our March Break activities, with the mentors acting as leaders and aides to a small group of girls. Examples of some of the tasks include “Take a picture of three different kinds of residential buildings,” and “Make a crayon rubbing of four types of building materials.” Also included was a map of the surrounding area, with the girls being required to use their spatial sense and knowledge of the area to label certain places. The list of tasks required the girls to be physically active, to work as a team, to be creative, and engage with their community in a tactile way.



A photograph of a flyer for a community event taken as part of the scavenger hunt

Reflections

These efforts to introduce planning concepts to the Village Bloggurls were moderately successful, but demonstrated to me that what may be appropriate learning tools for the mentors may not be for the younger girls. The mentors were much more interested in planning concepts during our impromptu conversations about built form and history of place, whereas the younger girls seemed somewhat disengaged at those times, and I wonder how much they took away from those talks. On the other hand, the girls responded very well to the scavenger hunt, with more than one describing it as their favourite activity of the entire March Break camp. The extent to which the girls were able to complete the scavenger hunt unaided by myself or the mentors varied between groups. All were quickly able to identify a flyer for a community event, and at least two types of residential buildings, while others had to think longer about what constituted an “industrial” building. Through the scavenger hunt they saw the many different features that make up a neighbourhood, learned about land uses, and were able to express their understanding of Lotherton through photography and art.

In my final interview with the girls, I asked them what they learned from the scavenger hunt. One girl said that the scavenger hunt taught her not to litter. Another said that it helped them “see the community, I usually just go out of the community and not around it” (Village Bloggurls, personal communication, June 6, 2014). Other comments included “we did things we normally wouldn’t do and saw things we normally wouldn’t see,” and “before, I never cared about the trees or the difference between them” (Village Bloggurls, personal communication, June 6, 2014). For several of them, it helped them see “the good and the bad,” and made them feel like they were getting to know Lotherton in a new way (Village Bloggurls, personal

communication, June 6, 2014). This type of hands-on activity was clearly more beneficial for the learning of the younger girls.

Girls' Eye View Map

A major project that we undertook as part of this research is the Village Bloggurls "Girls' Eye View" map. This exists on the Google Maps platform (url:

https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zQsT9uwgg4pQ.khvl5mz_v_9Y), and

incorporates memories, artwork, photographs, and videos from important places that the girls experienced together. Some of these places were as close to home as the community garden within Lotherton Pathway, or as far away as the McMichael Art Gallery in Vaughan. In the past, maps with youth have been created to convey ideas about health (eg. Amsden & VanWynsBerghe, 2005) built form (eg. Dennis, 2006), nature (eg. Kelley, Pendras, & Minella, 2012), safety (Literat, 2013), and more. For the purpose of this research and beyond, the Girls' Eye View map is an important way for the Village Bloggurls to share their stories about places within their neighbourhoods and the wider City of Toronto, to think about place from a gendered perspective, and to participate in a mentorship opportunity in the actual creation of content for map points.

In the *Community Planning Handbook*, the author writes, "mapping is an effective non-verbal way of finding out how people view their area. It is a good way to gather and present site-specific data, understand differences in perception and stimulate debate as a basis for joint planning" (Wates, 2000, p. 76). This, on a very basic level, is what mapping achieves, but it also

does so much more. For instance, mapping has traditionally been the domain of individuals in power, and maps to this day still tend to represent those power dynamics. Those excluded from traditional mapping have included, for example, Indigenous groups, women, and of course, youth. By creating maps with local people, the views of individuals or communities who may be marginalized can be represented and their voices can begin to be heard (Parker, 2006; Literat, 2013). Further, Literat (2013) writes,

Rattine-Flaherty and Singhal (2007) convincingly argue that visual participatory research methods like participatory mapping are a feminist approach, since they inherently privilege emotionality, connections and community. They claim that “the feminist viewpoint questions the hegemony of knowledge that is printed, arguing for the recognition of other forms of expression, and that by providing participants the tools of producing knowledge, such as markers and cameras, as well as opportunities for public performance of their narratives, feminist approaches enhance individual agency and solidarity.” (p. 358)

This speaks directly to the approach we took with mapping, combining written words, art, and photography to create the online map, all from the individual perspectives of the girls working together with their mentors.

The creation of the map took place over several Friday evening sessions. On the first, I introduced the younger girls to the concept of mapping. To begin the session, I had the girls split into small groups and then handed out a series of maps depicting nontraditional map data, i.e., something other/more than houses, streets, and landmarks. One map depicted the most famous brands that emerged from different United States. Another was a TTC Subway map, and another was Canada with the former Aboriginal names for places instead of current names of provinces, lakes, etc. Another map was a map of the world depicting the most popular sport in

