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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Collaborative video production as method, process and text in participatory action
research

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Communication

by

Camille Campion

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Cole, Chair
Professor Patrick Anderson
Professor Tom Humphries
Professor Jay Lemke
Professor Hugh Mehan

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Collaborative video production as method, process and text in participatory action
research

by

Camille Campion

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Michael Cole, Chair

This dissertation examines how collaborative video production (CVP) can act as method, process, and text for exploring group dynamics and the construction of self- and social representations in a community action program. I trace the temporal development of a CVP project that grew organically over two years as I participated with Project Safe Way, a local resident-led safety organization in Southeastern San

Diego, a marginalized and underserved neighborhood. By the end of the research process, PSW and I produced a produced a short promotional video of the group.

Adopting a participatory action research-based and narrative-based design, the project took place in four sequential and overlapping stages: 1) gaining entry, 2) collecting personal narratives, 3) editing final product, 4) and video afterlife. Discussing and analyzing each stage, I seek to illustrate how collaborative video production projects have the potential for revealing multiple levels of understanding of how small groups construct identities and represent themselves. Importantly, I wish to demonstrate how video-making can act as a stable, crystallizing tool for unveiling group dynamics which may have otherwise remained invisible to the researcher, and are only possible after moments of reflexivity over time.

There is a long history in academia of looking at small groups and addressing questions of identity and representation, and more contemporarily, of ethnographers seeking to do so in more collaborative and reflexive ways. Digital media tools, particularly video-making in this current case, provide opportunities for collaborating, analyzing, and intervening in and with small groups in novel ways. CVP projects provide opportunities for building mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and participants.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how collaborative video production (CVP) can act as method, process, and text for exploring group dynamics and the construction of collective self- and social representations in a community action program. There is a long history in academia of looking at small group activities in order to address questions of collective identity and representation (i.e., Whyte, 1943; Liebow, 1967; Anderson, 1976, 2003). Many of these early studies relied on data collected from outside observers, but in recent decades ethnographers have developed a number of more collaborative and reflexive research tools. (See for example, McIntyre, 2000; Kindon, 2003; Parr, 2007; Pink, 2007). Digital media tools in particular (collaborative video-making in this current case), provide opportunities for collaborating, analyzing, and intervening in small groups in novel ways that greatly enrich our understanding of group dynamics and identity construction.

This research is evidence that collaborative video production projects have the potential for revealing multiple layers of understanding small group dynamics, which reveal themselves over time and after moments of reflexivity. Importantly, video-making acts as a stable, crystallizing tool for unveiling negotiations, contradictions, and tensions in identity construction, which may have otherwise remained invisible to the researcher. CVP provides an opportunity for gathering concrete empirical evidence of identity construction in small groups, while building mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and participants.

In this thesis I trace the temporal development of a collaborative video production (CVP) project that developed over two years as I participated with Project Safe Way (PSW), a resident-led non-profit organization whose main purpose was to ensure students' safe passage to and from school. In this research, I have adopted an approach that blends participatory action research and narrative analysis. The project takes place in four sequential and overlapping stages: 1) gaining entry and building relationships, 2) filming members' personal narratives, 3) jointly editing a short promotional video about the program, and 4) the use of the video upon completion.

Background of research site

This study was part of a larger mission¹ to help increase the well-being of residents in an underserved and marginalized neighborhood in Southeastern San Diego (SESD). Located a few miles from downtown San Diego, SESD suffered from several decades of social and economic hardships. In the 1960s, a majority of the European American families who lived in the neighborhood moved away and more African American families moved in. As a result of this "white flight," many businesses in SESD closed down. The lack of economic development and de-investment in the neighborhood left the area severely lacking in resources. As with many marginalized urban settings, crime rates and gang activity were high, and test scores at local schools

¹ From 2008-2010, I was a member of the interdisciplinary group "Community Well-Being Co-Laboratory," located within the Center for Community Well-Being (CCW) at UCSD. The CCW was concerned with uniting existing research efforts to improve education, economic development, neighborhood safety, and community services in Southeastern San Diego by co-creating interventions with community partners.

were low². There were numerous HUD subsidized housing complexes for low-income families³ and liquor stores and fast food restaurants outnumbered grocery stores and healthy eating establishments. Owing to these factors, many non-profits organized in the area to address social and economic issues facing the neighborhood.

As mentioned earlier, members of the Project Safe Way worked to create safe corridors through which local children can make their way to and from school. The team members stood on street corners around designated schools for an hour and a half before school began and after it let out. But the members were more than just crossing guards. They addressed a number of local safety issues and sought to empower residents to take back ownership of their neighborhood.

Project Safe Way was a satellite program of the Jacobs Family Foundation (JFF) and Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI), which was one of the largest non-profits in SED. Since 1998, JFF funded and implemented strategies for neighborhood change. Its mission was to develop “new philanthropic roles and relationships for strengthening under-invested neighborhoods by making grants and other investments that support innovative, practical strategies for community change”

² In 1992, Councilman George Stevens and other community leaders buried a coffin filled with gang and drug paraphernalia meant to symbolize Southeast San Diego. Stevens’ symbolic gesture was an effort to throw aside the dark shadow of unsafe and criminalized neighborhoods cast in most media stories, and bring to light a safer, healthier environment. During the symbolic funeral, Stevens’ renamed Southeast San Diego to *Southeastern* San Diego. In an interview, Stevens passionately exclaimed, “I don’t think reporters would say West San Diego and have that include La Jolla, and I don’t think they would say West San Diego for Point Loma. We want reporters to respect our communities. We want them to stop using a nickname” (LA Times, June 29, 1992). This rhetorical strategy aimed to reappropriate the former negative images associated with the neighborhoods and allow for more positive representations of the area. Despite the gesture, ten years later, Southeastern San Diego residents continue to struggle with negative portrayals of their neighborhoods and with unsafe conditions.

³ The median household income in SED was \$23,500 in 1999 (sandag.org).

(jacobsfamilyfoundation.org). JFF worked within a self-designated area of SEDS, referred to as the “Diamond District.” Nestled between Interstate 8, Interstate 805, and California State Route 94 (also known as “Martin Luther King Jr. Freeway”)⁴, the Diamond District was composed of ten culturally and ethnically diverse neighborhoods (see Figure 1.1). While primarily African-American and Latino communities resided here, there were also significant Loain, Somalian, and Filipano communities in the area. When I began working with PSW, it was functioning inside an 18-block parameter within the Diamond District, in which 10 public schools were located.



Figure 1.1: Map of Diamond District in Southeastern San Diego

It would be misleading to discuss Project Safe Way more at this point since I will be discussing the changing dynamics that took place over time in the remainder of

⁴ The geographic boundaries of Southeastern San Diego reflect its place on the periphery of social standing and economic development. As a SESD resident stated, “Just because we live and work in an area that is south of the [8] Freeway doesn’t necessarily mean that we can’t live like those people that are NORTH of the [8] Freeway and have the same things accomplished that they have” (Rhonda, 6/25/09). The 8 freeway acts as a border that delineates social class and perceived habitus.

the thesis. So, I pause here for now. In what follows, I trace my experiences with Project Safe Way, from entry to exit, and explore the ways my engagement in the Collaborative Video Production project mediated my understandings of the group, its work, and its members.

Overview of chapters 2-8

In the Chapter Two, I review the research traditions that informed the design and methods for the current project. I will discuss classic studies and schools of thought in the fields of urban ethnography, narrative-based research, and participatory action research.

In Chapter Three, I provide the reader with a timeline of the project events as they unfolded over the duration of the study.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the first stage of the project, when I attended PSW's weekly meetings and began building relationships within the group. This phase marks the formation of a preliminary layer of understanding of the group and the construction of a master narrative.

Chapter Five marks the second stage of the project. Here, I analyze the group members' personal narratives, providing a second layer of understanding of the group dynamics. Three emerging themes are examined: urban street corner narrative, redemption narrative, and superhero narrative.

In Chapter Six, I discuss stage three -- the editing process -- when a subgroup of members and I constructed the finished video project for Project Safe Way. In this

Chapter, I deconstruct the video we collaboratively produced, and look at the contradictions, tensions, and negotiations that arose during the process.

In Chapter Seven, I provide an overview of how the video was used by the group after my participation with them ended. I conducted follow-up interviews with team members one year and three years after completion of the CVP project.

Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I return to the beginning and reexamine the development of my understandings of the group. It was only once we had reached the end of the project that I could go back and (re)see and make-meaning of the initial courses of action that took place during the study.

CHAPTER TWO:

RESEARCH TRADITIONS

In what follows, I describe three research traditions that influenced the design and methods of the current study. I will describe them in the order in which they emerged during the research process and informed subsequent stages of the project. They are as follows: urban ethnography, narrative-based research, and participatory action research. At the end of each section, I pose research questions, which the current study seeks to address.

Urban ethnography

The first research tradition I will discuss, urban ethnography, set the stage for the current project. Since the early 20th century, urban ethnographers have studied the ecology of urban areas, concentrating mainly how social groups interact in collective settings. Urban ethnographers study the ecology of small groups, paying close attention to the local conditions in which people live and function, how they experience and make meaning of their lives, and how they interpret and define themselves and others (Anderson, 2003). They systematically study urban life and culture using both first-hand observations and careful interviews with participants.

Urban ethnography is rooted in the Chicago School tradition. Early Chicago School sociologists, such as W.I. Daniel and Florian Znaniecki (1918) studied first generation Polish peasants who had recently immigrated to Chicago. They used the city as a laboratory and sought to learn about the people residing there through first-hand

acquaintances and participant observation, novel ideas for a time in academia that was dominated by quantitative methods. They believed one could gain local knowledge of a setting and a group by focusing on “interacting, interpreting and self-reflecting selves” (Stanley, 2010, p. 140). In other words, by having people reflect and record their own lives and relationships. They used the participants’ written autobiographical life histories and written correspondences with others in their social network as tools for theorizing about social life in immigrant groups and the way immigrants developed personal identity within these groups. By emphasizing the importance of people representing their *own* lives, they pioneered the use life stories and personal narratives in the context of social research.

A classic example of urban ethnography is William Foote Whyte’s *Street Corner Society* (1943) in which he depicts the experiences of groups of young men living in “Cornerville,”⁵ an Italian neighborhood in Boston’s North End. Whyte conducted interviews with local residents who represented two primary groups in the neighborhood: the corner boys and the college boys. Unlike Daniel and Znaniecki who collected written accounts from participants, White foregrounded personal narratives, by participating in the group members’ daily lives and activities, and gathering their stories to map their respective social worlds. He believed that before we can begin to

⁵ Cornerville was mainly inhabited by Italian immigrants and known to outsiders as “the problem area”. Cornerville was thought to be a neighborhood where children ran the neglected streets unsupervised, crime was prevalent among adults, and juvenile delinquency rates were high. Many community members lived in poor housing conditions, appeared as social work clients, and were defendants in criminal cases. These images of the neighborhood were circulated in the media, which focused on reporting the spectacular.

analyze a group or social system “the individual must be put back into his social setting and observed in his daily activities” (p. xvi).

Whyte’s study offered a different view of Cornerville from the one that had been popularly circulated in the media at the time - Cornerville as “the problem area” where children ran unsupervised in neglected streets, adult crime was rampant, and juvenile delinquency rates were high. Whyte showed that while many community members did live in poor housing conditions, appeared as social work clients, and were defendants in criminal cases, the Cornerville street corner society was actually quite organized and patterned. Whyte’s study offered a new understanding of the residents and the place.

In *Tally’s corner: A study of Negro streetcorner men*, (1967), Liebow took an in-depth look at a group of men who frequented a particular Washington street corner in the early 1960s. He explored the men’s relationships with their work, their wives and lovers, their children and one another, to comprehend their lived experiences and make sense of their social world. He wrote this piece at a time when most research on urban Black communities focused on poverty, women and children⁶. He sought to challenge the then-predominant view of Black men as being lazy, irresponsible, and unemployed by focusing on roles, presentation of self, acting, concealment, and vulnerability of the self in social and group life (Duneier, 2007). Liebow identified Tally’s corner as:

⁶ The popular opinions of Liebow’s day posited that inherent deficiencies existed in Black families, as made prominent by the 1965 Moynihan Report. The Moynihan Report described a matriarchal structure that emasculated Black men, and transmitted and perpetuated images of Black poverty across generations in the U.S.

a sanctuary for those who can no longer endure the experience or prospect of failure. There, on the street corner, public fictions support a system of values which, together with the value system of society at large, make for a world of ambivalence, contradiction and paradox, where failures are rationalized into phantom successes and weaknesses magically transformed into strengths. (1967, p. 214)

To better understand the street corner culture, he looked at how the men constructed a local social structure based on the relationships they formed. The street corner was a place of leisure where men would meet up to pass the time, interact with familiar faces, eat, drink, and gossip. As mentioned in the quote above, the men in Liebow's study created and circulated what he refers to as "public fictions", stories they would tell themselves to deal with senses of social failure in their personal lives⁷. The men's sense of security and self-esteem, he argued, was grounded in a complex web of recognition and non-recognition, which helped construct and maintain personal relationships and senses of community⁸. Liebow argued that

the desire to be...noticed by the world he lives in is shared by each of the men on the street corner. Whether they articulate this desire...or not, one can see them position themselves to catch the attention of their fellows in much the same way as plants bend and stretch to catch the sunlight. (ibid., p. 60)

⁷ Many of the men in Liebow's study were unemployed and adrift. While many Black men during the time of the study desired the American dream of a tidy, well-tended house and home supported by a husband and father's income, they often found themselves incapable to achieving this reality.

⁸ Liebow speaks of community here as a web-like arrangement of relationships, not necessarily bounded to an area, which are meaningful to members in particular ways and serve particular purposes.

On the edges of the network are people that they recognize, but do not know personally other than nodding and exchanging salutations. In the ‘center’ of the network were those people who interacted on a daily basis.

A decade after Liebow’s work, Elijah Anderson, in *A Place on the Corner* (1976), focused on how individuals hanging out on a street corner around “Jelly’s Bar” in Chicago’s Southside created and recreated their local social system. He, too, found that street corners were important gathering places for people in urban centers and important sites for the development of personal identity.

Here [at the street corner] people can gather freely, bargaining with their limited resources, their symbols of status, and their personal sense of who and what they are against the resources of their peers and against what their peers see them *really* to be. Here they can sense themselves to be among equals, with an equal chance to be somebody, even to be occasional winners in the competition for social esteem. This is their place. They set the social standards....Much of the conversation and interaction within small groups like this one [at Jelly’s] involves people’s attempts to present themselves as important – as “somebody” according to some standard the group values. (p. 1, 15)

Anderson found that the men on the street corner created, debated, and negotiated their personal identities in relationship to, and through, their interactions with the other men on the corner. They created a shared understanding of the place and the group based on their perceptions of who did and did not constitute an “us”.

These classic examples of urban ethnographies demonstrate the value of studying small groups contextually, within a community setting and through active participation with members of the target group. Such urban ethnographies not only foreground the significance of ‘place’ in research on small groups, but also the use of

people's stories as valuable ways of knowing and gathering local knowledge (Geertz, 1973). These ethnographers were able to gain an understanding of the communities that countered dominant perceptions of the people and places.

Following from the works discussed above, this project seeks to address the following important question:

How might a researcher gain access to local knowledge and develop an insider's understanding of a group and its dynamics?

Narrative-based research

Drawing on earlier works in the field of narratology (i.e., Russian formalism [1920s and 1930s], and French structuralism [1960s and 1970s]), a narrative turn took place in the social sciences around the 1980s⁹. Whereas narratology was traditionally confined to literary forms – i.e., novels, poems, etc. – contemporary narrative scholars generally concur that lived experiences can be understood through the stories people recount about themselves (Berger & Quinney, 2005). This study of narrative goes beyond analyzing people's narratives as reflections of events and objects in the world, to acknowledging the role of narratives in contributing to our self-understanding,

⁹ Narratology, a term coined by Russian formalist Tzvetan Todorov, denotes both the theory of narrative and the study of how narrative and narrative structures affect people's perceptions. Though developed in the 1960s, it retrospectively includes thoughts about narrative stemming from Russian formalists and others as of the 1920s.

creation of selves, and building of community. In a special issue of the journal *Critical Inquiry*, W. J. T Mitchell commented:

the stuff of narrative is no longer the province of literary specialists or folklorists borrowing their terms from psychology and linguistics but has now become a positive source of insight for all branches of human and natural sciences. The idea of narrative seems...to be repossessing its archaic sense as *gnarus* and *gnosis*, a mode of knowledge emerging from action, a knowledge which is embedded not just in the stories we tell our children or while away on leisure but in the orders by which we live our lives. (1980, ix-x)

Narrative-based research foregrounds the use of personal narratives as cultural tools and ethnographic texts. Personal narratives, used interchangeably here with “life stories,” are

texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future and imaginary experiences....[Personal narratives are] sequential and meaningful; definitely human; ‘re-present’ experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it; [and] display transformation or change (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 37, 42).

Through personal narratives we both create and express our beliefs about who we are, and our understandings of how we came to be who we are.

Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. Life stories are psychological constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person’s life is embedded and given meaning. As such, individual life stories reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race, and class. Life stories are intelligible within a particular cultural frame, and yet they also differentiate one person from the next. (McAdams, 2001, p. 101)

In sum, personal narratives are texts that we share with others to make meaning of our lives, cultural tools we use to organize human action and make sense of ourselves, others, and our surroundings (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Schafer, 1981; White, 1981), and vehicles for forming our identities (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998).