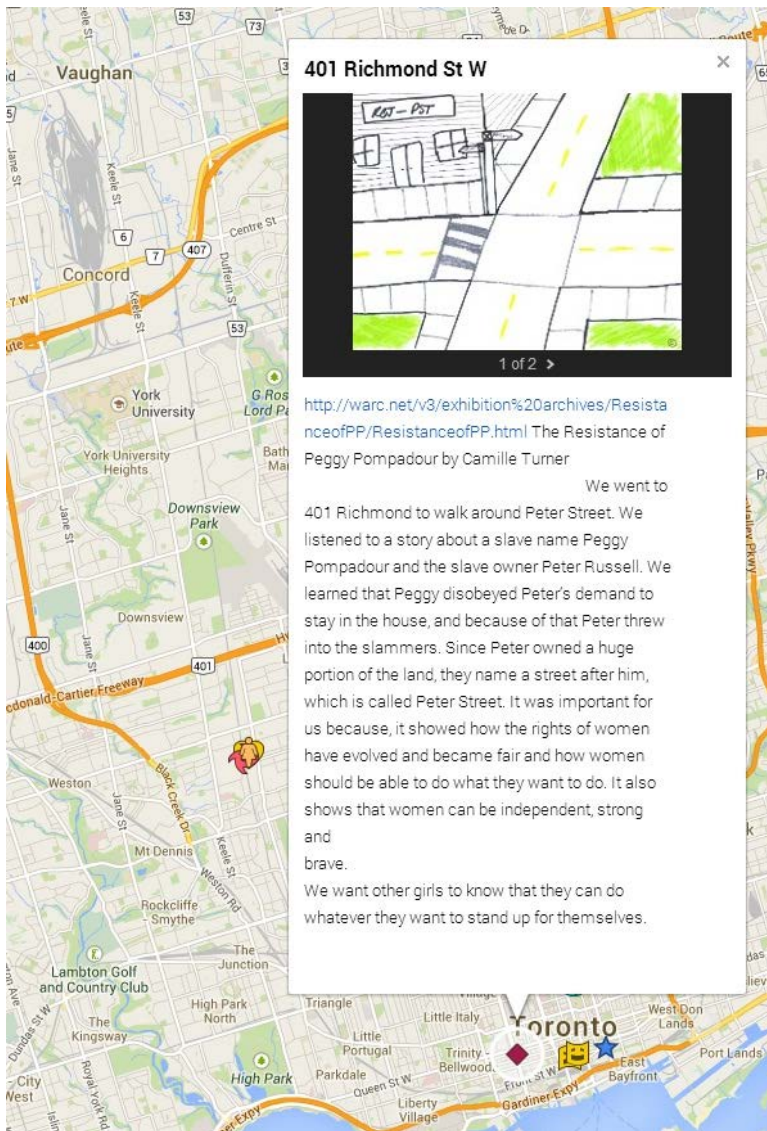
each country. After allowing them to discuss in groups, I asked them to think about what the map was telling us, whose interests it represented, and why they would create that map. We talked about how maps represent power relationships, depending on who created the map and the story they wanted to tell. This allowed the girls to become interested in the process of mapping and required them to think about maps as tools and symbols rather than maps as immutable facts. I then briefly explained the concept of the online map to the girls. In the same groups, I assigned places to each and asked the girls to draw pictures and write stories about their experience of that place. I asked them to think about what it meant to them as girls, and what they learned.



Girls working with a mentor to create content for the map.

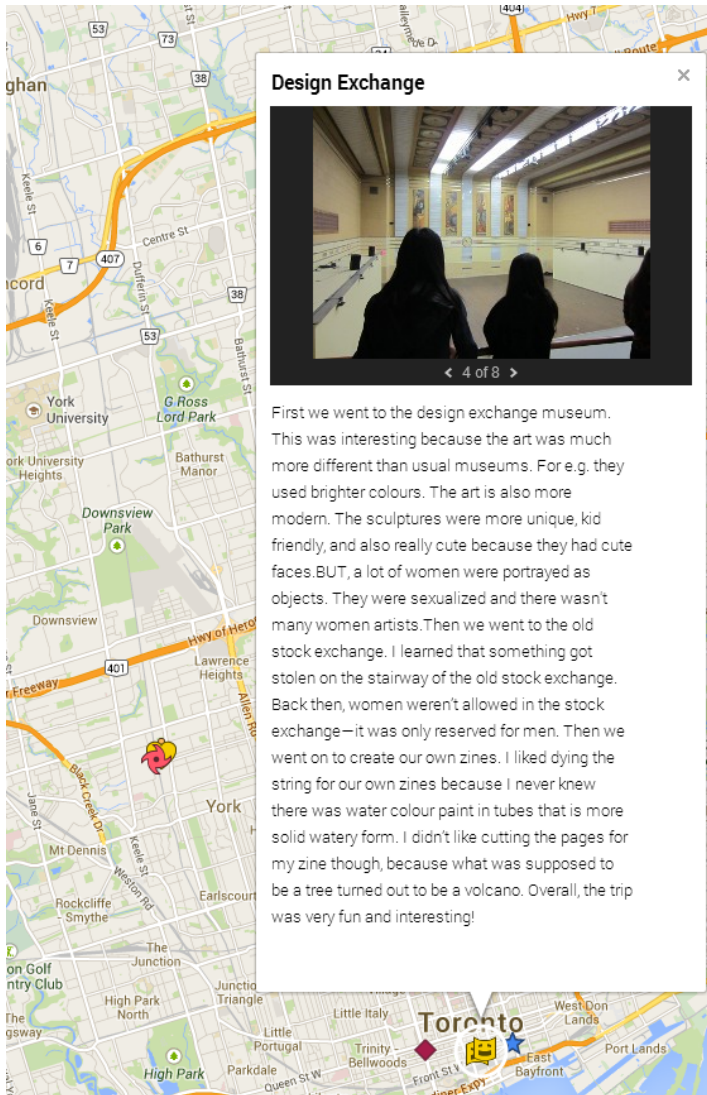
The sessions that followed had the girls working on computers to digitize their images and create text for the online map. In these sessions they worked with the Mentors to describe their experiences of the places we have been as a group. They were also required to find the places we visited on the map using the search function, and with each new pin added to the map, the girls were amazed at the amount of distance and space we have occupied as a group. As we visited more places and had more experiences, we added to the map throughout the year.

In these mapping workshops, the girls were required to think about the meaning underlying the spaces we inhabit. In one example, the girls wrote about their experience visiting 401 Richmond, a loft-style building with various art galleries and media on display. We went there specifically to see the work of artist Camille Turner, who created an audio tour of the surrounding area depicting the story of Peggy Pompadour and slave owner Peter Russell in the late 1700s. We started in a studio but soon walked out to the streets with the sounds and story of a previous time in our ears. We were able to imagine the early days of Toronto and consider how different it was back then. Through this experience, the girls learned that the streets we walk on have long histories, and in this case, Peter Russell's legacy lives on throughout Toronto despite his treatment and enslavement of people of colour.



The Girls' Eye View Map point illustrating the girls' trip to 401 Richmond, including a drawing of Peter Street

In their description of our trip to the Design Exchange to see a vinyl toy exhibit (see below), the girls noted that very few pieces of artwork on display were created by women, and that depictions of women were almost exclusively sexualized. Further, we were able to walk through the old Toronto Stock Exchange and imagine what it was like when women were not allowed on the trading floor. Creating the map allowed the girls an opportunity to be critical of the places we travelled together, and consider how issues of gender manifest themselves in different spaces.



The girls' description of their trip to the Design Exchange, including a picture of the old Toronto Stock Exchange trading floor

In addition to these more critical aspects of the map, the girls also used the map to share their lived experiences of being part of the group, what they enjoyed or disliked, and funny memories. This balance was important because it made the map feel more their own, and also made it accessible to a range of ages hoping to learn from their experiences.

Reflections

Both the girls and mentors enjoyed working on the map as a way to express their experiences of place within Toronto. The youngest girls prefer to express themselves through drawing and

photography, whereas the older girls and mentors were interested in writing descriptions of places. The map allowed opportunities for both. One girl commented that “it is not normal to consider girls’ experiences,” but all agreed that it is important for girls to represent themselves. In their words, the map allowed them to “report to other girls if a place is fun or not,” to tell their stories, and they said that it makes them feel “interesting” and “like they stand out” (Village Bloggurls, personal communication, June 6, 2014).

Viewing the map reveals several things about the Village Bloggurls’ experiences around Toronto. First, the majority of places they have visited are downtown, and none are in the immediate vicinity of where they live, except for the places within Lotherton itself. This illustrates the existing divide between downtown Toronto and North York in terms of opportunities for culture, recreation, etc. The map also challenges any lingering stereotypes about what might constitute places for girls and places for boys. The girls and mentors appreciated places where they could learn about and do many things, including art, science, and sports. At the same time, a few of the places we visited could learn from the girls’ reflections, with the major message of the map being that their voices and experiences of place have importance and should be heard.

Safety Audit

In their final workshop for this research, the girls conducted a Safety Audit of Lotherton Pathway as part of their March Break activities. A Safety Audit is a walk around a neighbourhood with a group of local people with the purpose of assessing the safety issues

present in the area. Here, safety means freedom from violence (especially gender based violence) and has grown to also include “freedom from poverty, financial security and autonomy, and having a sense of self-worth” (Shaw, Andrew, Whitzman, Klodawsky, Viswanath, & Legacy, 2013, p. 4). Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women (METRAC), a Toronto organization, designed the Safety Audit in the late 1980s and developed a guide to help individuals facilitate the process. Since then, METRAC’s “Women’s Safety Audit Guide” has been adapted by organizations all over the world (Whitzman, Shaw, Andrew, & Travers, 2009, p. 205). The underlying philosophy of the safety walk approach is that “in doing a Safety Audit, women are the experts. It’s women’s experiences with places that counts” (METRAC, 1992, p. 4). This runs counter to the notion that expert opinion is the sole domain of men, and white, wealthy men in particular.

The girls conducted their Safety Audit on March 10, 2014. We began the process by brainstorming what safety means to them and how safe they felt in Lotherton. I described the Safety Audit process, and we discussed why it was important that a group of women developed and initiated the process (as described above). I then handed out a cue card to each girl with something written on it describing a trait of different individuals in the community. For example, one cue card read “newcomer,” while another read “single mother with two kids,” “wheelchair user,” “does not own a car,” etc. I told them that as we were conducting the Safety Audit they should try to wear two hats – first, be themselves, think about what makes them feel safe or unsafe, and secondly, consider what the person on their cue card, who might have a different experience from them, might need in order to have a safe environment. After handing

out clipboards with the Safety Audit checklist, measuring tapes to find out various distances outlined in the checklist, and cameras so they could record their findings, we were off.

We began in the lobby of the building where the Village Bloggurls program takes place, looking for cleanliness and signage. We then rode the elevator to the top floor, evaluated lighting and other aspects of hallway safety, and then walked down the stairwell making notes as we went. We followed the stairwell to the parking garage, and then went outside. In the interest of time, and because of cold weather we had to quickly finish the last few questions on the questionnaire. While the Safety Audit Guide recommends conducting Safety Audits at night, it was not possible to do so because of the timing of the Village Bloggurls meetings. To make up for this, my coworker and I took a video of Lotherton Pathway at night three days prior to the Safety Audit and screened it for the girls. An example of a Safety Audit checklist completed by one 9-year-old participant can be seen in appendix B.



The group discussing safety in the parking garage



The girls pointed out cigarette smoking, especially in stairwells, as something in their community that makes them feel unsafe



Taking a break to record findings



Measuring distances between streetlights during the Safety Audit

After completing the safety walk and watching the video of Lotherton at night, we debriefed by discussing our findings and our general feelings about the Safety Audit and briefly considering next steps. In general, the girls were very engaged throughout, and took their role very seriously. They were very intuitive about many aspects of safety, and had a considerable amount of knowledge about safe and unsafe spaces. On March 12, 2014, we held a session in which the girls brainstormed potential solutions to problems in their neighbourhood. They wanted to include a discussion of the pool even though we did not include it in the safety walk. A summary of the problems and potential solutions in their own words can be found in appendix C.