The personal stories of members of Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, act as culturally symbolic devices that mediate transformations in members' identities as construed through and against their imaginings of the AA world, or the 'figured world'¹⁰ of AA (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). They contribute to culturally producing and reproducing the members' understanding of themselves and the group. The members' stories objectify cultural elements (i.e., beliefs, interpretations, values), create a narrative of what it means (and does not mean) to be an alcoholic, and mediate self-understandings. By recounting their personal stories, members are able to socially negotiate and interpret the events they recount in a meaningful way. They create and recreate their identities, group membership, and figured worlds accordingly.

¹⁰ A figured world is "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are values over others" (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998, p. 52). These "as-if" realms are sociohistoric imaginings of what could and should be, and they mediate participants' thoughts, actions, and behaviors. Figured worlds can also be considered as figurativized, narrativized or dramatized worlds (p. 53). A figured world is formed and re-formed in relation to everyday activities and events members' experiences represented in storied form. The narrative creates a frame of understanding against which participants construct (and sometimes re-construct) identities and make meaning. Participants come to embody their figured world over time through continual participation in shared activities and through the narratives they come to embody.

When telling a personal narrative, narrators are re-presenting events and performing (Bauman, 1986; Reissman, 1993) or authoring (Bahktin, 1986; Holquist, 1990) their identities and senses of self. Though memory can be faulty and may fail objectively to reflect what “really happened,” what *is told* in a personal narrative reveals beliefs about one’s experiences. People decide what to include and exclude from the stories they tell and how to organize the meaning of events (Abbott, 2002). Narrators are not necessarily revealing factual ‘Truths,’ in an objective sense, but rather, are creating texts that unveil how *they* interpret the world and make sense of their lives. The Personal Narratives Group put this aptly:

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths don’t reveal the past ‘as it actually was,’ aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead truths of our experiences.....Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only in interpretation. (1989, p. 261)

Since people often cannot fully make-meaning of their actions until after they have taken place, personal narratives also express development over time (Becker, 1997; Holquist, 1990). They make it possible for people to organize temporally distributed events into meaningful and interpretable wholes (Bruner, 2001; Wertsch, 2001; White, 1981). People are constantly reconstructing their pasts, and versions of past experiences often change with time.

When recounting personal narratives, individuals tend to include events that are tightly connected to their current sense of self: who they are and how they got that way (Linde, 1993; Pasupathi, Mansour, & Brubaker, 2007). Events and experiences that get

included and excluded from individuals' stories are culturally contingent and rely heavily on shared beliefs of what constitutes a self and what selves in general ought to be like (Bruner, 2001). Narrative inclusions and exclusions arise from the interactive or dialogic situation in which the narrative is being told, therefore it is important, when studying personal narratives, to ask ourselves who is speaking to whom, for whom, under what conditions and with what consequences (Finnegan, 1993; Langellier, 2003).

Numerous narrative-based researchers focus on the cultural meaning of people's personal stories, or the social positioning these stories produce and/or reflect. These researchers (e.g., Rappaport, 1995; Goodley, Lawthom, Clough, & Moore, 2004) are more concerned with exploring themes that emerge amongst a collection of elicited stories than in exploring narrative structure (e.g., Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Polyani, 1985). They take an experience-centered approach to analyzing personal narratives. Scholars using experience-centered analysis deviate from a linguistic framework, often drawing on anthropological or sociological paradigms. This form of analysis focuses on the semantics of narrated experience, rather than the syntax (Squire, 2008).

V. G. Zrníc (2007), for example, uses an experience-centered approach to analyze how residents of a housing complex in Zagreb understood the "meaning of the city." Through the narratives, she hoped to delineate subjective boundaries that created senses of belonging and exclusions in the local neighborhood. Importantly, she wanted to uncover what factors contributed to creating a sense of "community," defined as "a symbolic, subjective, mental and imagined construct" (p. 106). Recurring themes she identified among the narratives she collected included origin stories and stories about

the role of community organizations and social activities in everyday life. She also uncovered stories that reflected an imagined sense of social homogeneity in the community, despite the diverse backgrounds of many residents. By focusing on the experiences recounted by the residents, she found that they felt an attachment to the place in which they lived and a sense that they belonged to the neighborhood and the neighborhood belonged to them.

This line of research leads to the following question for the present study:

What do group members' personal stories reveal about Project Safe Way?

Participatory action research

At present, a growing number of ethnographers are using participatory- and action-based methods for exploring small groups and addressing questions of identity and representation. They are developing sets of practices that respond to participants' desires to act creatively in the face of practical and pressing issues in the everyday lives of the communities in which they are working. They believe that as social scientists, they have the possibility of bringing resources and opportunities to populations in need of support and social change, a position with which I agree. This form of research requires researchers to make their work meaningful to the people and places in which they conduct research. Rather than merely extracting information from participants during an ethnographic study, participatory methods allow researchers to address issues that arise during their investigation and facilitate the co-creation of solutions alongside

members of the culture. A participatory research approach is most often used when working with people from marginalized groups and aims to give voice to those whose voices are often silenced by the larger social apparatus.

Participatory action research (PAR) seeks to promote the active involvement of researchers and participants in the co-construction of local knowledge, self- and critical-awareness that leads to positive individual and collective social change, and partnerships between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process and its products (McIntyre, 2008). PAR projects often reflect postmodern epistemological shifts within the social sciences and humanities that question assertions of ‘wholeness,’ scientific claims to ‘truth’ and ‘objectivity,’ and the production of knowledge in research. They agree that all research is subjective and interpretive in nature, always already laden with cultural values embedded in the researcher and participants. They question how knowledge and representations get constructed in everyday life in order to unveil political stakes that anchor cultural practices. Unveiling these political stakes often requires researchers to dispel totalizing conceptions of social life and to work instead inside the interstices of individual and collective realities, i.e., to contest and struggle for meaning in between often-conflicting meaning-making structures (Conquergood, 2003; Kemmis, 2008). This form of research embraces the notion of the social construction of knowledge and reality, stressing the importance of understanding each of the participants’ points of view regarding *their own* social realities.

A key distinguishing feature of participatory action research is its willingness to *intervene* in participant-defined problems through community-researcher collaborations. PAR practitioners' goals are multiple and interwoven. They work within small groups to co-create action-based projects in order to gain knowledge about a particular place and group of people, and to channel this knowledge back into the community in ways that the local participants believe is beneficial (McIntyre, 2000).

Importantly, PAR highlights the role of the researcher, who acts as a central actor in the PAR process (Heikkinen, Huttunen, and Syrjälä, 2007). The participatory action researcher seeks to be reflexive and to engage with participants with self-awareness and reflection. She recognizes the historical evolution of action as both macro-level and micro-level cultural action. She considers the multiplicity of voices in the research and the ethical dimension of the research, and whether or not it is mutually beneficial to the researcher and participants. These four elements -- reflexivity, historical continuity, dialectics, and workability -- contribute to the PAR process unfolding as a narrative in its own right (ibid.).

An exemplary PAR project, *Finding a Voice: Making technological change socially effective and culturally empowering*, took place from 2006-2008 in 15 community centers across south and southeast Asia (Nepal, Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka). The researchers sought to “demonstrate the ways in which content creation [could] be used for reducing poverty and creating positive social change” (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, & Lennie, 2009, p. 152). Researchers engaged participants in creating media-based projects that combined old familiar media forms (TV, radio) with

emerging media forms (digital formats, internet, wireless technologies). After being trained in audiovisual production, local participants produced audiovisual pieces on topics of their choice. These projects held the potential of being used for advocacy, as they usually dealt with community issues or concerns the participants felt strongly about. The product was then broadcast on a cable network and/or local radio station. These locally produced projects gave the participants a medium through which to reflect on their circumstances and have their voices heard. They also contributed to enhancing the researchers' (and participants') understanding of the groups and the community setting. Ethnographic investigation and the production of media continuously fed into one another to create a collaborative research culture.

The use and production of visual media is an increasingly popular ethnographic research practice. Drawing from existing examples in visual anthropology, many researchers are using visual research to explore how meaning is communicated through visual images (Worth, 1981) for both academic and applied purposes (Pink, 2003, 2007). Visual research is gaining a more established role in academic and non-academic social science research and representation. While visual media can take many forms (photography, advertisements, videos, websites, paintings, etc.), here, I concentrate on the use of video in ethnographic studies.

Ethnographers Sol Worth and John Adair, who studied Navajo populations, were amongst the first to use filmmaking as a way to examine culture and cognition. They upheld that visual media were forms of communication by which people create and share meanings, and believed that filmmaking could act as a vehicle for

understanding how people thought about themselves, their groups, and their setting. In 1966, Worth and Adair conducted a study to teach Navajo peoples how to make films depicting their culture and themselves as *they* saw fit (Worth & Adair, 1970, p. 9).

Worth and Adair put the camera in Navajo hands and sought to see their world through their eyes. Many of the films had, according to Worth and Adair, an inordinate amount of walking. While the amount of walking depicted in the films initially seemed bizarre and contrary to ‘proper’ filmmaking, after reflecting on interviews they had gathered and behavior they had observed, they realized how important the verb “to go” was in Navajo culture. The importance of walking when telling a story about Navajo culture had eluded them prior to watching the films. By teaching the participating Navajos how to actually use a camera and edit footage, the researchers gave the Navajo participants power and agency to represent themselves in their own terms -- methods that were novel at the time. Worth and Adair were able to gain insights into Navajo culture which may have otherwise remained hidden.

Ethnographers have since adopted Worth and Adair’s ideas when producing knowledge and representing a culture and group of people. Filmmaking and the use of video, putting the cameras, and the production of self-representations into the participants’ hands are common practices in many participatory action research projects (e.g., McIntyre, 2000; Parr, 2007). For example, participatory video, otherwise known as Collaborative Video Production (CVP), is a tool used in participatory action research to reach and include those who traditionally lack voice in the production of knowledge. According to Johansson et al. (1999), CVP is

a scriptless video process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting–reviewing. This process aims at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way they think is appropriate. (in Kindon, 2003, p. 143)

Generally, researchers share common interests when incorporating the visual into their research: reflexivity, collaboration, ethics, and examining the relationships between the content, social context and materiality of images (Pink, 2003). This brings us to the next set of questions posed in the current study:

How can you design a collaborative visual-based project that that is mutually beneficial to the group and the researcher? What does that project reveal about how a group constructs a collective self- and social representation? What new insights into the dynamics of community life become available using this approach?

CHAPTER THREE:

PROJECT TIMELINE

In this chapter, I provide a timeline of events that unfolded over the course of my research with PSW. I will highlight significant moments that will be revisited during the analysis of the project in the following chapters.

Pre-history

Prior to beginning the collaborative video project with PSW in 2008, I had been working nearby in SEDS for two years at the Town and Country Learning Center (TCLC), a UCSD-community partnered after-school center located in a subsidized housing complex. In February 2008, one of the local youth was hit by a car on her way home from the local high school (a site of PSW activity which is located less than a mile from TCLC). The car hit Louise in her midsection, and then took off. Luckily, the police happened to be there and saw the incident. Unluckily, they told Louise she didn't look hurt, so sent her on her way. They did not ask her name, write a report, or escort her home safely. Shaken up, Louise walked to the learning center and immediately told the center's director, Ms. Evelyn, what happened. In recounting the story later that day, Ms. Evelyn told Rachel, a university partner, "The police came and got the information from the car, but they didn't even ask Louise her name! That's how much they care about our kids here, they didn't even ask for her name. They told her she looked okay so didn't need to go to the hospital." (RC field note, 2/25/08). Later in the evening when Louise complained of pain, her mother took her to the emergency room to discover

Louise had a hairline fracture in her left arm, which required her to wear a brace for the next two weeks.

Later that week, a strange man chased Michelle, another center attendee, as she walked home from the same high school. The man was shouting, calling her “Brenda” and threatening to rape her. Frightened, Michelle ran the rest of the way home and went straight to the learning center. Ms. Evelyn immediately called the police. Two hours later, the police department still had not sent a car. She tried calling again. This time, the police operator wanted to have her file a report over the phone or have the police officers come down another day. “If this happened in La Jolla (a wealthy neighborhood nearby) or anywhere else, they would have had 10 cars out there and a helicopter searching for this guy,” she told Rachel (RC, FN 2/28/08).

Coincidentally, a few weeks after the incidents with Louise and Michelle, Ms. Evelyn, Professor Cole (director of LCHC and my graduate advisor), and I attended a parent meeting at Lincoln High School, where Louise and Michelle were students. We intended to share information about the center and inform parents about the services we provide, hoping they would bring their children in to work with us. In addition to our presentation, a man from a community program called Safe Passage was on the agenda. He was trying to recruit parent volunteers to be part of a safety program that was being run out of a local non-profit organization, the Jacobs Family Foundation.

A man from Safe Passage started to talk. He named dangerous parts around school where fighting often takes place. He suggested setting volunteers at those corners...Said kids get high and wait for kids to get out of school to jump them. He also said that the park was a big problem – kids get high, play craps, etc. He said that a particular bus stop was a problem because buses from many places stop there and fights break out.

He is a coach. He said he thinks the problems start from a handful of people and leaks out (mentioned two multiple offenders as examples). He said parents that volunteer are trained and given a vest, pencil, walkie-talkie. (Field note, 3/04/08)

A few days after this meeting, I attended a Safe Passage meeting (3/17/08). The members of Safe Passage were monitoring an area bounded by Euclid Ave, Market St, 47th St, and Logan Ave (see Figure 3.1 below). The program was created after the Jacobs Family Foundation convened local community members concerned with youth safety in the neighborhood earlier that year. Members of Safe Passage would stand on designated corners within the bounded area before and after school. In addition to local residents being part of the team, local organization leaders, such as Pastor Simon from Inner City Youth (I.C.Y) and Andrew Miller from the Jackie Robinson YMCA, were part of the program. Safe Passage was in its pilot stage at the time.

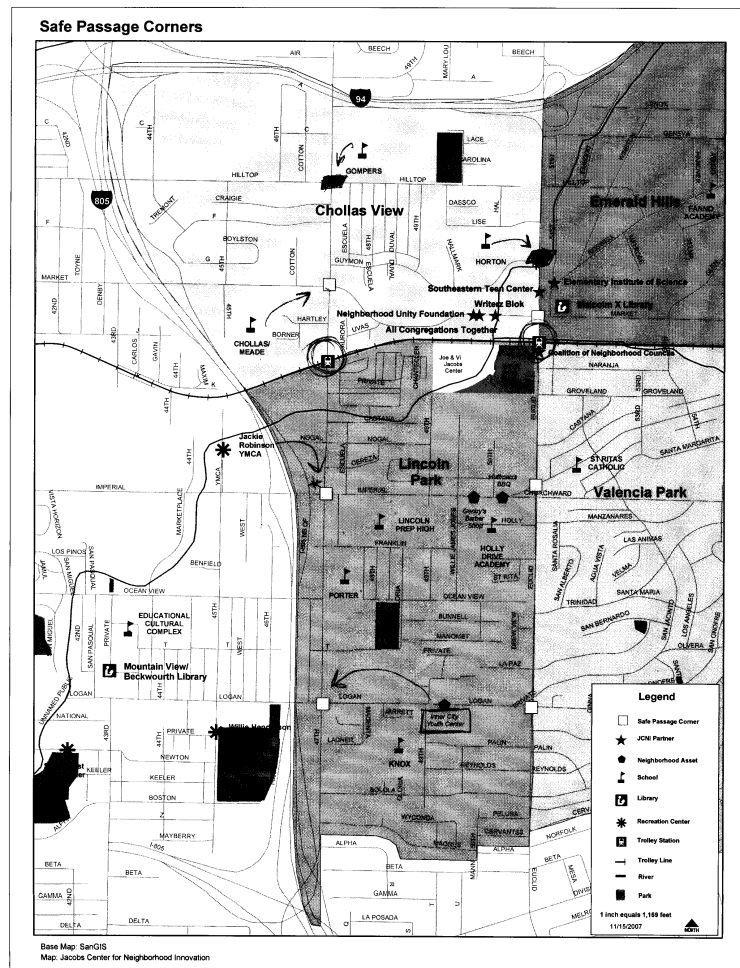


Figure 3.1: Safe Passage area map

A few months later (9/26/08), I attended another meeting in the hopes of getting the program to extend its boundaries to include TCLC. “Safe Passage” had now become “Project Safe Way.” I began attending the weekly meetings.

Stage I

From September 2008 to May 2009, I attended Project Safe Way's weekly Friday morning meetings. This period marks the first phase of the collaborative video production project, although at the time, we had not yet decided to create a video together. The group met regularly every Friday morning from 9am-11am at the Jacob Center. When I initially started going to these meetings, there were approximately 30 people in attendance and a full buffet breakfast was regularly served¹¹. Regular attendees included: 1) Rhonda Smith -- director of the program. Amongst other things, Rhonda was responsible for facilitating meetings, collecting corner reports, acting as a liaison with community partners, and getting grants for the program. 2) Anywhere from nine to fourteen corner leaders -- members standing on corners around schools in the mornings and afternoons. This was a paid position funded by the Jacobs Center. 3) Two to three corner volunteers -- residents monitoring corners for no pay. In order to get a corner position (paid or volunteer), interested persons were required to undergo a background check and receive training. Once approved, corner leaders and volunteers were trained, given a yellow PSW vest and a walkie-talkie. 4) Community leaders from other local organizations, such as representatives of the local Councilman, pastors, local police officers, school police officers, and university researchers, such as myself and Makeba Jones, a colleague from CREATE¹² at UCSD. Aside from Makeba and I, many

¹¹ By March 2009, breakfast was no longer served and the regular attendance had decreased to about 15 people, mainly owing to budget cuts.

¹² CREATE, the Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment & Teaching Excellence, is a research center at UCSD. Makeba and I were also both members of the interdisciplinary group Community Well-Being Co-Laboratory.

of the community partners did not attend meetings on a regular basis. Occasionally, Ted Johnson, CEO of the Jacobs Center also attended. All those present shared a common interest in making the neighborhood safer for the local youth.