In the final workshop for this research, I worked with my co-facilitators and other community members to develop an activity to take the Safety Audit further with the girls. Given the constraints of the nature of property ownership in the community (i.e. condominiums), and the relationship between North York Community House (the organization that runs the Village Bloggurls) and the Lotherton condominium board, we were somewhat limited in the direct actions we could take. For example, many of the problems the girls identified, such as insufficient security, garbage, poor lighting indoors and out, and cleanliness of the buildings, are the responsibility of the condominium board. Given the non-partisan nature of North York Community House within Lotherton, Village Bloggurls management was hesitant to allow the girls to bring their concerns directly to the board as members of the Village Bloggurls for fear it would create discord between the organizations in the community. Our solution was to bring our concerns to the resident action group within Lotherton in the hopes that they would become allies and could work together with the girls as residents, not as members of any organization.

Given the timing of the most recent resident action group meeting (two days before our final session), the girls will have to bring their results from the Safety Audit remotely, as their program ends before the next resident action group meeting. Together with my co-workers, we decided that a video in addition to their written comments about the Safety Audit would be the best way to proceed. In the final session, we re-capped the Safety Audit and discussed the future of the Safety Audit, the challenges of the condominium ownership of the Lotherton properties, and the plan. We then spent time filming for the video, which can be viewed at

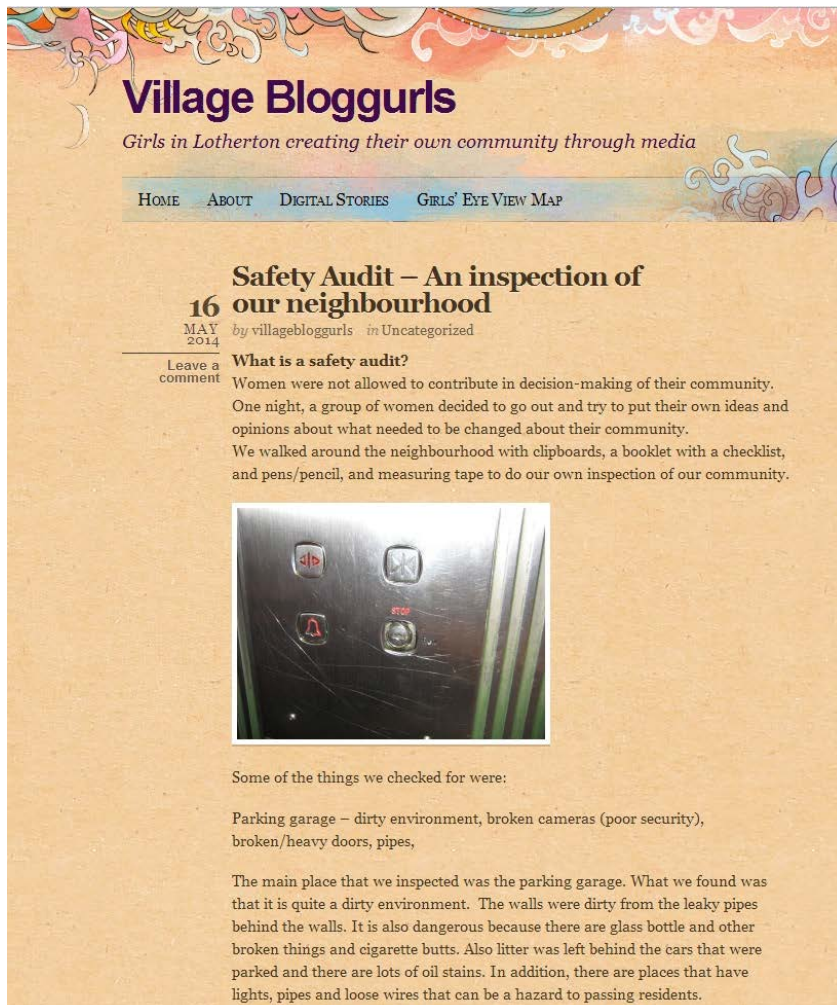
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw2O4Ct6Sh0>. At the time of this writing, my coworkers and myself are in the process of finalizing letters to be sent to the resident action group, City Councillor Josh Colle and MPP Mike Colle. We hope to receive responses before the Village Bloggurls program returns from summer hiatus.

Reflections

Though I did not know this at the time, a month after the girls conducted their Safety Audit I discovered that a Safety Audit had already been done in Lotherton in September 2009. An official report was submitted to METRAC detailing their findings. I believe that not knowing about the 2009 Safety Audit was an asset, as it did not have any influence on the things we identified in our own Safety Audit. Interestingly, the girls identified many of the same issues as those identified in 2009. For example, the 2009 group cited a lack of outdoor garbage cans contributing to litter, unreliable security guards, insufficient outdoor lighting, and more, all of which the girls also identified independently. This leads me to understand, first, that the girls have as much knowledge as any adult in their community, and second, follow-up activities to the Safety Audit by the girls are absolutely necessary, as many of the problems identified in 2009 still exist.

My most challenging moment as a researcher and facilitator came directly after the Safety Audit when many of the girls were expressing negative feelings about their community as a result of the activity. One girl said, "I don't even want to live here anymore." This view persisted in the weeks that followed the Safety Audit whenever the subject came up. In an attempt to

help the girls refocus, I encouraged discussion about all the wonderful things about living in Lotherton unrelated to the state of the buildings. I also expressed that all neighbourhoods have their challenges and could benefit from a Safety Audit, and helped them to realize all the things that they can do to help make things better. A quote from their blog post about the Safety Audit reads: “As a result of doing this Safety Audit, we learn that Lotherton was not well taken care of. Although this made us sad, some of us believe we can make a difference. For example, cleaning up litter, planting trees, encouraging people to recycle, composting, putting up posters, talking to people in charge, and encouraging people to turn on their house lights at night” (Village Bloggurls, 2014).