By the end of stage I of the project, the Jacobs Center had created six positions titled “Project Area Coordinators” to be part of PSW. These six individuals were hired to make home visits in order to collect information and suggestions from local residents about how to make their neighborhood safer (Field note, 5/19/09) and empower them to keep it safe (Field note, 5/15/09).

Stage II

The idea for making a video emerged after PSW’s one-year anniversary meeting, when the members went around reflecting on the year:

Today’s meeting was out of the ordinary. No corner reports. It was the one-year anniversary of PSW. Rhonda began by talking about what PSW does: they make kids and community members feel safe. She said that one of their main concerns is communication, and that they need to learn from each other. They need to listen.

She then asked the members to go around the room and reflect on the year that had passed. 17 people were in attendance. They said that they saw changes in the community. People were now stopping in their cars to say that they were doing a good job and show appreciation for what the PSW members are doing. They said it takes people coming together and working together to create change. They said that school violence has gone down. That community = family. PSW is seen as one unit; they are not seen as individuals. Community members talk about the vests and corners, rather than individual people.

One member said, “It’s about how you represent the corner.” Another said she communicates with the public, the police, and the schools, and

feels she is growing as an individual in the organization. Another said, "You feel good about yourself. Kids come up to me and I feel appreciated." One member mentioned that he now gets recognized in the community, even when he is not wearing the vest. Another said that he is now giving back what he used to take: "Jacobs Center is with PSW helps me, and I'm helping the community." One talked about how the neighborhood got bad in the 80s. He heard about the Jacobs Center in jail. He takes pride in the development of the community and is proud to be part of this.

Many members told stories about their personal pasts to explain why they appreciate the present and their perception of now. One member said, "It's not about the pay, it's about my change." He was now giving back. He used to be in and out of prison. He said he took a lot from San Diego and named various areas (he had moved here from Compton). Now, he is respected in all those areas. He said he likes having Maurice on the other [end of the block], doesn't want him to leave. They communicate and see what others can't see. Tag team effect. Another member said, "I've been a criminal all my life. Not a police lover. But now, I can work with them." Madison, the Councilman's representative said, "We may not all be in the same boat, but we're all in the same storm."

After the meeting, Makeba and I stood outside the room and talked about how inspirational and moving the meeting was. We were both really touched by the members' personal stories and how deeply they felt about being part of PSW. We think that we should record the members' stories as a way to document their experiences and learn more about the neighborhood. It seems like it could be useful for the Center for Community Well-Being in terms of getting to know the area better. I suggested that we film them and maybe create a short documentary-type video. This way, PSW would get something out of it too. We're going to talk to Rhonda about it next week. (Field note 4/24/09)

Once Makeba and I decided we wanted to interview the members, we needed to run the idea by Rhonda and get her approval:

I arrived to the meeting a little early today. I started chatting with Daniel [a corner leader], just talking about the week. Makeba then arrived and we went up to talk to Rhonda about our film idea. She thought it was a good idea and gave us the go ahead. Rhonda then started the meeting. Before getting to the corner reports, she announced that Makeba and I

wanted to interview the members and make a short documentary. Makeba briefly told the group that we were really inspired with the stories they shared last week and the work they were doing in general, so wanted to capture their stories on film. I added that the interviews would be part of a short documentary-type film about PSW. People seemed interested. Rhonda thanked us, and started talking about incidents that took place that week. (Field note, 5/01/09)

This meeting marked the first time the idea to make the video was presented to the group. They were given a brief introduction to the project, which at this point was still in a rudimentary stage. At the next meeting, we were allotted time to make a more formal description of the intended goal and ascertain whether or not this was something the group wanted to do.

Makeba and I talked to the group about the interviews and documentary. We said that we wanted to make a documentary about the people of PSW and interview them. We said that we could film them wherever they wanted, they just had to let us know. We explained that we had a few questions and their interviews could be as long or short as they wanted. I briefly explained that we would use the interviews and also additional footage in the video. They could help film or take pictures, and could help edit if they wanted. We hoped everyone would want to participate, but there was no pressure. Some people seemed hesitant to be on camera. Others were excited. Randy [a corner leader] jokingly asked if we could make him look younger. Derrick [a corner leader] said he thought it was a really good idea and thanked us. I thanked HIM, they were the ones doing all the great work. Danielle [a corner leader] said she wanted to be filmed by the trolley, since that's her spot. We then passed around the sign-up sheet. We said that we would be in touch with them in a couple weeks to start scheduling interview times. Most people signed up! (Field note, 5/07/09)

Thirteen of the fifteen members signed up that day.

As noted above, Makeba and I immediately got approval from Rhonda to interview and film the members and we started organizing the next steps. However, we

needed to also get approval from Ted, who wanted to get more information on what we were doing. In an email correspondence with Makeba, Rhonda wrote,

Ted also needs to know more information about the interviews and documentary. Can you have Camille email him some details so he is clear that the whole team is working on this project, the full scope of work, how it will be used and the role that CREATE is playing in it. (Field note, 5/11/09)

I did not email Ted¹³, but we did eventually get approval from him. From May 21, 2009 – June 29, 2009. Ron asked to get copies of all the interviews.

After collecting the narratives, I was unable to work with PSW again until September 2009. Between September and December I only attended one or two meetings a month owing to other obligations, and interviewed two more members. Making the documentary was temporarily put on pause. However, Daniel, Makeba, and I would occasionally meet to discuss PSW. He wanted to interview Ted Johnson to learn more about the early history of the project. He compiled a list of questions and interviewed Ted in October 2009.

When I returned to PSW, they were “working themselves out of a job” (Field note, 9/18/09). There were major budget cuts and members’ hours had been cut. They were seeking to recruit more volunteers because in the next few months, unless they received a grant, they would no longer be able to pay corner leaders. Only area coordinators would still be employed as part of PSW. The area coordinators had

¹³ I was asked to wait on sharing information with Ted. The interviews were also a part of a larger project at CREATE in which they were assessing the “State of Education” in the Diamond District. They were conducting interviews with teachers and principals. Ted had already approved the broad outline for the study, but Hugh Mehan, director at CREATE and PI of the project, wanted to give him the details all at once. Mehan already had an established relationship with Ted and was a better mediator for explaining our intentions.

originally been hired to go door-to-door around six territories and have conversations with local residents about neighborhood safety issues. A few months later,

PSW created branches, i.e., RAP (residents against predators), San Diego Police Department (SDPD) connections (in which they want to improve relations with the SDPD). What is going to happen now: the current PSW area coordinators will become area supervisors of these branches. They are trying to get residents to take over the corners and watch out for/take back their neighborhood. Additionally, they are reaching out to local businesses to be “safe places” – a place where kids can walk in if they feel threatened or unsafe and have the business owners make a commitment to help them and call the PSW team to alert them and get them to help as well. These stores have signs in their window fronts that designate them as a safe place. They are also designating “safe havens.” These, according to Luis, a current area coordinator, are much harder to identify. These are places that will shut down in case of an emergency (i.e., a kid feeling unsafe). They will take the person in and keep them there until they have a plan in place a safe place for them to go afterwards. Requiring a higher level of responsibility, these places take more time to spot, as the members need to make sure the people running them are “good,” trustworthy people....After going to businesses and recruiting possible members, they are giving a luncheon in March to present PSW to them and hopefully sign them on. The team members are responsible for making invitations and flyers (to pass out), and decide what speakers they would like to speak at the luncheon. (Field note, 12/18/09)

After the meeting, I learned that four of the members I had previously interviewed were no longer part of the team. Danielle had to leave owing to back problems, and Maurice, RJ, and Janet had been asked to leave. I was not told why.

PSW was then off for the holidays. Meetings resumed in the beginning of January. I emailed Rhonda the following:

I was thinking about the luncheon PSW will be having to recruit possible new volunteers, and thought about compiling a short (maybe 5 minute) edited video from the narratives to introduce the program -- to show recruits what it's about, how it has affected people's lives, the positive

changes it has made for the team members, etc. It could be a nice way to start the luncheon. What do you think? (Field note, 1/06/09)

At this point, the idea went from solely making a documentary about the group, to collaboratively producing a promotional video about the program. Tasha did not email me back, but we discussed the idea at the meeting two days later. She thought it would be a good way to represent what PSW was doing in the community, and a nice addition to the luncheon.

Stage III

Rhonda allotted Makeba and me 30 minutes during a meeting (1/22/10) to present the idea of making a promotional video to screen at the upcoming luncheon. This brainstorming session marks the beginning of Stage III. All of the members were present. I began by explaining the production process to the group, most of whom were not familiar with editing. We then brainstormed ideas for the video. Here is what they decided:

Goals for the 5-minute video for the March 24th luncheon: to show new recruits what PSW is, to show schools and kids, to use to seek funding, to show the whole community as a way to start dialogue, personalize the team, to show the history of PSW and its positive impact; important to also include statistics and talk about Miguel Sanchez's (National City councilman) role in starting PSW. We discussed new footage that we needed to capture in addition to the interviews: Video interview with Clayton Ford, Gompers principal and Andrew Miller, Jackie Robinson YMCA Exec. Director. We drafted a brief storyboard: Start with PSW history (e.g., Gompers, YMCA, Miguel Sanchez, etc.), then include team members' individual stories, perceptions of PSW by students, community members, and residents, and end with PSW's proclamation from the city. They want to include the following themes in the video: Emphasize that PSW is resident-run, the positive impact of PSW [e.g., decrease in fights,

incidents with “bad” people (homeless, gang members)], finding runaway kids, reducing gang violence, truancy, etc. inside and outside of the schools, positive relationships created among students, parents, Jacobs Center and local businesses (mention Safe Haven). Lastly, they want to include the following images in the video: Community events (e.g., giving away food, toy drives, help evacuating school, truancy sweeps, curfew sweeps, helping homeless, promoting gang awareness -- point of these images is to show the dedication to community beyond mornings and afternoons on the street corners), PSW vest and T-shirts, Project Heal (support for grieving families), dangerous or risky places in the neighborhood, girls’ group at Lincoln High, Project S.A.V.E. (Field note, 1/22/10)

We started editing two weeks later (2/04/10).

I met with PSW for nine editing meetings over six weeks, from February 4 - April 19, 2010. We mainly met on Tuesdays¹⁴ in the PSW office in the Jacobs Family Foundation Building. Only the area coordinators -- DeeDee, Paul, Luis, Gina, and Jaime -- participated in the editing sessions. I tried to get corner leaders involved in the editing process as well, but owing to scheduling conflicts they were unable to participate. The area coordinators and I created a seven-minute video to represent PSW (link to video: PSW video¹⁵).

Stage IV

¹⁴ I mention that we met on Tuesdays because the PSW, as a group, officially met on Fridays. Deciding to have the editing meeting on a separate day made it less convenient and accessible for other members who would not otherwise be at the Jacobs Center; unlike the area coordinators who had to be there.

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0K3oHPpY-ts>

The last stage of the project involved learning about the afterlife of the video – how the group used the video after completion. I met with PSW three times over the next three years to gather follow-up materials.

The research process developed organically over time as did my relationships with PSW members and my understanding of the program. The beginning stages of the project overlapped and informed the later stages, and the later stages then spiraled back to inform the beginning stages (see Figure 3.2 below).

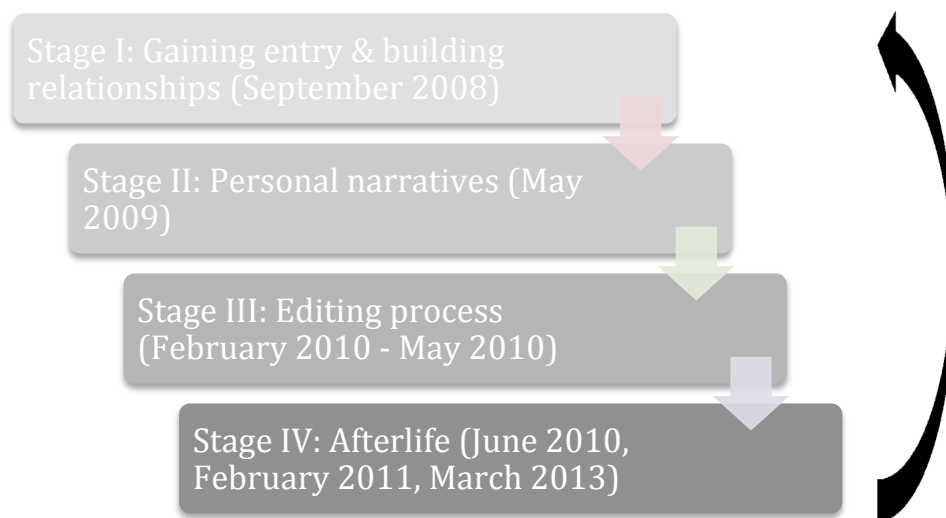


Figure 3.2: Cycle of collaborative video production (CVP) project research stages

CHAPTER FOUR:

STAGE I: GAINING ENTRY AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In what follows, I analyze the first stage of the collaborative video project. I discuss my entry into the Project Safe Way group and the understanding that emerged as I attended the group's weekly meetings. The analysis of this stage is based on field notes I kept during my participant-observation and observant-participation. I will discuss one particularly significant meeting in detail. I will then provide an overview of topics discussed during meetings to give the reader a sense of the group's activities.

Learning the ropes

An important part of any ethnographic research is gaining entry into the group with whom you are participating and accessing the local context (McIntyre, 2008; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). Gaining entry into a group can be difficult, especially since researchers are often 'outsiders' to the cultural context and setting they are investigating. Ethnographers have used various techniques to bridge the insider-outsider divide and gain understanding of the lived experiences of group members. Attending the meetings allowed me to build rapport and relationships with group members to begin gaining local knowledge from a local point of view (Geertz, 1973).

Building rapport, and by extension trusting relationships, requires time and consistency. I attended the PSW's weekly meetings for eight months before getting approval to make the video. As a European American twenty-six year old (at the time), middle-class, educated, female, university researcher, seeking to work within an African

American and Latino, working-class, minimally-educated group members, whose average age was somewhere between forty and fifty, we had a substantial gap to bridge.

I attended my first PSW weekly meeting on September 26, 2008, along with a Makeba Jones, an African American female researcher in her late thirties (this initial meeting proved to be significant and will be discussed further in the following section). Makeba was already familiar with the group and had been attending meetings for several weeks prior to my entrance. I was able to gain entry into the group owing to 1) my affiliation with UCSD, 2) my relationship with Makeba, and 3) my partnership with the Town and Country Learning Center (which I discussed in Chapter Three). At this point in the research process, the group members and I were unaware of the future video project we would create. I attended the meetings as a concerned action researcher with hopes of getting PSW to extend its activities to include the area within which TCLC is located. I also wanted to gain a better understanding of the neighborhood and the local cultural context in order to create practical and meaningful community interventions¹⁶.

During this initial phase of the project, I started to gain a specific understanding of SED and local safety issues from the corner reports and stories members shared during meetings. As I have mentioned, Project Safe Way monitored 18 designated corners within a 2-mile parameter. The group used an official area map (see Figure below 4.1) from which members are assigned specific corners to monitor. Copies of the map were distributed to all members, and well as any newcomers. Additionally, a large two by four foot board of the map stood on an easel in the room during every meeting.

¹⁶ As a member of the Center for Community Well-Being, one of our main concerns was to design and implement interventions alongside members of the community.

The map served as an anchor for discussions and for thinking about the activities PSW was conducting. In the following examples, I hope it becomes clear that the area map and the members' positions on the street corners mediated their and my perception of the neighborhood.



Figure 4.1: Project Safe Way area map.

A routine was established for the weekly meetings. Each person around the table would report in turn, stating which corner they monitored, and giving an account of the week's happenings (or non-happenings as the case may be). Members identified themselves based on the corner for which they were responsible.

Common activities were reported each week. Many of these included conflicts, which were often related to gangs and/or students fighting. Examples include a girl-gang fight in a canyon off of Imperial Ave (Field note, 4/03/09), and an attack at Lincoln High School in retaliation following an earlier attack by a Skyline gang member (Field note, 5/01/09). There were also incidents of kids smoking marijuana in the alleys after ditching school in the morning (Field notes, 10/09/08, 3/06/09), and reports of drug use in the bathroom in Kennedy Park behind Lincoln High School after school (Field notes, 11/07/08, 2/20/09).

The members had situated knowledge. They were able to identify and locate specific gangs in the area. Two gangs were mentioned specifically, Oriental Killer Boys (OKB) and Market Street Crips, both which roamed around Eagle's Nest North. PSW members knew specific houses and alleyways into which gang members would run and hide out. They knew that gang members would often wear the colors of opposing gangs over their actual clothes in order to gain entrance into other territories and start trouble. Members were told to look out for these signs to prevent conflicts. During one meeting, DeeDee, a PSW rover¹⁷, asked other members to watch out for kids wearing all red clothing with blue Chuck Taylors [Converse sneakers] as this combination was indicative of a Crip disguised as a Blood (Field note, 10/03/08). The members could

¹⁷ A 'rover' was a person who drove around the designated area to assist corner leaders on the ground. If a conflict arose on a corner, the rover would be alerted via walkie-talkie and drive over the area to assist. During warm days, the rover would also drive around to hand out water bottles to corner leaders.

also identify specific kids who were troublemakers; such as the Johnson brothers, who drove a burgundy PT Cruiser and frequently hung around Lincoln High School.