Village Bloggurls
Girls in Lotherton creating their own community through media

HOME ABOUT DIGITAL STORIES GIRLS' EYE VIEW MAP

16
MAY 2014
by villagebloggurls in Uncategorized

Leave a comment

Safety Audit – An inspection of our neighbourhood

What is a safety audit?
Women were not allowed to contribute in decision-making of their community. One night, a group of women decided to go out and try to put their own ideas and opinions about what needed to be changed about their community. We walked around the neighbourhood with clipboards, a booklet with a checklist, and pens/pencil, and measuring tape to do our own inspection of our community.



Some of the things we checked for were:

Parking garage – dirty environment, broken cameras (poor security), broken/heavy doors, pipes,

The main place that we inspected was the parking garage. What we found was that it is quite a dirty environment. The walls were dirty from the leaky pipes behind the walls. It is also dangerous because there are glass bottle and other broken things and cigarette butts. Also litter was left behind the cars that were parked and there are lots of oil stains. In addition, there are places that have lights, pipes and loose wires that can be a hazard to passing residents.

A screenshot of the Village Bloggurls blog post about the Safety Audit, available at <http://villagebloggurls.wordpress.com/2014/05/16/safety-audit-an-inspection-of-our-neighbourhood/>

During my subsequent interviews with the girls at the end of this research, they spoke very practically about what they had learned, for example saying, “it showed us what needed to be changed,” and “if people in the community learned what we learned they would want to make a difference” (Village Bloggurls, personal communication, June 6, 2014). Another spoke about the cue card activity, saying that the Safety Audit showed them “how safety affects people with different needs” (Village Bloggurls, personal communication, June 6, 2014). That this was a take-away for at least one girl reveals the nuanced learning process that happens in a Safety Audit, and that each girl’s experience was a little bit different.

Outcomes

The purposes of this research were: first, to understand the extent to which planning concepts and inquiry could be introduced into community programs with youth; second, to contribute to the field of feminism and planning scholarship; and finally, to encourage the girls to feel empowered to understand and make changes in their communities. These objectives have been met to varying degrees.

On the first point, this report has demonstrated that young people have considerable knowledge about their environments, and given the opportunity, they are eager and willing to share that knowledge. This confirms numerous studies with youth (eg. Rissotto & Giuliani, 2006; Horelli, 1997; Percy-Smith, 2002), and supports the idea that children can and should be included in the planning process. Unfortunately, the formal education system does not at this time allow many opportunities for this type of expression, making the level of community

organization one possible avenue for planning education and inquiry. While only a few activities were described above, it is clear that by knowing the young people in a given community and their interests, it is possible to develop and facilitate workshops that contribute to planning understanding in an effective and meaningful way.

Working with the Village Bloggurls also reveals to some extent that issues of feminism in planning persist today, in this case particularly around issues of safety in their community and differential treatment of the girls in terms of mobility based on gender. More work needs to be done to understand the extent to which sexism and other forms of discrimination are at play in this case and in general. At the same time, this report revealed that a feminist approach is beneficial for working with youth because of the ways it acknowledges different types of learning and knowledge as valid. For example, Sandercock and Forsyth (2005) write that “creating symbolic forms” through art and media are “more important way[s] of knowing and communicating than planners have yet been prepared to contemplate” (p. 73). A shift in this thinking is necessary given the importance of those modes of expression for young people.

The final purpose of this research was to hopefully contribute in some way to the girls’ and mentors’ sense of civic engagement and empowerment. This is challenging, as many young people feel like their ability to make a difference is limited (Chawla, 2002, p. 225). Through interviews and other informal interactions with the girls, it is clear that the participants in this research feel a new sense of power in their ability to shape the world around them. They also connected with their community in a new way, by thinking about the challenges as well as the

wonderful things about where they live. It is clear that they are discontent with many things happening around them, specifically in the context of safety in their community, and they want to know what they can do to make things safer. This is a promising sign that they will be less inclined to accept things as they are and realize that cities are always changing and they can be involved in that change. Though this research is a preliminary exploration of planning and community issues, these activities have had an impact in shifting their understanding of their own roles as urban citizens.

Challenges

While conducting this work was enjoyable in many ways, I also faced many challenges. The most significant challenge I experienced was a lack of time with the girls devoted consistently to this research. In developing this project, I was offered four to six weeks of Friday sessions in addition to March Break camp to dedicate to this research. Due to a change in management within the program just prior to the start of my research, I was unable to commit those continuous weeks to my research and to planning workshops with the girls, and therefore my workshops ran intermittently between March and June. While I feel fortunate that I was able to work with the girls, I think this lack of consistency was a detriment to the level of understanding and engagement we were able to achieve.

This lack of consistency was especially challenging in terms of following through with action items on the Safety Audit. For months after the Safety Audit, the girls continued to have negative feelings about their community, as we had not had the opportunity to make

meaningful attempts to turn what we now knew about safety into actions to make things better. By creating the video to culminate the Safety Audit process, they were able to think less abstractly about the impact of this work, and consider its applications in their community. At the same time, by creating the video sooner and by being able to dedicate more time to follow-through, the negative feelings the girls were experiencing could have been diminished earlier on, and we would have had more time before the end of program for the year (at the end of June) to engage with the individuals we hope to reach with the video, such as other Lotherton residents and local politicians.