After these immediate issues were aired, members voiced concerns about neighborhood infrastructure. For instance, they suggested the traffic lights around the schools should be synchronized to allow for safer and more orderly pedestrian crossing (Field note, 4/03/09); additionally, they wanted safety lights installed around school zones and speed bumps put in at Escuela Street and Hilltop Ave (Field note, 2/20/09); Trash problems in the neighborhood were also a concern as they attracted rats, particularly around the canyon and in the bushes at Imperial and Euclid Avenues. Members attributed this problem to residents who did not value their neighborhoods (Field note, 5/01/09).

Thirdly, and seemingly unrelated to safety issues, during a handful of meetings members of the group were offered training courses. For example, the group received financial training¹⁸ led by a woman who once worked for a local District Attorney. She spoke about not buying things when you don't have the money, and instead, putting money aside in a savings account, etc. I sat at a table with three other members during this meeting, none of whom were paying much attention. They said they did not understand what she was talking about and had bad financial habits in any case (Field note, 10/08/08). In April 2009, the members went through a conflict resolution class to learn how to handle conflicts that arose on their corners, and in May 2009 they received

¹⁸ The PSW team had another financial aid workshop led by a woman from Wells Fargo in September 2009, but this was during the second phase of the project.

police training on how to use the radios properly. Use of the radios was a recurring topic. During some meetings Rhonda acknowledged that “radio talk was getting better” (i.e., Field note, 5/01/09), during other meetings the members were reprimanded for improperly using the radios. This included chatting too much over the walkie-talkies rather than “being professional” and getting “straight to the point” (Field note, 5/29/09).

Master narrative

In what follows, I discuss my first PSW meeting, during which people in positions of power at the Jacobs Center constructed time a master narrative of PSW. This master narrative reappears during later phases of the research process, as PSW members appropriated the narrative in their own representations of PSW and of themselves.

My field note from this meeting describes my first encounter with this narrative.

Rhonda began talking about the next stages of the program. They are going to distribute fliers for corner volunteers at local businesses and schools as a way to do outreach. She said the volunteers wear bright yellow vests and, as described by a volunteer (who I later learned is currently homeless and jobless), they monitor the kids to make sure they have a safe environment. She said that they are like a family and need to work as a unit to try and get businesses etc. to unite with them. She said they are also seeking non-profit partnerships. Currently have Inner City Youth (ICY), but they want to partner with the YMCA and Overcoming Gangs, who would also receive funds for monitoring the community. Makeba mentioned that she is working on getting grants for this type of extension.

They are also reaching out to schools now and are seeking volunteers from there too. Rhonda said, “It’s [Project Safe Way] about building relationships” with businesses, organizations, churches, etc. She mentioned that they are low on funds so they only have room for volunteer positions right now, which requires at least one or more hours

per week. The volunteers are expected to get to know the kids, and talk to parents. She mentioned that everyone has walkie-talkies. (Field note, 9/26/08)

In this new phase of PSW, the members would be doing more outreach to recruit local businesses, schools, and other non-profit partnerships to create safer environments. The goal was to increase safety through resident and local business participation. Rhonda stressed that the PSW members should not impose the program on people, but rather, should try to facilitate the process of “resident ownership of neighborhood change” (Field note, 9/28/08). She said that Project Safe Way “is about building relationships,” and creating change from the bottom-up instead of top-down. Owing to a decrease in funds, the project could not offer any more paid positions, and they were looking for more volunteers to work one or more hours per week. She explained that volunteers were to stand on the street corners, get to know the kids, and talk to the parents. Meanwhile, the “rovers,” members driving around designated areas in their cars, go to all the corners and make sure everything is OK and nothing is “out of the ordinary.”

After Rhonda spoke, Ted Johnson (again, he was the CEO of the Jacobs Foundation at the time), began speaking to the group.

Ted was very animated and spoke as though he was giving a sermon. He knows the audience well and caters his speech accordingly. He told a lot of anecdotes. When people would say something or give a suggestion, he would say, “I think you are saying this...” and reiterate what they had said to make sure he and the rest of the group got the message. There was a lot of call and response action. The audience would often hum and shake their heads in agreement after his comments. It was not, we-just-sit-here-and-listen-while-you-talk; it was pretty dynamic. There was a

great energy in the room generally and you could tell people were really invested in the project.

Ted was happy that he had gotten a vest and was wearing it. He said that when he put on the vest, he felt different. He said the vest “changes you.” He asked, “How?” Answers: increase self-esteem, feel you are helping the community, get thanked by people on the street/at the grocery store for the work they do, connects them to the program and what it represents, when they put the vest on they represent the community. Then, he asked what they should think about when they are wearing it. Answers: behavior, alertness, engaging with the community in a respectful way, and, importantly, building relationships. He then said that a main reason kids join gangs and/or are delinquent was due to a lack of respect given to them by others. This is why it is so important that the PSW team show respect to the kids. He said that when they have the vest on they are performing and putting on a performance. He said they have to be the people they want the kids to be: act as good role models. He then went over the four values of the Jacobs Center: risk - take risks to get results, respect - one another and the community, responsibility - keep your word and don’t make excuses, and relationships - build networks throughout the community.

October starts Phase 2: recruiting businesses, organizations, churches, etc. in the 6 territories to create safe environments. They are trying to not change what is already there, but want to help the community via the residents and local businesses to make it safer. They don’t want to impose, but want to facilitate. They believe in “resident ownership of neighborhood change,” taking a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. (Field note, 9/26/08)

Ted talked about what it meant to be a member of Project Safe Way. Using the vest as a performative agent, he said wearing the PSW vest “changes you,” and while wearing it, members are expected to embody the four values of the Jacobs Center (listed in the quote above). He then reiterated some points Rhonda had made about the next phase of the project. Ted emphasized that they were trying to *facilitate, not impose*, changes that would make the neighborhood safer.

Later during that meeting,

Ted emphasized the importance of documentation so they know what they are doing and the difference they have made. Ted and Rhonda then talked about a job opening for a project area coordinator and went over the qualifications this person would need (which was compiled from lists the members had created at a previous meeting). There was a lot of discussion as to whether a person on parole or probation could have the job. Some said yes, others no. Conclusion: yes, as long as they weren't involved in a sex/child-related crime. They want to give people a second chance, so they can't hold past crimes against them -- this was voiced by several people who had a criminal past. Another topic of contestation was the interview process. Some members wanted the interview process to only include Ted and Rhonda, others wanted team members as part of interview team. The reason to not include team members would be due to hostilities between members, but Rhonda said if that was the case, those people should talk it out. She said they are like a family here and any disputes should be handled instead of letting them stagnate. Conclusion: Ted, Rhonda, 3 team members for non-team interviewees; Ted, Rhonda, 1 team member for team member interviewees. (Field note, 9/26/08)

I happened to be introduced to PSW on a significant day. The beginning of this new phase of PSW marked an occasion to gesture at PSW's past, concentrate on its present, and imagine its future. In the process, Ted and Rhonda constructed the master narrative of Project Safe Way. They had two different approaches when doing so. Rhonda took a direct approach and *told* the members what PSW is about, what they do, and what they will be doing in the future. She *gave* the members a narrative. Ted, on the other hand, took a dialogic approach, and sought to co-construct a narrative with the members. He would make a statement, such as "*the vest changes you*," and then ask for examples. He guided the members toward a narrative frame and then "filled it in" alongside the members. This approach gave the members some agency, while reinforcing the structured narrative Rhonda had already provided.

Taken together, Ted and Rhonda created a master narrative with intersecting plot lines. Project Safe Way was about more than monitoring kids for their safety and helping keep the neighborhood safe, though those were its main responsibilities. Members sought to build relationships with local residents and businesses. Team members were like a family, worked as a unit, and did not hold people's criminal pasts against them. Membership in PSW changed individuals -- when they wore the vest, they came to represent altruism and benevolence. Importantly, they were facilitators and worked *with* others to initiate change.

My regular and consistent presence at these meetings helped forge relationships with PSW and its members over time. I would generally arrive to meetings a little early and make small talk with various members. During these informal conversations, I started to learn about the members' lives outside of PSW. I befriended Daniel, a Black man in his late 60s, who took a vested interest in the work Makeba and I were doing in the neighborhood. He had previously worked at a university and expressed his interest in conducting research and wanting to interview some central figures at Jacobs, namely Ted Johnson. Daniel and I informally met over coffee several times after meetings to talk about what PSW was doing, and about life in SEDD more generally. After a few months of attending meetings, I also offered to get the team tablets that they could use to enter and digitally store their safety reports. Until then, they were handwriting weekly reports and keeping them in folders. Rhonda was especially enthusiastic at the prospect. Through my affiliation with CCW, I had the opportunity to

get four tablets donated to PSW. This gesture also contributed to solidifying our relationship and showing my investment in the team¹⁹.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, the tablets never got used. We needed to install Linux, which proved more difficult than we anticipated, and many of the members' were not computer literate. Owing to many other more pressing issues, it was never made a priority to use the tablets.

CHAPTER FIVE:

STAGE II: PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

We filmed twelve narratives of the PSW members: Rhonda -- the director of PSW, two area coordinators -- Paul and DeeDee, seven corner leaders -- Danielle, Randy, Ryan, Daniel, Raymundo, Maurice, Derrick, and Janet, and Tom, a corner volunteer. Each narrative was professionally transcribed. I analyzed the narratives using the experience-centered approach discussed in Chapter Two. The themes revealed during the analysis informed the editing and production stage of this project.

Several significant narrative themes emerged from our collection of narratives. I refer to them here as the ‘street corner’ narrative, the ‘redemption’ narrative, and the ‘superhero’ narrative.

Urban street corner narratives

Street corners in urban settings can be predominantly thought of as places where unsanctioned activities happen, such as drug sales and prostitution. People hanging around street corners are often thought of in terms of being loiterers, deviants, and/or criminals. The PSW members stood on the corner to discourage those wishing to participate in the unsanctioned activities traditionally associated with street corner life, and to ensure the safety of innocents in the neighborhood. As the excerpts below illustrate, for PSW members, the street corner, under their watchful eyes, became a safe haven for students. It was also a place where they themselves were positively recognized and valued, where they built relationships, and invested in the future of the

neighborhood and its children. On Project Safe Way street corners, the members felt good about themselves and acquired a sense of purpose.

The members felt that they transformed the corners on which they worked before and after school. Danielle shared:

When I worked on Imperial and Euclid, I noticed that there was a whole lotta, you know, people laying on the ground, sleeping during the night and it was cold, and they were drunk all the time, and they had urine and feces all around them. But, as I was coming on the corners, they would see me coming and be like, "Oh, the kids are coming through. I'll get up. I have to get up." (Danielle, 5/21/09)

Daniel said PSW changes the corners' "personas":

During that period [before and after school], what happens is because you're there, they [gang members] don't sit there and wait. So what you've done is sort of pacified that. There might be some that come out but they know and they don't come out until after school is over, we're watching this corner...how do I say, changing its persona so for a period. (Daniel, 6/15/09)

PSW transformed the kinds of behaviors and interactions that would otherwise take place on the corner. The street corner was no longer a place for socially inappropriate activities and gatherings, but rather, was now a place for positive and productive exchanges within the community.

Part of their corner life included building relationships with community members: the kids, bus drivers, parents, teachers, and neighbors. As many explained, it took time to get the community to acknowledge and interact with the PSW members in meaningful ways. Ryan said,

It [PSW] changed because they got more parents that's getting involved. They stop. Before, people would look at you crazy on the corner and now they wave. You got bus drivers waving and the kids is talking to you....The kids wasn't talking to you at first. They was walking out to the crosswalk, you know, doing normal kids stuff, but now they listen to you. They say hi to you in the morning. They bring you, I got, somebody brung me something to drink. It was just, just nice now, just like that. (Ryan, 6/15/09)

Whereas Ryan's presence on the corner was initially either ignored by the students or looked at suspiciously by people passing by, through his participation in PSW he became part of the everyday fabric of the place. Over time, he built relationships through acts of reciprocity²⁰ (Bauman, 1993); as people started recognizing what he was doing on the corner, they began exchanging friendly salutations. Occasionally, Ryan received gifts. Ryan's experience mirrored that of most of the other members'. Paul explained how he communicated more with the community once he became a part of Project Safe Way:

You know, but I think after two years, they're, the schools that I was doin, I build communication with the kids. At first they wouldn't even tell me hi. They just, I tell em "mornin, God bless you," or I'd tell em in Spanish, "buenos dias," and "have a good day" and, and, and like two years now I communicate with a lot of people, and, and if I'm not there sometimes, they're "where we've been? what's happening?" you know, so they care. (6/17/09)

Suddenly people expected to see Paul on the corner. They acknowledged when he was absent, which Paul took as a sign that his presence was important and people cared

²⁰ The members' participate in acts of generalized reciprocity, when "the idea that it 'pays' to be good to others since others are more likely to be good to those who earned the opinion of being good to others" (p. 2)

about him. Over time and with persistence, he built relationships and communicated with “a lot of people.” He was no longer just giving out pleasant greetings that were not returned. He alluded to having more meaningful exchanges and being recognized as a valuable presence in the community.

Reciprocated recognition and communication were important elements in how the members’ evaluated their relationships with the community and how they gave meaning to their positions on the corner. As other members’ recounted:

A lot of them [community members] stop or honk and say hey, you’re doing a good job. They always say you’re doing a good job and they wave at me or whatever.... Teachers come around and say hey, you’re doing a good job. They honk at you. It’s so much it makes you feel good because I’m doing something and people are looking. (Raymundo, 6/17/09)

The same people I complain about that try to turn too quick, they are now waiting and we will be on the corner and people will wave or roll the window down and say, “Thank you.” So the community sees the involvement too. Sometimes I’m in the grocery store down at the little trolley station there, “You’re the guy that stands on the corner,” because I am the big guy that stands on the corner. They never ask my name, but they know I’m there, because all of us show up all the time. So sometimes when the parents walk by they speak and they drop their kids off and they come back by and say, “Thank you for looking out for our kids.” So it helps me build some other relationships that I probably wouldn’t normally have made....Everyday now, a man 70 years old has purpose in his life when I come to my corner. If people in here kid me, “How is your corner doing?” “My corner is doing good.” The people out here wave to me before they get on the 805. So I get paid by a check and I get paid in compliments. (Randy, 6/12/09)

Most of the people that come by, they look at me and they will wave and say, “Good job.” That makes me feel good to be able to make an impact in the neighborhood as far as trying to get the community back. I guess that is what people like to see in the community, somebody out here giving back to the community helping the community out. I even have police officers come through here and they wave, law enforcement from

different parts of town come through a light. I had Sheriff Deputies passing through this morning and they are like, "Good job, young man." It just puts a smile on my face and makes me feel good about myself to be able to give back. (Tom, 1/15/09)

Standing on that corner you become sort of like an icon. And people come by you and they beep their horn at you and you don't even know them, they don't know you, but they see you there. And every once in a while they might do something like maybe stop their car when the kid is talking. So they see that and they say that's great. This guy's out here keeping the kids safe and so forth like that. So they beeped at you. So you become sort of the neighbor. You wave at people, at some strangers, and after a while the strangers become friends. (Daniel, 6/15/09)

As these stories illustrate, the members express gaining a sense of purpose and worth from the relationships they developed with the community while on the corner. The community positively reinforced the work they were doing; they were consistently told that they were doing a good job and being thanked for being there. This, coupled with friendly gestures, such as waving and honking, made the members feel important and good about themselves. Though these relationships were not deep (e.g., as Randy says above, most community members did not ask their names), they are important threads in the members' narratives. It made the members' feel as though the community recognized PSW as a positive fixture in the neighborhood; personally, it made them feel as though *they* themselves were recognized as positive figures in the community. Daniel went so far as to say the corner leaders were like "icons"; though many community members many not have known them personally, while on the corner, PSW members became representatives of safety and service.

When talking about their relationships with the kids, many members positioned themselves as parental figures. They recounted stories in which they took a vested

interest in the students' academic success and personal development. Maurice, for instance, shared:

There was this one child, she would come and show me her report card, right? But prior to that I'm checking on her behavior and she was just a mess. So she shows me her report card and she has all A's. So I look at her report card and I said, "This and you don't match. You need to work on your behavior because it doesn't work." So eventually she worked on her behavior and she got it right. I haven't seen her but I think she graduated. I haven't seen her in about a month. But yeah, it's rewarding when you see the improvement in the kids, when you first meet them and then down the line you see them and you see the improvement. That's worth more than getting paid. That's worth more to me than getting paid. (6/27/09)

Maurice identified himself as a person who could effect positive change in problematic kids. He looked at a student's report cards, as a parent would have. He commented on her behavior, which he thought was inappropriate, and gave her advice. He felt that her academic success and behavior did not match, therefore believed that she needed to get her act together, so to speak. And, by his account, she did: *"Eventually she worked on her behavior and got it right."* He did not explain how she changed to give him the impression that she had finally "got it right," but he believed that she was behaving appropriately. He also felt a sense of ownership over the students' improvements, as though he had a direct influence in their transformation: *"it's rewarding when you see the improvement in the kids."*

Other members also positioned themselves as parental figures or mentors. Paul said,

It's not only going in there [to the corner] and watching them. You talk to them about college, you talk to them about staying outta trouble, you can't miss school because it's going to go on your record, do you have

your days in, your homework in. Gis give them something positive, you know. Maybe that's what it is, that's why we're there, you know.
(6/17/09)

DeeDee expressed that she is

here for all the kids. Those that can't, have parents that don't understand, not willing to understand, I'll just step in and take that role. That's it. (6/12/09)

Janet said,

I have a passion to help kids and a lot of these kids on the street need somebody to help them, because sometimes I notice some of them say, "My moms not really around or dad is not really around." So these kids need somebody that they can trust to talk to. (6/29/09)

Paul, DeeDee, and Janet's stories exemplify a common belief among the members that they were filling gaps in the children's lives. In the examples above, the members gestured at a lack in the kids' home lives in regard to parental involvement and understanding (though they did not provide explicit explanations for why they think this way). Therefore, they attempted to guide the students in a positive direction, urging them to go to college, stay out of trouble, hand in their school assignments, etc. By mentoring the kids while on the corner, it became a space for positive change and guidance, a place where kids are not only monitored for their physical safety, but also for their personal growth and overall well-being.

In this vein, Ryan said,

They [the kids] talk to me about everything from their girls, from basketball, from sport wise and etc. etc. (Interviewer: Do kids ever ask you for advice?) Sometimes, well one dude do. (Interviewer: What did he ask you?) How do you talk to girls? And I tell him to be, you know, just be yourself.....Maybe they [the kids] know that Project Safe Way is,

you know, a place where kids feel safe, you know, to come to us and tell us anything that's going on, and that we will help them with anything – from rides to school, to, you know, if they feel like they being threatened, I walk with them – that's a long walk over there to the other side – but I walk with them just so that they will feel safe. (6/15/09)

Ryan recounted how he felt PSW members helped create multiple senses of safety for the kids. He reported that the corner was a place where the kids felt physically safe.

Interestingly, he framed the corner as *being* Project Safe Way: “*Project Safe Way is, you know, a place where kids feel safe, you know, to come to us and tell us anything that's going on.*” By “tell us anything,” he was pointing to the students’ ability to go to the corner leaders if they feel in physical danger, knowing that they will receive help. He said that in addition (or maybe by extension) to being a place where kids felt physically safe, the corner was also a place where the kids could feel safe talking to corner leaders about emotional issues, or life in general: “*They [the kids] talk to me about everything from their girls, from basketball, from sport wise and etc. etc.*” Ryan saw himself as a big brother, engaging in everyday conversations about common subjects, such as sports and dating. The kids felt like they could trust him, even ask him for advice. (Janet too, in the excerpt above, mentioned that she acted as a trustworthy person the kids could go to with their problems.)

The corner leaders felt that they offered the kids and parents peace of mind.

According to DeeDee,

[Parents] can go to work and can be comfortable... you're not thinking, "Okay, my child is going to get jumped on or something is going to happen," because you know there are eyes and ears out there to protect your child. So you can go to work with ease. You can sit there at your desk, do what you want to and your child is safe. (6/12/09)

Having PSW members standing on the corner created both a real and imagined sense of ease for the parents. In the same way that ensuring safety allowed the students to concentrate on their schoolwork without having to worry about being harassed while on their way to or from school, the parents were believed to experience the same sense of comfort. They were believed to know that the corner leaders were watching and listening, protecting their children from harm.

Many members said that they would continue being on the corner despite the lack of monetary compensation. The corner leaders *cared* about the kids, and this, they said, was enough to validate their presence on the corners.

So we have got to improve on [the way things were in the past], and that's what we're trying to do as part of Project Safe Way is give them – not because we're getting paid or whatever - the thing is that we really DO care for these kids. We want to show THEM that we care for them. So we come here when it rains or whatever. We care. We're going to make sure you're safe. We want to make sure you get where you're got to go. Where you've got to go is going to make a big difference in other people's lives one day because like I said, we're setting a foundation for the future of these young kids now. (Raymundo, 6/17/09)

Raymundo said that he did not stand on the corner because he got paid, but because they (PSW) *cared* for the kids. They *showed* the kids that they cared by consistently being on the corner -- by being visible and present. Their purpose extended beyond ensuring the children's immediate safety, to setting a foundation for their *futures*.

Paul relates a similar story:

Like I says, it ain't the big money, it ain't this or that , it's, you're there, I'm, I'm, I think I'm only missing in two year two weeks, you know. Very seldom I miss because those kids are there and somebody's got to watch them. I know that if I go, ah, they'll put somebody in my place. But, the thing of it is that I have, I care for these kids, I wanna be there for these

kids. And like I said, when they come by and wave at me or say "God bless you, have a good day," it makes me feel good. I never had that. So there's a change coming out of me. [MJ: Right] There's something different that's coming out now, and, and there's no more hatred, there's no more bad person, there's something good coming out of that project safe way.... Even if they didn't pay me I'd still be out there helping out. That's the way we started. Everybody started as a volunteer. An' I wasn't gettin nothin for it for 6 months, but that's not the point. The point is that we're learning, and learning, and learning and finding out that we can see some of the results, see. Cus we didn't know what it was, ya know. But I think project sa-, project safe way is gonna do something real positive. It's gonna impact the kids, you know. They're gonna say, how come you're not out here. Or the kids are gonna say in five years, I remember, they used ta always be on my corner....And they remember, they remember, you know. They remember how we impacted their lives, you know. It's not just going in there and watchin em. (6/17/09)

Paul also attributed his presence on the corner to his concern for the kids. Twice in his narrative he mentioned that he was not standing there because he was getting paid, but because he wanted to be there for the kids and positively change their lives. PSW was about more than simply monitoring the students for their safety -- it was about building relationships and caring for the youth. As we hear in Raymundo's narrative, Paul saw his position on the corner as oriented toward the future. He imagined the students would one day remember PSW members as having positively impacted their lives.

Again, we heard stories of why members stood on the corner, which had more to do with affective compensation than monetary compensation:

At the time I needed work, so I got introduced to Rhonda and I volunteered for maybe 2 to 3 months before I actually started getting paid. But it's not about getting paid. It's really about the kids. So I've lived in the community and helped with kids. And for me to give back since I took so much from the community. (Maurice, 6/27/09)

This one pastor, he asked me, “Are you getting paid for this young man?” I was like, “No.” “Are you a volunteer?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “You are going to be blessed for what you’re doing.” I said, “I’m doing this for the kids.” I’m not worried about getting paid or anything like that. I’m giving back to the community [I: Right] because we need more people out there doing this. (Tom, 1/15/09)

For Maurice and Tom, standing on the corner offered them an opportunity to give back to the community. The opportunity to engage in positive acts of reciprocity was more important than getting paid.

Redemption narratives

In several of the PSW members’ narratives, the narrator framed his or her experience working with PSW as being one of redemption. Redemption involves the act of being saved or released from a bearing albatross, from misdeeds and immoral behaviors. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “redemption” as “deliverance from sin and damnation; salvation.” It is also defined as “expiation or atonement for a crime, sin or offense; release from punishment” (oed.com). The former definition has theological roots – deliverance from sin is achieved by the atonement of Christ; the latter has more secular connotations. Both, however, denote morality, ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ behavior.

Remembering the past, even the parts we would rather forget, can provide us with a sense of continuity and coherence (Linde, 1993). As I have mentioned, personal narratives are one of the means by which we communicate our sense of self (i.e., who we are and how we got that way) and negotiate it with others. As Linde states, “We use

these stories to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are in fact worthy members of those groups, understanding and properly following their moral standards” (p. 3). In their narratives, the members positioned their sense of self against their old ways of being and behaving, which they identified as being “bad”. In the following excerpts, we see how members’ expressed a changing sense of self from being a “taker” to being a “giver” and how being part of PSW participated in this transformation.

Derrick recounted:

I grew up in Compton. I came out here in ‘82. I’ve been out here ever since. I grew up in this community, well I didn’t grow up in this community but when I came to San Diego I moved to this community in like, the end of ‘82. And I was young at that time. I was like a terrorizer. This main street used to be a drug street right here. Before they built this school, there used to be a bunch of apartments on this side. And there used to be, this whole block used to be infested with drugs and gang members. And the park and I used to be out running in that crowd; terrorizing the neighborhood. And now I’ve done been in and out of prison since then and it really changed my life. And about, my last term in 2000 when I got out, I had got saved, in San Bernardino and it started changing my life. Then I started, I went to a rehab when I got out of prison, went straight to a rehab. And then I got my life together and I got connected with God. And I think God wanted me to work with kids, gang members, ex-gang members or gang members. And save the little ones; stop the little ones, well some it’s too far gone....I feel like Project Safeway, it’s a big impact in my life. It changes me, I’ve got, it builds up my self-esteem because I’m doing something I really wanted to do. I really like working with kids and that’s it. I just like what I’m doing. It’s rewarding. The reward is the good feeling, knowing that you’ve given back after you’ve done destroy. Because I terrorized this neighborhood and now I’m giving back. I don’t, I just don’t like violence and I don’t like gang members no more. I used to be one. And I don’t even like saying I used to be one because that’s old. Other than that, every day, even if Project Safeway was to die out, I would still want the community to do this. (10/30/09)

Derrick's narrative was particularly poignant because he came to monitor the very park he once 'terrorized,' in his words, along with other gang members and in which he was arrested and taken to jail. Being incarcerated represented a turning point in his life story and in his personal identity. During his time in prison, he was "saved" and started reevaluating who he was and what he was doing with his life. He attributed his transformation to a renewed belief in God. Connecting with God, he believed, led to a vocation to "save the little ones" and work with gang members. *"Life has been good to me, since I changed my life,"* he said. Whereas he was once a taker, he became a giver: *"The reward is the good feeling, knowing that you've given back after you've done destroy. Because I terrorized this neighborhood and now I'm giving back"*. PSW was a means by which the act of redemption could take place. PSW provided him with the opportunity to continue feeling renewed.

At one time, Derrick liked violence, he liked gang members, and, he liked *being* a gang member. However, while he gestured at it, he did not want to revisit that part of his past: *"I don't, I just don't like violence and I don't like gang members no more. I used to be one. And I don't even like saying I used to be one because that's old"*. The fact that this part of his self was "old" conveyed a purposeful erasure of the past to make room for the newly transformed self he narratively created – both for himself and for others (Bruner, 2001). Yet, because he experienced deviant behavior, he felt he was better equipped to help kids seek a different path. While he may have wanted to diminish the relevance of this past deviant self, it is due to these past actions that he

could position himself as a giver. Being a corner leader allowed him to continue down a path of change and reinforced his belief that he was (now) a good person.

We heard a similar narrative from Paul:

Well like I said, my name is Paul, and I grew up mostly in National City, the part they call old town National City, ah, usually it's called OTNC. I was brought down here from Ontario when I was about four or five years old. Didn't speak no English at all. And then I got into, came to school, and ah, and ah, ah National City junior high school, but because of my not speaking English, and ah, and never transitioned from English to Spanish, I was having problems at school. I had problems in grammar school, and even when I got to ah, to ah, National City junior high school, I was always fighting and beating people up and everything because they would make fun of me, and that was one of my big things. That carried on into my adulthood, you know. So when I got married, and then, ah, I started doing drugs and all that. Cus that's the only people I knew and hung around with, you know. That was maybe about thirty-five years, maybe, or just drug addiction and going out of prison, federal joints, and that's the life I lived. So, by 19, ah, 80, ah, 87, 86 is when I had a big change in my life. I had, ah, I remarried, lost my first family, and I remarried again through the church, and then that really helped me a lot to straighten my life out because I was never a giver, I was always a taker. And, ah, what happened in that position there is when, ah, after so many years of being involved with the church, having a new family, ah, like I said, ah, Miguel Sanchez called me up to go to these meetings to see what they were about.....You have to know me to love me, you know what I'm sayin. I, ah, grew up like I said in the barrio. I used drugs for about 25 years, in and out of prison, and, I, I, I would never know that I would be in this kinda position. You know, to help these kids out for no gain or nothing, you know. And when you start doing that, it, it changes your character. It changes how you see things in life. It changes how you help people out, you know. And it's just something that you're doin, something good. You're not a taker. I used to be a taker, I was, ah, I didn't go to prison because I was a nice guy, you know. And when, when you change your life around, you figure that's good. It kinda gives you a smile to say you've done something good because you're not taking, you're giving [MJ: right]. And I think that inside you changes. (6/17/09)

There were similar plot lines in the narratives of Paul and Derrick. Both led lives of crime and went to prison, had turning points and were transformed through the church, and were now different people. Paul said, *“I was never a giver, I was always a taker....And it’s [being part of PSW] just something that you’re doin, something good. You’re not a taker.”* Paul positioned himself as a ‘giver’ in juxtaposition to his former sense of self as a ‘taker.’ Like Derrick, his participation in PSW helped maintain this new ‘giving’ identity. He expressed that helping the kids changed one’s character and one’s perspective on life. Life for him was no longer about personal gain, but was now about helping others.

The theme of giving and taking re-emerges in Randy’s narrative:

I get excited when I think about what I’m doing in the community, because when I was growing up I did so many things that took away from the community. I lived the lifestyle that was gambling, and hustling and that’s why I went to prison three times. So this is my chance now to say, “Okay, I did tear down the community, but now at least I’m giving back to the community.” That is where my heart is. (6/12/09)

Once more, similar plotlines were revealed in Randy’s story. He was a criminal and went to prison, and through PSW had been redeemed from his past actions. PSW afforded him the possibility to give back to the community he once tore down. He identified himself as a giver and a good person. Whereas he used to take from the community, his *heart* was now in a better place. He acknowledged that his past actions were troublesome, to say the least, but as a corner leader, he became part of the community in a positive way.

Raymundo, too, acknowledged how he used to be a taker and how being a part of PSW changed him:

This is something new. This is something I never thought about doing. I've done a lot of things but never something like this. This has changed me and the way I look at things because before I was always like what I can get. (6/17/09)

These members' narratives are representative of many of the members' life stories and the role they saw PSW playing in the development of their sense of self and creation of individual identities. They framed their experiences as corner leaders as making a difference, both in themselves and for the community. Their present benevolent actions influenced how they viewed their past selves:

By suggesting that one's own efforts may generate products and outcomes that will outlive the self, by framing a life story in terms of those good things (and people) that become the self's enduring legacy, life narrations that emphasize generativity implicitly provide stories with what may be perceived as good and satisfying endings. These endings, in turn, feed back to influence beginnings and middles. (McAdams, 2001, p. 107).

Most of the members attributed some form of personal transformation to PSW. Thanks to being part of the group and working on the corners, they learned to feel good about themselves. They no longer saw themselves as takers; they had become givers.

Superhero narrative

A 'superhero' narrative also emerges in several of the PSW members' personal narratives. The superhero is a fixture in American popular culture. The word conjures very specific images in the minds of many readers: Batman saving Gotham City or

Spiderman casting webs to catch bad guys. Typically, superheroes of the comic book variety possess some uncommon strengths or abilities that set them apart from the rest of society. Despite the characters' various powers, they have one thing in common – they are archetypal of the “good guy”. Often, a personal tragedy in their youth sparked a life of fighting crime and saving the innocent. They ensure their status as “heroes” through their ability and willingness to “do good” (Grant, 1995). This need to “do good” puts them on the right side of the law and justice. Superhero narratives “feature men who exist on the margins of prevailing structures of power, and through their own personal skills, combined with somewhat magical devices...are able to ferret out and triumph over evil wherever it exists” (p. 1112). We have already seen some embodiment of these characteristics in the redemption narratives discussed above – a desire to “do good” stemming from pasts fraught with taking and deviancy. Here, the narratives not only address past and present selves, but the narrators also position themselves as ‘costumed’ crime-fighters, conjuring up images of archetypal superhero narratives popular in Western culture.

Within the superhero narratives, three significant features dominant many of the members' narratives: the role of the costume (i.e., PSW yellow vest), positive recognition from law enforcement and authority figures, and the act of watching.

The costume

An important artifact in the world of PSW members was the bright yellow vest they wore when they were working. The vest solidified their position on the team: “*It*

made me feel good because once I got that walkie-talkie and that vest, it made me feel like part of the team once I got that" (Tom, 1/15/09). Much like a comic book superhero was transformed from his everyday persona to his superhero self once he put on a crime-fighting costume – Bruce Wayne becomes Batman, Peter Parker becomes Spiderman, etc. – the members' of PSW were transformed when they put on the PSW yellow vest:

When you put on those bright vests and you on that corner, you represent something now....So a lot of that had to do too, how do you carry yourself when you got the vest off and when you got the vest on, ya know..... The, the, when you put the vest on, they [others] have to see the integrity, they have to see the character, they have to see where, where, ah, you're not there for gain for yourself, because I see some places where they want coffee, or they want donuts, or cigarettes, or somethin. But you're not there for that, because people are going to see through you. After two years, they're going to see through you. They're going to know if you're for real, and that you care about their kids. (Paul, 6/17/09)

This excerpt from Paul's narrative was interesting and telling on several fronts and worth looking at more closely. He said, "*When you out on those bright vests and you on that corner, you represent something now....So a lot of that had to do too, how do you carry yourself when you got the vest off and when you got the vest on, ya know.*" The act of putting on the vest, which represented integrity, character, and selflessness, transformed members into moral superheroes. Importantly, *others* recognized these traits in the members as they worked the corners: "*they have to see the integrity, they have to see the character, they have to see where, where, ah, you're not there for gain for yourself.*" If a member did not embody these traits when wearing the vest, others would "*see through you.*" You would come off as a fake or a fraud -- working the

corner for self-interest (“*I see some places where they want coffee, or they want donuts, or cigarettes...*”), rather than being there for the kids.

Interestingly, it seems that the members’ identities were suppressed in some ways, and magnified in others, when wearing the vest. It is as though their past senses of self – ones that needed redemption – were lessened and the new sense of self as givers was highlighted. While in typical superhero narratives, the costume conceals the hero’s everyday identity, here, the vest – the costume – served double purposes: both of concealment and recognition. On one hand, it concealed the parts of their identities the members did not see as appropriate PSW group behavior. In this way, the vests concealed their “bad” selves. On the other hand, the vests made the members’ highly visible and recognizable to others. Therefore, their actions while wearing the vests needed to coincide with ways of behaving that were deemed appropriate by the group.

When the team members wore the vests, they became powerful, much like a superhero gains powers when he or she puts on his or her costume. Community members recognized them as “do-gooders.” The two examples below illustrate how the wearing of the vests cast the members in a positive light.