The fact of the different ages of the younger girls and the mentors and the types of planning inquiry this allows for created another challenge for this research. As stated above, the girls and mentors responded differently to various activities, but due to the mentors' responsibility to work with the girls as part of the Village Bloggurls mandate meant that we were not able to explore activities with the mentors alone that might have been more appropriate for older youth. Creating youth oriented ways of learning and sharing is integral to the success of planning with youth (Frank, 2006). The ways in which younger children and pre-teens might be engaged in learning about planning as opposed to teenagers was not thoroughly explored here and remains an area for further research.

Another challenge to this work and work with youth in general is the institutional barriers faced when trying to incorporate youth voices into the planning process. Frank (2006) writes of the limits of decision makers' willingness or ability to acknowledge youth participants in the

planning process at a socio-political level (p. 368). In the context of the Village Bloggurls, one main barrier was the power held by the condominium board over many of the changes the girls hoped to implement through this work. Major issues identified in the Safety Audit such as garbage collection and lighting are the purview of the condominium management and their legal responsibility to remedy, meaning that the City is limited in its ability to assist the girls in their work even if they were compelled to do so.

Though not a challenge to the research itself, one thing I would have approached differently is the extent to which this was a true participatory action research project. As stated above, this research only incorporated the girls in the process of research in the final two of the five phases identified by Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner (2012): the “documentation and evaluation” and the “feedback, interpretation, dissemination, and application of results” (p. 179). Greater involvement from the beginning was not possible given the time constraints on the project, and challenges of coordinating this research with the rest of the Village Bloggurls’ priorities. In an ideal world, the project would have had the input from the girls from the start about issues in their community important to them, and we would have worked together to define goals and carry out the work. It is possible that something like this will be done in the future.

Recommendations

While considerable work has yet to be done in terms of engaging youth in planning, including with the Village Bloggurls, this research revealed important insights that are essential in conducting this work moving forward.

1. Having knowledge of and being responsive to the needs of a community are beneficial to meaningful work with youth. My previous experience with the Village Bloggurls helped me to understand the challenges of where they live, as well as helped me to know what types of workshops and activities would get them interested in the ideas of planning we were working with. Along with this, being receptive to input from the youth participants about what they want from the process is an integral part of this type of work.

2. Incorporating planning concepts and inquiry with youth is a slow process. It takes time to develop and facilitate workshops and activities with young people, especially given constraints of finances, competing organizational goals, and limited time to carry out activities. The process of manifesting educational activities with youth around planning into true feelings of empowerment is also not a quick one, and so patience is necessary to see any effects.

3. Tangible activities are preferable to abstract concepts or information conveyed in lessons. The Safety Audit, for example, was more effective in getting the girls to think about their community than abstract conversations about land uses (eg. talking about St. Lawrence Market). A few months prior to the start of my research with the Village Bloggurls, I became aware of an opportunity for young people in the vicinity of Glen Long Community Centre to provide input on changes being made to the local playground. Had timing been different, this would have been an excellent chance to introduce planning concepts and encourage participation from the girls. These real life opportunities to participate should be taken advantage of by community groups (and should be made more frequent and better advertised

by city planning staff) if youth are to truly become empowered. Another opportunity for practical involvement in the community exists in the Lotherton community garden, run by the Action for Neighbourhood Change office. The girls have had some experience in the garden before and enjoyed it very much, but the fact that much of this research took place in the winter months prevented us from taking advantage of it as a learning opportunity in community planning, but it is certainly a future opportunity to continue this type of work.

4. Partnering with existing organizations can offer new perspectives and opportunities not otherwise available in a particular neighbourhood. In an effort to connect with outside opportunities for the Village Bloggurls, I contacted the co-founder of Women in Toronto Politics. I did so after reading about a Jane's Walk they had run in May, 2013 surrounding activism and engagement by women in Toronto, and I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity for the girls to see the history of and potential for women's involvement in city building. The organization was very interested in working with the girls, and so together we (slightly) amended the walk to make it more appropriate for young people. I planned a mapping activity and discussion questions to further engage the girls during the walk. We planned to conduct the walk on April 5, 2014, but unfortunately the unseasonably cold weather prevented us from carrying it out. We have tentatively rescheduled for October 5, 2014, in advance of the municipal election, and I hope to see that through with the girls when the time comes.

5. Establish a consistent process with clearly defined goals. One of the major challenges with this research was having intermittent opportunities to actually carry out workshops and

activities, which is something that had changed from the planning stages to the actual carrying out of this research. It is difficult to say for sure, but my sense is that the girls may have benefitted from a more concentrated focus on planning concepts and inquiry, allowing us both to delve deeper into the issues and for them to see greater connections between the problems they were identifying and potential solutions.

Conclusion

This report demonstrates what many have already described, which is that planning with youth is not only possible, but also worthwhile. Further, working in a community setting provides an opportunity for learning about planning issues that would not otherwise be available. This report has also provides key insights into doing this type of work with youth. For one, efforts to include youth in the planning process should consider age, as different ages respond to a variety of planning and place-based activities. Planning with youth can also encourage a sense of care and concern for their neighbourhoods, and a desire to make them better. The young people in this study also had considerable knowledge of improvements that could be made in their area comparable to adults, though we as a group struggled in some ways to find avenues to express these findings.

Taking a feminist approach to this research reveals that feminism and planning should be an ongoing field of research, as gendered issues in planning persist. As the Village Bloggurls saw, many places they visit reveal a history as well as ongoing issues of gender discrimination, and this work encouraged them to be critical of place with that in mind. A feminist research

methodology is also appropriate for work with youth as it challenges the very power dynamics that are excluding youth in the first place, and this research helped the girls to realize that their voices have a right to be heard.

In the end, the girls and mentors gained a sense of connection with their community as a result of this research, and were compelled to contribute to its development and change. Incorporating planning inquiry into community organizations with youth should be encouraged in the interest of acknowledging their potential for involvement and fostering the development of concerned and engaged citizens in the future.