We, we, people recognize us, ah, the police department, the mayor, the gang, the gang intervention. Ah, I mean, churches recognize us. They know that we’re doin it. It took two years to get that, get that value up of what this vest really means. So when you put that vest on you represent Project Safe Way, you know, and the ones that, ah, behind us. At the same time, when I go shop at Food4 Less, I see tha people there. I go to the gas station, I see the people there. So a lot of that had to do too, how do you carry yourself when you got the vest off and when you got the vest on, ya know. (Paul, 6/17/09)

I was walking to the store. I didn’t take my vest off, I had my vest on. And I walked to the store and they said oh, you guys are the ones on the

corner. I appreciate what you guys are doing and it's a positive thing for the community. And I was just wow. It just brought a smile to my face. So we're recognized, we're recognized, but I guess it's only about the vest. Without the vest they don't know who I am (all laugh). It's the vest. (Maurice, 6/27/09)

Additionally, criminals recognized them as threats.

In the day, during the day time while these vests are around these schools, we don't have no outside gang members coming (Raymundo, 6/17/09).

The vest repelled deviant bodies. It became a key feature in the members' stories and in their representation of PSW. In addition to the vests, walkie-talkies were also important parts of their costumes. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, for Tom, receiving the walk-talkie solidified his position as a PSW member. Corner leaders all had walkie-talkies that they used to communicate with one another, each on their respective corners. The walkie-talkies also enabled the members to communicate with law enforcement:

We have walkie-talkies. We've had incidents where these girls have been tryin'ta, these guys start comin cars an' try ta snatch these girls up. And, from my corner, I, ah, I spot the car, it goes to the other corner, they spot it, by it gets to the third corner, the police are on them. So that means we're doin a difference., especially with these, ah, radios that we got. Ah, they're really nice, hi-tech, ah, ah, you know we can, ah, call the police or the school police within seconds. I mean, you know, a minute, minute and a half. We have stopped fi- we have stopped fights, we've stopped kids goin into stores tryin ta take candy and goods. We have had some men that have tried ta grab a couple of the girls, and we have helped on that. Also, on the, on the truancy, we've helped on that too, because sometime they go on different areas where there's vacant lots and we catch that. (Paul, 6/17/09)

The walkie-talkies created a web of communication in which members could alert one another of issues that arose around their corner. They could all hear what was happening over the radio and become aware of problematic behavior taking place. The walkie-talkies were part of their superhero-like identities.

Law enforcement and authority figures

Another common feature in popular superhero narratives is the superhero's affiliation with law enforcement and authority figures. They work outside of the law, but on the side of the law to apprehend criminals. PSW members did just this -- they worked outside of the law (on the sense that they had no legal authority to arrest anyone), but they also worked *with* local police and other authority figures to "keep the peace." Given many members' past criminal activities and previous antagonistic relationships with law enforcement, positioning themselves as crime-fighting superheroes became an especially salient event. Where they were once part of the problem, through their involvement with PSW they became part of the solution. Where they once were criminals, through their involvement with PSW they became purveyors of justice.

We have a lot of respect from those guys [law enforcement]. In fact, yesterday is a perfect example. When the fire was here they had the streets blocked off. They wouldn't let no one in. So I left out but I had to come back and pick up one of my team members. So they had it blocked off up here by Franklin and Willy James Jones. And I get...I park, I get out of the car, and I see my team members walking up. I had on my vest, my radio in my hand. And I say hey, is it all right if I drive down and go pick up my....and they say sure, go ahead. But everybody else he's stopping. And somebody said something to me and said I see they let you through. And I said yeah, it's the vest, man, it's the vest (laugh).

[interviewer: A lot of power comes with that Project Safe Way vest.] So we get a lot of respect from the authorities. (Maurice, 6/27/09)

Now because I give respect to the people in black-and-white, they give me respect back. That doesn't mean if I do something that I mess up that they still won't arrest me, but I just want to say that the respect of the thing you give when you get. So I wave at them and I salute them. I thank him for the job they're doing. They thank me every day for the job I'm doing. Nobody could ever have told me that the police would thank a Black Panther ex-convict for what I'm doing. But I have earned it. (Randy, 6/12/09)

Like with the schools, like Lincoln, they're jumping the fence over here and then they run over here. And they go into the back of these apartments and they smoke their marijuana. So I stopped that. I helped the police officer, Ornes, he had come through and checked it out. (Derrick, 10/30/09)

As these examples illustrate, the members' positioned themselves alongside the law, and as a supplement to local police. They sought to maintain order. Just as the police strive "to protect and to serve," PSW members saw themselves as protectors of the youth. DeeDee shared,

I just feel like I'm a protector. Like I said, it started with my own children and then when you see the face of others to know that you are out here going to protect them too, it just overwhelms me. I just enjoy it. I am like, "You don't have to feel threatened. Come on, get in the car. Let me take you home. Don't you ever feel like anybody's threatening you. I'll take you home." So I just feel like I'm their protector. Everybody has their own purpose in life and I think maybe I feel like this is mine. (6/12/09)

Watching

The members also positioned themselves as watchmen. They had their eyes on the neighborhood. They were actively looking at what was happening around them in order to deflect any unwanted events.

I'm looking that way, I'm looking this way. Sometimes I'm looking both ways and now I look at their way. I look at what's going on around here, the different kind of cars. You know the cars, you know the people. But what I'm looking at, we're here for the kids. So anything around here that can affect the kids, I got to write it down. I've got a little tablet here. (Raymundo, 6/17/09)

Looking at it as a grandmother's perspective, if I was disabled and wasn't able to get out of the house, just the thought that I know once you get to 47th and Imperial, you are okay, because there is a man on 47th and Imperial, Market Street, and there are eyes all the way to school. If there is something that happens, I know that there are those people in those yellow vests that you can go to for help. That is a great investment that we have made in our community. (DeeDee, 6/12/09)

I DO help them across the street and make sure they get across the street safe because some people drive crazy as we know. But at the same time I try to observe them to see where they're at mentally, if they're doing this way, that way, or if they're straddling the fence. Sometimes if they're too far to the left I just leave them alone because nothing's going to help them until they have that experience. But yeah, that's what I try to do, and then if I can steer them in the right direction I do that. (Maurice, 6/27/09)

As demonstrated from the excerpts above, all of the members' actively watched their areas, but offered different reasons for doing so. Raymundo framed watching as a way to gain knowledge of everyday experiences and documenting any peculiarities that may have occurred. For DeeDee, watching gave neighborhood parents a sense of security in knowing that there were eyes on the street protecting their children from one corner to another. Maurice took watching to another level, and attempted to psychologically evaluate what the kids were thinking and feeling, based on what he was seeing. Then, he took it upon himself to try to steer them in the right direction when he felt they were straying.

The members' personal narratives constructed a representation of PSW that appropriated elements of the master narrative (discussed in the previous chapter) -- such as building relationships with the community, being respectful, and acting as good role models -- while reappropriating what it meant to be part of the group. We got a more textured and nuanced representation of what it meant to be a PSW member from the members themselves. We saw how the construction of the members' individual identities got interwoven with the construction of a PSW identity.

CHAPTER SIX:

STAGE III: EDITING PROCESS

The editorial stage of the collaborative video project took place from February to July 2010. I strongly encourage the reader to watch the video as preparation for interpreting my exposition of the process by which it was produced (link to video: [PSW video](#)²¹). Rather than narrate the editing process chronologically, I begin at the end with the product, the video itself (Mishler, 2006), deconstruct the video narrative, and provide an account of the negotiations, contradictions, and tensions that arose during the editing process. My goal is to identify the complex dynamics, inclusions, and exclusions, which were exposed and crystallized during the editing process, but had remained invisible, up until this point.

Recall from chapter three that the “editing team” included the area coordinators -- DeeDee, Paul, Gina, Luis, and Jaime – and me. My role was complex. I positioned myself as a resource – a tool the team could employ as needed in the construction of the film, which I saw as a collective self- and social representation. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, I met with the editing team nine times over six weeks. During the meetings, the editing team and I discussed what they wanted to include (and in some cases exclude) in the video. After the meetings, I edited the video at home according to what we had discussed. Then, the next time we met, I would show them what I had edited. I noted any changes they wanted made and we then continued to develop following sequences. This cycle continued until the video was complete.

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0K3oHPpY-ts>

The video is seven minutes long and has five segments: the opening sequence, the history of PSW, the Proclamation, a report on crime and safety in their community, and a report on other community events in which PSW participated. The contents of the video, including the voiceovers, were drawn from the individual narratives and supporting materials gathered as the need for them was identified by the editorial team. I describe and discuss each sequence and the processes that underpinned it in turn.

Opening sequence

The video opens with the words “Project Safe Way” in large yellow type across a black screen. An acoustic guitar plays in the background. The film then cuts to an image of the PSW logo: “Project Safe Way: Looking out for our children one corner at a time.” This image fades into the flyer used to promote PSW, and then zooms in to a close up of the flier, which reads, “Project Safe Way is a group of concerned teachers, parents, citizens, students, community leaders, and business owners coming together to provide safe passage for students to and from school.” The next image is a close up of a list of the schools PSW watches over, as a male voiceover says, *“Project Safe Way is a family and by we interacting with other families, they see that we a family and we can all come together.”* Then, another male voiceover: *“Well, it makes me feel important. It makes me feel like I’m doing something, accomplishing something.”* The shot then cuts to a corner leader standing with her back towards the camera, wearing the PSW yellow vest. The camera zooms in on the vest’s PSW logo and then cuts to a fixed shot of kids in uniform walking by, their faces blurred for anonymity, with the corner leader

standing on the corner to the right of the shot. The corner leader is laughing and smiling, chatting with the kids as they walk by. There is a strip mall in the background. As this shot unfolds, a female voiceover says, *“It started with my own children. And then when you see the face of others, to know that you out here to protect them too, I don’t know, it just overwhelms me. I just enjoy it.”* The scene then fades to a medium shot of students crossing the street at a busy intersection. A Black man in the yellow PSW vest stands in the middle of the crosswalk, both arms extended outward. Two male voiceovers say, in turn: *“I’m not in it for the money, I’m in it for the kids”*; and, *“Project Safe Way it’s a big impact in my life. It builds up my self esteem because I’m doing something I really wanted to do.”* In the next scene, a Latino man in the yellow PSW vest and another Latino man walk on a sidewalk away from a traffic light; cut to a Black man standing in a park wearing a yellow PSW T-shirt; and a Black woman wearing yellow vest standing on a corner talking to a student. Atop these images, we hear a male voiceover: *“It kind of gives you a smile to say you’ve done something good because you’re not taking, you’re giving.”* Cut to a trailing shot of student crossing the street, with a Black man in yellow vest on the side of the shot. A male voiceover says, *“The project itself, it’s showing somebody, it’s showing everybody, not just some certain people but showing everybody that there are people out here that care,”* followed by a female voiceover: *“That’s what’s we’re here for, for the children”*; and another male voiceover, *“This is safe now. And it is, and it’s gonna continue to grow.”*

Deciding to open the video with an affect-oriented sequence was a joint decision made between the members and me, but it took some negotiating. During our first

editing session (2/04/10), I suggested that we open with footage of the members standing on the corners and kids getting out of school to provide viewers with a visual understanding of what PSW members do before and after school. Having already transcribed the personal narratives at this point, and struck by the powerful affective quality of the members' stories and the role the project played in constructing their sense of self, I also suggested that we couple the images with voiceovers of members describing what it means for them to be part of PSW. My thematic categorization of the members' personal narratives, discussed in the previous chapter, ultimately effected which quotes were included in the opening sequence. I chose sound bites that I felt were relevant and representative of the group, but only after I initially sought to have the members decide what they wanted to include. Based on the brainstorming session I had with the group members (1/22/10), which I discussed in Chapter Three, the editing team and I started to construct the storyline for the video:

We began by creating a kind of storyboard. I gave them the log of what people said in their interviews. DeeDee said that she didn't want to use some things Daniel said in his interview, specifically about young girls and harassment. As they were reading the forms, I questioned whether I should have given them everyone's log. I explained that we were essentially creating a story, so we had to go through a similar process as though we were writing a story – outlining the plot, etc. We went over what they had brainstormed last week. I explained what we could do: add photos, montage (which I had to explain, they were unfamiliar with the term), have action footage, not just "talking heads," and that we had to start with something to draw in their attention. Sensing that they (DeeDee and Gina – Jaime left soon after I got there to go to a meeting) were a little lost, or just unsure what to do or where to start, I suggested that we begin the film with footage of kids getting out of school (they said we should have Gompers because that was the first school), people at their corner, rovers, etc. with voiceover of what PSW means to team members. DeeDee and Gina thought this was a good idea and a good way to draw people in. (Field note, 2/04/10)

Processes of in/exclusion

In the note above, we see the first instance of tension in how the members' wanted to convey a group identity and represent PSW. As the examples below further illustrate, the editing team was more concerned with what and who to exclude, than with inclusions. Right away, DeeDee specifically mentions that she does not want to include some aspects of Daniel' personal narrative -- specifically about young girls and harassment. As we see in the next note, Luis (who was not present during the first meeting) and DeeDee mention (again) that they do not approve Daniel' interview:

DeeDee and Luis said they were not happy with what Daniel said in his interview. It put up a red flag. They said that he shouldn't have been talking about prostitution, predators, etc. – not stuff PSW deals with. They want him to do it again for the film. (Field note, 2/08/10)

This interaction is particularly interesting on several counts. First, PSW *does* deal with issues of sexual harassment and predators. They had initiated a specific subgroup called R.A.P. -- Residents Against Predators, headed by area coordinators Jaime and Jahne. Jahne and Jaime even gave a presentation to the group during a weekly PSW meeting, discussing what they were trying to do²². Secondly, they wanted Daniel to redo his *entire* interview to meet their standards and not include talk about harassment and predators. Daniel' personal narrative, it seemed, did not fit the representation of PSW they had in mind. Thirdly, after reading his narrative, they felt that Daniel' narrative "put up a red flag" that made them question his character. Interestingly, DeeDee was the

²² During this meeting, they talked about how residents should 'fear' sexual predators and discussed ways for residents to be more aware of their surroundings in order to avoid potentially harmful situations.

one who introduced Daniel to PSW. In his personal narrative he said, “*I got involved with Project Safe Way through [Miss DeeDee]. We worked together, we go to church together and I knew she was involved*” (6/15/09). Despite knowing Daniel before he joined PSW and inviting him to be part of the team, DeeDee, and Luis, thought that it was very strange that he spent a significant amount of time talking about these issues in his interview, turning *him* into a potential predator of sorts who they had to keep an eye on.

Though Daniel was not part of the editing meetings, he was an active participant in the video production process in other ways. From the beginning, he said he wanted to work with us on the video:

Daniel, from Project Safe Way, wants to work with us on maybe documenting the early history of the project, how it got started, what it took to get it running, etc.. (Email correspondence, 5/08/09)

Daniel would meet with Makeba and me to discuss the project; as I have mentioned, specifically, he wanted to interview the director of the Jacobs Center, Ted.

Daniel and I met at the Starbucks in Market Creek Plaza. He suggested the following interview questions: Where did the concept come from? How incubated? What trying to accomplish?” He would like to interview Ted and ask him these questions. (Field note, 5/19/09)

Later (6/10/09), Daniel compiled a more comprehensive list of interview questions on the conception and history of Project Safe Way, with some feedback and suggestions from Makeba and me. He then conducted and audio recorded an 18-minute interview with Ted (10/08/09); a segment of this audio is used in a later sequence of the final video. Although Daniel was a long-time member of PSW and actively contributed to the

production process, DeeDee and Luis wanted to replace his story with a narrative “sanctioned” by the editors of the film.

DeeDee also decided that she did not want to include another member’s narrative:

DeeDee didn’t want to include what Danielle said about murders, says could be off putting for some parents. I explained that we didn’t have to use everything from the stories, just what they wanted to showcase in the film. I explained that people answered what they felt was appropriate and what they wanted to say during the interviews. She doesn’t want to include Danielle period. Only current team members. (Field note, 2/08/10)

DeeDee was technically correct. Danielle had recently needed to stop working with PSW due to back problems, but she had been a part of the team for the prior two years. However, her invocation of “current members only” was made up on the spot. Even though Danielle was no longer a member of PSW, she continued to be actively affiliated with the group. For example, she reported a stabbing she witnessed on the trolley:

DeeDee asked Luis to give the group a report on what happened at the trolley (at Market Creek Plaza). A 15-16 year Latino boy stabbed another 15-16 old year old Latino boy. Brown-on-brown violence, as Luis put it. The boy almost died. He was stabbed on his left side, under his armpit. Seems like the other kid knew where to strike. They caught the suspect. Danielle, an old PSW member, was one of first to see...and called the PSW folks on their cells. (Field note, 2/26/10)

Thanks to Danielle, PSW was alerted to this violence and was able to respond quickly.

Danielle was also one of the first members of PSW. She was present during the planning stages of the program. During her interview, she talked about how she had

committed two murders when she was younger, but had since turned her life around and was now helping kids get out of gangs and stay away from violence. She was extremely proud of her interview and had shown it to many of her friends and family (e.g., “He [Tom] said he watched Danielle’s video, thinking she’d be at the trolley, but she was covering Derrick’s spot at Lincoln Park that week.” [Field note, 12/19/09]). Despite her time with PSW, her participation in all-important planning meetings, and her continued parallel participation with PSW, she was excluded from the filmic narrative.

The topic of exclusion arose once again when I presented a rough cut of the opening sequence during our third editing meeting.

While watching the rough cut a second time, after the part where a man’s voice says “I’m not in it for the money, I’m in it for the kids,” Gina asked who said that. DeeDee answered it was Maurice. I said it was Tom. She said, no, it was Maurice. I assured her it was Tom, I didn’t use any of Maurice’s interview (as they had asked). She said looking at Tom, you can’t imagine that is his voice (it seemed deeper than she had experienced when looking at him). (Field note, 3/02/10)

This was an interesting moment in the editing process. I had to prove to DeeDee that I was respecting the team members’ requests in regard to excluding certain members, while also pushing to include voices that I felt were important. This event reveals my own role in the selection of materials for the video, positioning me as a proponent of inclusiveness.

Negotiations

It is clear from the prior field notes that there was negotiating taking place between DeeDee and me about excluding members. As with Daniel, DeeDee wanted to completely dismiss Danielle's narrative because she felt it was inappropriate. I emphasized that we could use some pieces that she felt were appropriate, rather than disregarding the entirety of both Danielle and Daniel's interviews. Just as Daniel talked about sexual predators only during part of his entire interview, Danielle briefly talks about the murders in her narrative. By excluding Danielle and others, DeeDee and the others started to construct a social representation of PSW that erased certain topics, or in these cases, persons from its history.

Another point of contention arose in regard to what schools to film for the opening sequence and what geographical area PSW actually covered. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, the PSW area map was frequently referred to during the meetings. I found it surprising that there was such uncertainty about the area boundaries:

Paul, Gina, Luis, and DeeDee talked about the 4th district and 8th district, trying to figure out PSW area boundaries....Luis later printed out statistics about the 4th district. Paul and I looked over the stats. After some deliberation, he figured out that they work only in Chollas View and Lincoln Park areas. (Field note, 2/08/10)

Even though these facts never made it into the video, and the members usually talked about PSW in terms of the corners they monitor, it was important for the members to delineate the areas in which they did and did not work according to institutionally predefined neighborhoods. When constructing a representation of PSW, the members felt that identifying specific neighborhoods would make the project more accessible for outsiders. 'Corner talk' seemed to be part of an insider lingo that required more situated

knowledge of the area. However, drawing on my knowledge of PSW accrued from stages I and II of the research process, I felt that the corners were an essential part of the program and needed to be included in the video. Therefore, as we see later, I included close-ups of some of the corner street signs where the PSW members stood.

DeeDee, Gina, and Paul also wanted to include the PSW flyer that lists the schools they serve in the opening sequence (Field note, 3/16/10). The flyer contained the following:

Serving students and residents in the areas of Horton Elementary, Knox Elementary, Porter Elementary, Promise Charter Elementary, Holly Drive Academy, Mt Erie Academy, Gompers Charter Middle School, St Rita's Academy, Millennial Tech Middle School, and Lincoln High School. Our volunteers are stationed at key corners and along school walkways and intersections in the area bounded by Market Street, 47th Street, Logan Avenue, and Euclid Avenue.

However, when I asked where I should film to gather footage of corner leaders when kids were getting out of school, I was specifically instructed to film Gompers Charter:

"I suggested that we begin the film with footage of kids getting out of school (they [DeeDee and Gina] said we should have Gompers because that was the first school)"

(Field note, 2/04/10). It seemed to me that Lincoln was also an important school to include since there were many corner leaders around it and, at the time, it was the only local high school; so, I suggested we film there as well. They were passively receptive; as long as Gompers was included, they were not that concerned about the other nine schools.

In the end, I only filmed around Gompers and Lincoln, and only Gompers is clearly identified. The necessary inclusion of Gompers points to the importance of the project's history in the members' construction of a representation of PSW.

History of the project

After the opening sequence, the image cuts to text: "The Jacobs Center started Phase I of Project Safe Way in 2007." A male voice says, "*From the foundation point of view, um, we, um, we decided that we probably wanted to take a look at issues of public safety and youth violence in the community.*" On screen, we see a montage of photos that include people in a room, sitting around tables, many in mid-speech, looking and pointing at a print out of a Google satellite map. Some people in the images wear the PSW vest, some are standing, and maps line the walls in the background. A male voice begins to speak and the scene then cuts to an interview of Paul, area coordinator, who is sitting in an office. He says, "*It was about 15 or 20 of us. We didn't really know what area we were going to take or what boundaries we were going to take. We couldn't take an area that was too large cuz we wouldn't be able to make an impact.*" His speech becomes a voice over another photo of the planning meeting and the PSW area map. The next scene shows footage of corner leaders on their corners and a female voice begins to speak. Next, we see an interview with Rhonda Smith, program director, in her office. She says, "*We'd monitor the kids, the traffic, and the police (laughing), and, and just the area to make sure people were safe and building relationships with people.*" An interview with Daniel, corner leader, on his corner, follows. Off screen, the

interviewer asks, *“From your perspective, why is project safe way important?”* Daniel responds, *“Well, first of all, the visibility of us corner safety monitors.”* Cut to a montage of kids getting out Gompers Charter School, corner leaders, and a woman driving. A female voice says, *“I’d say it’s important because of the fact that let’s say that the parents who can’t get out and bring their children to school, the peace of mind just to be able to know that there are eyes out here on the street that are protecting not just their children, but their grandchildren. And looking at it from a grandmother’s perspective, if I was disabled and wasn’t able to get out of the house, just the thought that I know, “Ok, once you get to 47th and Imperial, you’re OK because there’s a man on 47th and Imperial, Market Street and Euclid, there’s eyes all the way to school. And if there’s something to happen, I know that those people in those yellow vests that you can go to for help.” And that’s a great investment we made in our community.”*

The next scene shows text that reads, “Phase II of Project Safe Way started in 2009. It builds teams, headed by area coordinators, to accomplish goals that improve the quality of life in our community.” We then see an interview with Luis, area coordinator, in an office. He says, *“We have three teams that have been comprised of the area coordinators, two coordinators per team. Myself and Ms. DeeDee are involved with a Safe Talk team that is helping the community that is helping bridge the gap down here with the San Diego Police Department here in the Southeastern division. There’s another team doing Residents Against Predators, that’s called the RAP team, heightening awareness about sexual predators, the laws and the do’s and don’t when it comes to sexual predators. And our last team is the Safe Places team that is identifying*

unsafe and safe places, and any unsafe places they're attempting to make them safe. And the safe places, we're trying to let people know, that we do have safe places in the community that you might want to visit or go to when there's a situation in the community." The scene cuts from shot of Luis to a photo of the six area coordinators and then to footage of a PSW meeting. The song "Be Thankful" plays in the background. Next, we see text that reads: "Phase II goals: 1. 'Safe talk' between San Diego residents and San Diego police. 2. Residents against predators. 3. Safe places one block at a time." The following scene shows an interview with Paul: "*Project Safe Way is doing a good thing right now with the community. Like I said, with the principals, we meet with the, with the parents association, we meet with the teachers and try to tell em what we're doing and what direction we're going.*" Then, the scene cuts to a woman in her office. She says, "*I'm Noelle Lopez and I'm a family program coordinator here at Gompers Academy. What I've seen is, um, where the community, parents come in, they're just like, 'oh, we saw some people in yellow vests.' The Project Safe Way staff will come and 'oh, we found this student, and this is their name, and we need to help them.'"*" Footage of Noelle talking with kids outside of school follows.

The decision to include a section describing the history of the project was an important element in the construction of the representative narrative. Again, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, when the PSW team brainstormed ideas for the video in January 2010 during a weekly meeting, they wanted to begin with the a history of PSW, which included Gompers the YMCA, and Miguel Sanchez, who was part of the Jacobs Center and originally ran Project Safe Way.

I suggested getting into the history of the project, using footage from DeeDee, Paul, and Rhonda. They liked this too and said that we need to say how the program got started. They then pulled up some photos up from a computer – photos of early meetings when they were planning everything, the boundaries, etc. (Field note, 2/04/10)

It was not unexpected that the origin story figured prominently in the construction of the PSW narrative.

Processes of in/exclusion

DeeDee, Paul, and Rhonda were the only members of the editing team who were part of the beginning phases (Danielle was also there, but by this time, was no longer part of PSW). In addition to having these three members (whose interviews I had already collected) to recount the history, the team also wanted to interview Officer Stark and Noelle Lopez, Family Program Coordinator at Gompers Preparatory Academy:

DeeDee said she wanted to get interviews of Noelle (who to her is an important part of the origin story) and Officer Stark to add to the film. She wanted an officer to tell how PSW has helped changed the neighborhood, especially compared to what it used to be around Gompers. (Field note, 2/04/10)

In a later editing meeting, the members also asked that I interview Clayton Ford the principal at Gompers (Field note, 2/08/10).

The team felt that Clayton Ford, Officer Stark and Noelle Lopez, although peripheral to the daily activities of PSW, were important pieces of their story. In order to reconstruct a history of the project accurately, the narratives we had collected were not enough. It was only during the editing process, when a social representation of PSW

was being collectively constructed that the inclusion of other players' voices became central. The editorial team found it important to include the voices of authority figures and people in positions of power. These peripheral voices were now being highlighted, while active everyday members' voices were being dimmed. As it turned out, we never ended up interviewing Clayton Ford or Officer Stark for the video. Somehow, the interview appointments were never made. I did, however, interview Noelle Lopez on March 9th, 2010 at Gompers; part of the interview is included in this section of the video.

Interestingly, when constructing the history of PSW during the editing meeting, there was no mention of including Miguel Sanchez, the then-councilman from National City, who was present during planning stages of PSW. During our initial video brainstorming session, with the entire PSW team (1/22/10), Sanchez was specifically mentioned. Additionally, during this meeting, Andrew Miller, director of the Jackie Robinson YMCA, was also pointed out as a central actor in regard to the origin story. While Sanchez was forgotten during the editing process, Miller was purposefully excluded.

DeeDee wanted to make sure that it did not seem like PSW was a part of YMCA. She mentioned that for the history, Miller wasn't really "there". I thought this was surprising because Rhonda and others always say that Miller was a big part of the origin story. DeeDee said he was there maybe for a week total and spent one day actually on a corner. (Field note, 2/04/10)

DeeDee did not want to include Miller in the origin story, even though according to others he was important. When talking about the conception of PSW during her interview, Rhonda said:

It really, the conception came from a collaboration with Gompers and the YMCA, Andrew Miller. Andrew Miller was one of the first community members who actually stood on the corner of 47th and Imperial with a stop sign and actually with 2 other residents that monitored the kids as they walked across that busy intersection. And so then all of the other organizations and community residents and Jacobs came together and they started this talk about the Safe Neighborhoods Project. Then it went into venturing into the Project Safe Way. (Makeba: Okay. Interesting. I didn't realize that Andrew Miller was a part of that.) Yeah, he's been a key aspect to a lot of things in the community, very outspoken and very dedicated to making sure that people understand the dynamics of the community, and that people can change, and that people just need opportunities. (6/25/09)

Ted, recounted a similar history:

One of the things we [the Jacobs Center] try to do is build on places where there is already momentum. And several people had pointed out that a number of things were happening around 47th and Market, Imperial and 47th. One is Gompers Charter Middle School was doing its own safe passage program. They had their own staff coming out before and after school. One parent resident on her own time using her van to go and watch out for children, and then about the same time, Andrew Miller, who's the executive director of the Jackie Robinson YMCA, when Lincoln High School, the new Lincoln High School, opened, Andrew took upon himself to stand on corner of imperial and 47th to watch out for high school students. (10/08/09)

During his interview, Paul, who was part of the editorial team, also mentioned that Miller was an important actor in relation to PSW's history:

I know, uh, Andrew Miller from the YMCA, he helps. He was one of the first ones out there, you know, to do groundwork for a long time, you know. (6/17/09)

However, Paul did not make it a point to include Miller in the video.

Despite this consensus among individuals on Miller's role in the beginning phases of PSW, during the construction of the collective narrative, his presence was explicitly excluded from the origin story. Not only was he not mentioned as a person to interview, but his role was trivialized by DeeDee and he was purposefully erased from the origin story.

Negotiations

As part of the history portion of the film, Luis explains the roles of the three area coordinator teams. Luis was hired by the Jacobs Center as an area coordinator and had not been a part of PSW prior to getting the coordinator position. Though he was already part of PSW during stage II of the research project, he was not regularly present during weekly meetings and did not show an interest in being filmed at the time. It was only once we started editing the personal narratives into a representative video that he wanted to be interviewed. By the time we started editing, the area coordinator positions were much more defined than they were during earlier stages of the project. A clear hierarchy had formed within the program. During, and mediated by, the editing process, this hierarchy was becoming much more visible.

After watching a rough cut of Luis's interview, the other members of the editing team were dissatisfied:

All commented on how Luis seemed nervous in his film. Luis said he wants to reshot. I'm not sure if he was joking or serious. Later, when we watched it again and Luis had left for a meeting, Paul, Gina, and DeeDee commented that Luis didn't seem to know the three teams very well. He seemed to have forgotten or had trouble remembering. Gina made a comment that he should have the flier with the teams in front of him next time. (Field note, 3/02/10)

During his original interview, Luis said the following:

As an area coordinator we have organized three teams that are targeting specific uh, we are targeting not problems but specific issues in the community which happen to be the relationship with the police department, which is the team I'm on; identifying safe places and identifying unsafe places and trying to turn those unsafe places to safe places; and the last team is residence against predators which is heightened awareness against sexual predators that are out in our community. (2/08/10)

He hesitated when he started to describe what the teams responsibilities were, paused while talking, often looked down or away from the camera, rubbed his hands together several times, smacked his lips, and scratched his face on two separate occasions. When viewing the footage, these combined features gave the members the impression that he was nervous and not able to articulate the teams' areas of focus clearly. We decided to reshoot Luis' footage a couple of weeks later. Here, he said,

We have three teams that have been comprised of the area coordinators, two coordinators per team. Myself and Ms. DeeDee are involved with a Safe Talk team that is helping the community that is helping bridge the gap down here with the San Diego Police Department here in the Southeastern division. There's another team doing Residents Against Predators, that's called the RAP team, heightening awareness about sexual predators, the laws and the do's and don't when it comes to sexual predators. And our last team in the Safe Places team that is identifying unsafe and safe places, and any unsafe places they're attempting to make them safe. And the safe places, we're trying to let people know, that we do have safe places in the community that you might want to visit or go to when there's a situation in the community. (3/24/10)

Before beginning to film the second time, Luis studied the brochure (Field note, 3/24/10), so his second narrative reflects what is written in the PSW brochure more directly. He was also much more composed, looked directly at the camera most of time, kept his hands clasped in front of him, sat still, and fidgeted less. The decision to reshoot his segment reflects a desire from the team to look professional. It also is an effort to align with the official narrative text and convey a consistent message. In a similar vein, the team had originally asked me to add text in the video that read, *“Building teams to accomplish goals that improve the quality of life in our community,”* when beginning to describe Phase II of PSW in the video (Field note, 2/08/10). Later,

They want[ed] me to change what I had written about the Goals of Phase II (according to team) to reflect what [was] written in brochure.
(Field note, 3/02/10)

I suggested that we could include both the original material and the new ideas. This would avoid having the video be just a reiteration of the master narrative created by Jacobs Center. I felt it was important to keep the video more personal and reflective of the members’ understanding and representation of the project, not simply the official story that got distributed. In the end, we included both descriptions of Phase II.

In the previous section, I mentioned how the editing team did not approve of Daniel and Danielle’s narratives and did not want them in the video. However, in this part of the video, I included a sound bite and footage of Daniel at his corner and Danielle appears in photos of the planning meetings. No one seemed to notice. At least no one commented. This is significant because it illustrates the negotiations that took

place between the team and me and reveals us as joint constructors of the narrative.

While they were more concerned with adding the voices of peripheral players and area coordinators, I wanted to make sure the entire current team was represented in the video.

The Proclamation

The following sequence opens with text that reads, “After the Project Safe Way team helped find a 12-year-old missing girl, Councilman Tony Young proclaimed March 24th as ‘Project Safe Way Day.’” The video cuts to a montage of photos of the team at city hall receiving the proclamation from Councilman Tony Young, and an image of the Proclamation itself. Rhonda and sixteen other PSW members, in addition to Ted, were present for the Proclamation, which took place at San Diego City Hall. The Proclamation states:

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY derived from the intent to gain a greater understanding of gang issues and effective strategies to address youth violence, Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation conducted a Youth Violence Listening Project in the fall of 2006. The project included listening to community organization leaders and former gang members dealing with these issues, parents and youth who are being impacted, and regional and national program staff who have developed ways to address youth violence; and

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY was launched as a 10-week pilot in April 2008. Paid Corner Team Leaders were trained by the San Diego Police and San Diego Unified School District Security in how to observe and report illegal or dangerous activities. The teams observed and reported on: 1) public safety action items, 2) incidents, and 3) issue areas. The public safety items included broken stop lights, needed street signs, and dangerous traffic flows; and

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY'S first phase has resulted in identifying a core team, implementing a safe passage to school pilot program, becoming familiar with the safe neighborhood area, and building initial relationships with parents, students, and school staff; and

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY also included a group of Lincoln High School students who were sent to a national Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) conference in Birmingham, Alabama, and are working the SDUSD Police Officer Patrick Wafer in developing SAVE Clubs on the campuses of the schools being served; and

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY'S Team will conduct planning for the 2008-09 school year. Corner Teams have developed resource maps for their area; and

WHEREAS, PROJECT SAFE WAY will expand the geographical areas and the times team members will be deployed. A resource network will be established for each corner area and a Reclaiming Our Territory Plan will be developed and implemented; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of The City of San Diego, that this Council, for and on behalf of the people of San Diego, does hereby proclaim March 24, 2009 to be "PROJECT SAFE WAY DAY" in the City of San Diego in appreciation for his dedication to the community and Council District Four.