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Appendix A – Lotherton Scavenger Hunt

Let's explore and connect with our community! The first group to complete all the items on the list wins a prize.

AS A TEAM take a picture of:

A flyer for a community event
 Three different kinds of residential buildings
 Two different kinds of retail buildings
 An industrial building
 Three different transportation structures/spaces
 Take pictures of **three** places you go to have fun

INDIVIDUALLY draw:

Draw the best place in Lotherton (in your opinion)
 Find a place that could use some improvement (maybe a place that is unsafe, dirty, or not ideal for women and girls) – draw what the improved space would look like
 Draw any animals you see during your scavenger hunt
 Draw three different types of transportation you see in Lotherton

INDIVIDUALLY make a crayon rubbing of:

Four different types of building materials – and label them!
 Three different types of trees – and label them!

FIND ON THE MAP:

Glen Long Community Centre
 Lawrence West Subway Station
 Joyce Park

****BONUS:** Pick up five pieces of litter – be sure to wash your hands after!**

Appendix B – Completed Safety Audit checklist

LOTHERTON SAFETY AUDIT CHECKLIST

Date: March 10th 2014
Time:
Auditor: [REDACTED]
Reason for auditing:
to learn about the community and to change it.

General impressions of safety in Lotherton
Your gut reactions:
In Lotherton, it is not safe because there are strangers in the hallways.

What five words describe Lotherton:
1. not safe
2. dirty
3. dangerous
4. not friendly
5. strange

INDOOR AREAS

a. Signage
Is there a sign (eg. room #) identifying where you are? YES NO
Are there signs that show you where to get emergency assistance? YES NO *
If yes, where are they located?
Up in the corner and in wrong colour (blue) no pictures.

Are there signs that indicate wheelchair access? YES NO

b. Elevators
Are elevators reliable? YES NO * takes a long time
Are there aids so that you can see who is in there with you? YES NO
Impression of lighting in the elevators
too dark good too bright
1 2 3 4 5
 3

What atmosphere do the elevators project?
Scary, because worry being lock in the elevator.

1

Do you know how to call for assistance when in the elevator? YES NO

Are there visual and tactile symbols to represent important information? YES NO
 Is the lettering on the signs tactile, raised or in braille? YES NO *tactile only

General comments about elevator safety: * 12 floor (100)
 scary and not safe because sometimes strangers in
 elevator and sometimes locked in side

c. Hallways

Impression of lighting in hallways * 12 floor
 too dark 1 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

Are any lights out in the hallway? YES NO

If yes, how many and where? _____

Are you able to identify a face at 25 metres/80 feet away in the hallway? YES NO

Are exit doors identified? YES * faraway / not bright NO

Is there a monitor or surveillance system?
 YES NO DON'T KNOW

d. Stairwells

Lighting in stairwells
 too dark 1 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

General comments about hallway & stairwell safety:
 Bad smell, floor is brokeing / dirtily floor sticky
 wheel chair; can't reach lots of floors signs/
 brokeing

e. Parking Garage

When you enter, are there any obstacles blocking your view? YES NO * signs that say no bike parking

What are they and how far up ahead?
~~Double~~ Double doors! * put mirrors

Are there any aids to help you see around those obstacles? YES NO

If yes, what are they?

Are there any places someone could be hiding? YES NO

What are they and how far up ahead?

Close to entrance and behind griant walls

Lighting in parking garage

too dark 1 2 3 good 4 too bright 5

Are any lights out in the parking garage? YES

NO

Don't know

If yes, how many and where?

Are you able to identify a face at 25 metres/80 feet away in the parking garage?

YES

NO 64 feet to see face

Identify any risk sites (places you or someone else might feel uneasy or unsafe)

Near corners and turns

General comments about parking garage safety:

scare ~~stanger~~ because stanger are walking around (be quite)

drink beer & winer falls down, light ~~close~~ close lights not covers. stairway in snow

* want mirrors

* bikeing spots

OUTDOOR AREAS

D407 Exit (broke) only 1 mirror

f. Outdoor Lighting

General impression of lighting outside the front of buildings AT NIGHT

too dark 1 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing at the door of the apartment building, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT

9 and a ~~half~~ half metres

Where are the lights on each apartment building?

in the fornt entrance

General impression of lighting outside the front of homes AT NIGHT
 too dark 1 (2) good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing at the door of a house, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT
6 meters

Where are the lights on each house?
in front of the door

Do all houses leave their lights on outside at night? YES (NO)

If not, which houses do not? (Don't know)

Impression of lighting on sidewalk AT NIGHT
 too dark 1 (2) good 3 4 too bright 5

Choose a place on the sidewalk, and estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT
about 9 meters

Impression of lighting outside of the convenience store AT NIGHT
 too dark 1 (2) good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing at the door of the convenience store, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT
~~3 meters~~ 9 meters

Impression of lighting at the basketball court AT NIGHT
 too dark (1) 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing in the middle of the court, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT
~~2~~ 2 meters

Impression of lighting at the playground AT NIGHT
 too dark (1) 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing at the playground, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT
1-2 meters

Is there a monitor or surveillance system?
 YES NO (DON'T KNOW)

* no light outside exit from 108

Other comments about lighting

g. Sightlines & Hazards

Are there any obstacles that might block your view of your destination?

YES NO

What are they what do they block the view of?

Are there any hazards on the street? YES NO

What are they and who do they pose a risk for?

h. Isolation – Eye Distance

At the time of the audit, does the area feel isolated? YES NO

How many people are likely to be around

Before school:

none 1 2 3 4 5
 a few(10-20) many(30+)

Coming home from school:

none 1 2 3 4 5
 a few(10-20) many(30+)

Dinner time:

none 1 2 3 4 5
~~a few(10-20)~~ many(30+)

Late at night (after 10pm):

none 1 2 3 4 5
 a few(10-20) many(30+)

i. Isolation – Ear Distance

How far away is the nearest person to hear a call for help? _____

How far away is the nearest emergency service such as an alarm, security personnel, crisis telephone?

Is the area patrolled? YES NO DON'T KNOW

If yes, how frequently? _____

j. Identify any risk sites (places you or someone else might feel uneasy or unsafe)

behind convenience, going to ANC, in the parking garage (corners)

k. General comments about outdoor safety

l. Maintenance

Impressions of maintenance

Poor 1 ~~2~~ okay 3 4 great 5

* No
garbage
cans

Is there litter lying around? YES NO

Is there offensive graffiti? YES NO

From your experience, how long do repairs take?
forever!

Does the place feel cared for? YES NO

m. General comments about maintenance

Bad! Because they do not shovel snow, take out ~~garbage~~ trash

MOBILITY/TRANSPORTATION

m. Transportation safety

How safe is the area for pedestrians?

not at all 1 2 somewhat 3 4 very 5

Are there any signs helping pedestrians move/cross streets/etc.? YES NO

What do they look like and where are they?

Crosswalk signs / 2 people hold hands!

Is it easy to predict a woman's movements? (eg. due to unchangeable route/path)

not at all 1 2 somewhat 3 4 very 5

Impression of lighting at bus station AT NIGHT

too dark 1 2 good 3 4 too bright 5

Standing at the bus stop, estimate how far you can see someone AT NIGHT

5 meters

Accessibility of transit (distance, safety)

not accessible 1 2 somewhat accessible 3 very accessible 4 5

If you weren't familiar with the place, would it be easy to find your way around?

YES NO

NEXT STEPS

n. In the space below, or on a separate sheet of paper, please write:

What improvements would you like to see?

What action items should we recommend?

How can we do our best to stay safe?

Appendix C – Village Bloggurls Safety Audit results: problems and solutions

Feature	Problems	Solutions
Parking Garage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -doors were heavy -doors don't work when cars come out -too many doors -blocked doors -Architecture – hiding places – easy for criminals -dark – broken lights -broken/spraypainted cameras -insufficient amount of security cameras -rusty pipes -unused dirty cars -leaky/broken walls -bike parking? -smell -not enough signs – weren't visible – colour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -remove a door from double doors (useless!) -shovel snow off blocked door -more mirrors for pedestrians, drivers (in corners etc./safety) -fix some walls/break them down -bike racks? -replace some pipes -lights should have covers -contact homeowners and actually tow the cars -signs need to be clearer -security cameras (MORE!!)
Outdoor Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -residents don't put on lights for others -streetlights – broken, dim, not enough (add to playground, convenience store, court) -1 streetlight every 6 houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -hire more people to fix streetlights (with proper and good quality materials) -ask for more street light -make a letter to them so they would fix it and add more -change bulbs for streetlights every 1 month
Security Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -they do not want to connect w/ community -they need a sign to identify office hours (7:00pm-3:00am) -better hours – hire more employees to switch -always talking & chit chattering- they should do their job -patrol better – provide evidence that they are doing their job -answer phones – ppl. Could have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -they can participate in community activities -put up a sign with office hours -hire more employees -more employees for night patrol (patrols in general) -put up flyers with # and hours

	<p>emergencies -publicly provide signs w/ phone #</p>	
Hallways	<p>-bad lighting -flickering lights -dirty -smoke in the hallways -too noisy incomplet titles -slippery floors (need carpets) -smells</p>	<p>-fix lights – make them brighter -clean -fines -prohibit smoking -warnings of noise – must be quiet between __ to __ -replace tiles -add carpets -air freshners (FEBREEZE)</p>
Elevators	<p>-ppl pee -strange sounds -need mirrors -dirty/garbage -don't know what floor you're on -vandalism -smells -bad lighting -shakes -need handle bars</p>	<p>-intercom to tell what floor (helpful for blind people too) -brialle [Braille] on floor numbers -spy cameras/security cameras -fix lights once in a while with covers -get handle bars -warnings/fines for urination, vandalism</p>
Stairwells	<p>-too dirty -smelly – urine, drugs, smoke, alcohol -garbage – beer bottles, cigars, wrappers, glass -smokers -wrong level signs -stairwell lighting - dim -floor # painted same colour as wall</p>	<p>-maintenance cleaning -prohibit urination, drinking, drugs & smoking – result in a fine -FEBREEZE -cleaning & prohibiting & fining -define the # of floor (paint in a different colour) -change the lights -add rails for residents to hold on to</p>
Outdoor garbage	<p>-glass, bottles, cigarette buds, plastic, paper, wrappers, food, cans, metal car pieces</p>	<p>-more garbage bins – garbage/waste, recycling/compost -better cleaning -signs</p>
Pool	<p>-pool stinks -poor hygiene -dirty surroundings -cloudy water -medical issues – person got hives from pool once -lifeguards don't do anything – asked</p>	<p>-every week have a scrub down of pool, changing area, etc. -have a bin for lost & found -hire “legit” lifeguards -warnings for smokers (lifeguards) – do their job right -provide wristbands (deep</p>

	<p>a person's friend if he/she was drowning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-lifeguards get paid for nothing-not real lifeguards they are fonnies [phonies]/fakers-only two lifeguards-lifeguards rude – smoke in front of the kids – NOT COOL – diseases	<p>end/shallow end)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-have more regulations on the lifeguards and the swimmers-HELP PEOPLE
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