Figure 6.1: Proclamation of "Project Safe Way Day"

Processes of in/exclusion

The Proclamation was a significant event to include in the video, and was also listed as an element to include in the story during the group brainstorming session (1/22/10).

They [the editing team] want a lot of photos of the Proclamation. Gina (who seems to have a better grasp on the process) asked if we really wanted that many. DeeDee said yes. They should be proud that they have a day dedicated to them and therefore should show it off. (Field note, 3/02/10)

The Proclamation solidified PSW's role and positive impact in the community. They were officially recognized by the district for the work they were doing in the neighborhood. The members chose four photos to include in the montage: one of members in their vests sitting in city hall, one of Councilman Tony Young at the

podium with PSW members behind him, one of the Young and Rhonda holding the Proclamation on stage with members behind them, and one of Randy and Danielle holding the Proclamation with members standing around them outside city hall.

Interestingly,

They want[ed] to Photoshop Maurice, Janet, and RJ out of the Proclamation photos. (Field note, 3/02/10)

They did not, however, ask to Photoshop Danielle out of the photos, even though they did not want to include any of her narrative in the film.

Maurice, Janet, and RJ only appeared in the last photo, standing in the back of the group. The photo is on screen for about two seconds, yet they thought it was vital to blur their faces out of the image. I have mentioned, they had recently been fired from PSW, for reasons that were never explicitly mentioned to me. This was another significant moment in the editing process. During Stage II of the project, when collecting the personal narratives, all three of these members spoke with great passion about being part of PSW. Each had been part of the team for over a year by the time of the interview. During this editing meeting, DeeDee talked about how she had recently seen RJ since he had been fired and told me that,

RJ wants the DVD of his interview. Apparently, Jacobs took the DVDs I had made the members and never gave them back. They said they were going to look at them and give them back, but they still haven't. DeeDee and Paul didn't know why. (Field note, 3/02/10)

Even though he had been fired, being a part of PSW seemed to still be a relevant part of RJ's life and his interview seemed to be important to him. The fact that Jacobs took the

members' copies of their interviews was quite surprising to me. As I have mentioned in Chapter Three, Ted was hesitant to let us interview the members at the beginning of project, questioning our intentions. Once approved, he had a member of the Jacobs Communications staff sit in on the initial brainstorming session, and I had to provide her with all of the video footage, including the interviews²³. The staff member never contributed anything to the project, just gathered the material we had collected.

Returning to the Proclamation photo, not only did the editing team want to exclude Maurice, RJ, and Janet from being recognized as PSW members during this historic event, they also spoke quite disparagingly about them during the editing meeting:

There is drama with Janet. They didn't even want to ask her about using photos where her daughter was in them because there is bad blood there (since she got fired. It seemed like they didn't think much of her by the way they were talking about her). DeeDee said she saw her one day with plastic bags over her feet and a cane. She had hurt her legs. Jokingly, DeeDee said that Janet was probably going to try to sue somebody. Later, they made another such comment about her....They also talked about RJ. RJ had recently asked DeeDee if she wanted to buy coffee from him – he is going into the coffee business now. She said she has family that owns a coffee shop in Old Town. If she wanted coffee, she could go there. (Field note, 3/02/10)

As discussed in the previous chapters, many of the members talked about PSW as being a family; hearing them speak this way about their former “family” members was remarkable. The video editing process revealed tensions in the group's relationships that would have otherwise remained invisible to me. Once again, in constructing the

²³ I am still uncertain why the Jacobs Center took the members' personal copies, though I could speculate that it was a kind of control mechanism. Without the DVDs, the members' had no concrete record of their interview and their sense of ownership over their stories dissipated.

collective narrative, they figuratively (and here, literally) erased persons from the filmic representation.

Negotiations

There was not much negotiating that took place between the editing team and me for this part of the video. While I was surprised at the editing team's request to blur the previous members' faces, I did not feel I was in a position to question their decision. Interestingly, no members talked about the Proclamation during their personal narrative interviews.

Crime and safety

In the next sequence, text appears that reads: *"Since Project Safe Way began, crimes before and after school have gone down by 97 percent."* We then see a medium shot of Jaime, area coordinator, outside a school saying, *"They know we're out here, so crime rate goes down. They don't want to be around here when we around cuz they know that we're not going to tolerate any type of violence, any type of negativity, behavior around here. So they kind of like keep their distance from the school grounds now."* The scene then cuts to footage of street signs and a voice over of Noelle saying, *"What it's done to our community is make us take ownership and make us be able to feel safe to walk."* Next, we see a man in a yellow PSW T-shirt standing a park, saying, *"Since I've been at this park, I done stopped about eight fights,"* followed by footage of a young man in a yellow PSW vest who says, *"It's definitely a place, you know, where*

kids feel safe, you know, to come up to us and tell us anything that's going on and that we will help them with anything. From rides to school, um you know, if they feel they're being threatened, I'll walk with them." In the next scene, we see women talking in a roving car, followed by a tracking shot of Noelle walking around with a voice over saying, *"A week ago a girl was being bullied and they saw Ms. Turner's van and they said, "Are you OK?" and she was like, "No." She goes "Ok, so we're watching you. We'll make sure you get home safe." So the girl felt comfortable and safe to get home."* Then, the scene cuts to an interview with Jahne, area coordinator, standing in front of the Jacobs Center, who says, *"As Project Safe Way, us as a team, we make people feel comfortable, make them feel loved, make them know, let them know that we do understand what they're going through,"* followed by a cut to a shot of Jaime, area coordinator, standing outside of a school, saying, *"We make a difference. And we being part of the community and telling them that since we're part of the community, it shows them that they can also make a difference. Because if I could make a difference, they can make a difference. We're all part of this neigh-community."*

Processes of in/exclusion

After the Proclamation, the editing team wanted to highlight the positive impact PSW had on the neighborhood. They wanted to include examples of how PSW made the community safer.

DeeDee wanted statistics of how they have made it [the neighborhood] a safer place. She said that in 2009 there were 0 homicides, which she was really proud of (even though, she mentioned, there have already been three youth homicides since the beginning of the year). She said it went

down by 97%. When I asked her what “it” was, she said criminal activity, gangs, robbery, violence, etc. She would say 100%, but things happen in alleys ways or parts they know PSW people will not be, which accounts for that 3%. She said she will get stats to add to the film. (Field note, 2/04/10)

DeeDee came up with this statistic, basing it off of no actual evidence. In a later editing meeting (Field note, 2/08/10), after pulling up statistics about the 4th district (SESD), they corrected themselves, acknowledging that there were no youth homicides in the *summer* of 2009, not the entire year. Though it did not make it into the final cut, they wanted to include this police statistic about youth homicides (Field note, 3/16/10). This is interesting because while they were proud of this fact and seemed to take some responsibility for this decrease in crime, PSW does not monitor the neighborhood during the summer months when kids are out of school.

We ended up deciding to only include that since PSW started, crimes had gone down 97%. While it is true that crime rates had gone down while the PSW members were outside of the schools, during their weekly meetings and in their personal narratives, the members spoke about crimes that had happened around their corner or about violent activities they had been able to stop (as discussed in Chapter Four). Saying crime had gone down by 97% seemed like a stretch. It seemed that they were creating ‘public fictions’ (Liebow, 1964), exaggerating reality to heighten their sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Negotiations

In this sequence, we hear from two area coordinators, two corner leaders, and Noelle, Gompers Family Program Coordinator. The two area coordinators, Jaime and Jahne, were not interviewed during stage II of the project. They were not regularly present during PSW weekly meetings. Like Luis, they were hired by the Jacobs Center specifically to be area coordinators. During an editing meeting (3/09/10), Jaime asked if I could interview him (we filmed the next day). During that editing session, DeeDee also said that I should interview Jahne to be part of the video.

When reviewing a rough cut of this part of the video, the editing team pointed out a distinction between a “corner leader” and “corner volunteer” (Field note, 3/16/10). At this time, there were only two corner volunteers on the PSW team, neither of whom appeared in the video (though one was a voice over in the opening sequence). As we’ve seen in other examples above, including corner leaders in the video required some insistence on my part. I made a conscious effort to at least have b-roll footage of the corner leaders as they monitored their corners, and include a few of their interviews in the video. Two of the three corner leader interviews that appear in the video are in this segment.

Other events

The video closes with a photo montage of events PSW organized in the community: Christmas Tree Giveaway, Toys for Tots, Safety Summer Bash, MLK Parade, and Community Unity Safety event. “Wake Up Everybody,” by Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes, plays in the background.

Processes of in/exclusion

Including images of other events in which PSW had participated was an important component in the construction of the narrative.

They also wanted to have photos of other events they were a part of included in the film: food drive, Christmas trees, turkey give away (this was a YMCA event though, and DeeDee wanted to make sure that it did not seem like PSW was a part of YMCA). (Field note, 2/04/10)

The editing team wanted to showcase how they not only monitor the corners before and after school, but are also tapped into the community in other ways -- making them more than just safety monitors or crossing guards.

Choosing the photos was a relatively easy process, but also led to some tensions between PSW and other people and organizations.

They chose the photos from events they want to use in the video, ones in which they do not have to ask for release. DeeDee seems to have a shaky relationship with the YMCA. While looking at one photo of two ladies who work at the Y, she called them heifers. She didn't want to use photos of a Y event they helped out at because doesn't want to overrepresent YMCA, but showcase PSW.... While looking at photos to include in the montage, we came across a photo of Janet's daughter at the summer safety bash. Said we couldn't use it because knowing her, she would say she had not given permission and would try to get money out of it. (Field note, 3/02/10)

Also,

when looking at photos of current members at the MLK Parade, noted that it is such a smaller group than what they began with. (Field note, 3/02/10)

Only seven PSW members were in the MLK parade photo. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, when I began working with PSW, there were about 30 members and affiliates in the program. A year and a half later, that number had significantly lowered. Looking at the photo was an opportunity for the editing team to reflect on how the project had changed. They were some of the few “last men standing.”

Negotiations

As with the Proclamation sequence, no negotiations took place between the editorial team and I here. I included all the photos they had chosen and given to me.

In sum, during the editing process, the editing team and I had to negotiate whom to include and exclude from the story. The editing process revealed many group dynamics that had not surfaced during stages I and II of the project. In some instances, the dynamics revealed actually contradicted information that had previously been established. The editing team sought to construct a collective social narrative of PSW that reflected the master narrative and institutional framing of the program. Members with paid positions and parallel actors were overrepresented, while everyday participants were underrepresented. I discuss these points further in the next chapter.

Group response to the video

We finished the video in April and screened it to the group at a weekly meeting (4/23/10) to get the other members' feedback. Eleven PSW members were present, including Rhonda, two area coordinators, six corner leaders, and two corner volunteers.

After watching the video, there was a round of applause. I asked the members if they thought we needed to change anything in the video. Derrick (a corner volunteer featured in the video), said that he felt the video really captured 'them' and looked good. It made him feel proud to be part of PSW. Randy (a corner volunteer in the video), expressed that the video did a good job of showcasing what PSW does. He liked being able to see footage of them at their corners. There was a general consensus among the group that the video accurately represented PSW. They thought it was a good way to show people what they do and who they are. (Field note, 4/23/10)

No members voiced any objections to the video. They thanked me and the editing team for making it, and all wanted copies for themselves. They gave their stamp of approval, and so, the video was complete. This also marked the end of the CVP project and my active participation with the group.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

STAGE IV: AFTERLIFE

In this Chapter, I discuss follow-up meetings I had with PSW after we completed the video to see how the group was doing and how the video was being used.

PSW appreciation dinner

In July 2010, PSW hosted an Appreciation Dinner to recognize their community partners. This was the first time the video was being screened to a public audience. There were about 100 people in attendance. The video was playing right before the dinner officially started, as people were arriving and settling in. It was hard to hear the audio amongst the chatter that filled the room. Some people were already sitting at their tables and were watching. Others paid no attention to what was on screen. And still others were in and out of watching.

I received a plaque in recognition of the work I had done with PSW. They introduced me as graduate student at UCSD, who had taken the time and care to make a PSW video with them, which they mentioned was screened earlier in the night. I was very touched. DeeDee and Luis, who were handing out the plaques, gave me big hugs....After the dinner, I talked with a local resident who was sitting at the table next to us. She told me that she liked the video and thought we had done a nice job of showing what PSW does. Her child attends Gompers and she was familiar with and thankful for PSW....Before leaving, I asked Luis if

anyone had said anything about the video. He said not too much (especially since it was playing as other things were going on), but some people had told him that they thought it captured the group well and it was cool to see them all on screen. (Field note, 7/19/10)

While there was not much feedback about the video, the general tenor of the remarks I heard was positive; viewers felt it was a good representation of PSW and the work they do. The audience unquestionably accepted the video as an authentic description.

A year later...

In February 2011, Makeba and I meet with DeeDee, Gina, and Paul (area coordinators) in their office at the Jacobs Center. PSW no longer had its own office. The area coordinators now had desks in a large office they shared with other Jacobs Center community outreach coordinators.

Makeba was already there when I arrived, along with DeeDee, Paul, and Gina. I gave hugs to everyone. It was nice to see everyone again and the feeling seemed reciprocated. A lot of big hugs and smiles. They had been talking about new progresses in PSW. It is now divided into the three area coordinator divisions: safe passage, police relations, and predators -- "PSW" is the umbrella name. They have made significant progress on police relations. DeeDee told us that police used to have people they were questioning sit on the curb; now, they have the offenders sit on the car bumper. They felt the former was degrading and violation of respect. Made the appended seem deviant to passer-by-ers. Sitting on the bumper, they felt, was more humane and less demonizing. Paul gave me a small booklet they are giving out to residents that explains their rights when dealing with police. They said that a lot of people do not realize that the police cannot just do whatever they; citizens have rights and the police need to follow the laws. The team is educating the residents and raising awareness of their personal rights.

The corner monitors are now under the group name "Safe Passage," which needs to be all volunteer-based. They are having a hard time recruiting residents to stand at corners. Funding for the project will end

in June 2011, so they need to get people asap. They told me that they show the video we made at meetings to try to recruit volunteers. After watching the video and hearing their presentation, a lot of residents praise their work, thank them, and tell them what a great job they are doing in the community; but when it comes to participating themselves, they will not. They are trying to even get people/parents to commit to one day a month, so would need about 30 volunteers to work one day monthly. Even this strategy hasn't worked. People would rather sit at home, even though many do not have jobs and don't do anything during the day. (Field note, 2/15/11)

The area coordinators were the only salaried PSW members with security of position. The corner leaders would no longer be getting paid in a few months unless they received grant money to sustain the program. While the video evoked a positive response from viewers, it did not help motivate them to want to volunteer for PSW.

Three years later...

Three years after we completed the video, I did a follow-up interview with Luis to get an update on PSW and how they were using the video. I met him during a transitional period, when the Jacobs Center was in a process of restructuring. The Jacobs Center had a new president and CEO. Ted (recall, he was the former CEO), who had been a significant (even if peripheral) actor in the project, was no longer a part of Jacobs. Owing to budgetary issues, there had been a 40% reduction in workforce. Five of the six PSW area coordinators had been laid off -- Luis was the only one remaining. He became a part of another community outreach team (three of their six coordinators had been laid off). Luis's focus on the team was safety. Luis said, *"Our jobs were outreach, working with the community.... And we were the ones that were directly in contact with residents, and of course Project Safe Way was involved with things*

pertaining to safety. So, that was a huge loss” (3/18/13). Eventually, two of these four Outreach Coordinators were transferred, leaving only Luis and another person in charge of doing community outreach. Luis explained,

Before when Jacobs Center, when we were first involved with PSW, there was a very family-oriented, family feel to the Family Foundation Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation. As the company grew, there was a need to formalize a lot of our departments. (3/18/13)

PSW was now composed of Luis and 10 volunteers, who watched 8-10 corners.

Luis explained that they were entering a new phase of PSW, where they would be asking for more support from the schools. He said,

We’re trying to get the schools’ help because we’re spending a lot of time looking for volunteers. So now what I’m going to ask the schools to do, is every time they have a parent conference or parent meeting, for them to ask people, “Would you want to volunteer for Project Safe Way?” Instead of us having to do it. We used to spend of time and a lot of our resources setting up these meeting when the schools already have meetings. And they know how good the program is because they tell us, “Oh my god. We’re so happy you guys have-- It’s so good.” It’s almost like one of those, “Well, you guys are doing it, we’re cool.” Well, now you guys need to find the volunteers, and I’ll still provide the vest, and the radios, and the training. Just find me the volunteers now. They should be making the push for the volunteers instead of us. (3/18/13)

Despite the institutional restructuring and decrease in PSW members, he said,

Thanks to the push from the original wave of PSW, a lot of the enforcement has eased the streets. So, a lot of the traffic violations and a lot of the stuff that was going around the schools, I think people in the community realized that there is a volunteer-based group out; no matter there’s 25 of us or 10, they still see the yellow vest out so they know that somebody’s watching and there’s the potential for somebody to call the cops or call somebody. So, we have seen a decrease in violence and a decrease in traffic accidents. We’ve strengthened our relationship with the police department, so, I mean, things have worked out for the best. (3/18/13)

Though there were still PSW members on the street corners before and after school, Luis had to hold off doing any marketing or outreach until things at the Jacobs Center settled down. He said,

At this point we kinda put a brake on all things PSW as far as marketing and outreaching until we figure out what our next steps are, what our next 90-day plan is. Prior to the reduction in force, we were using the video everywhere we went to recruit new volunteers. So every time we did a presentation at a school, or a community resource fair, or at a community meeting, we would take the video that our friends at UCSD helped put together, and it helped us recruit volunteers....I think the video [is representative] of PSW, and of the work. Because, there's nothing like seeing it happening on film, or you know, like, when you put the DVD on and you can actually see Ms. DeeDee driving around in the van, waving at people, and seeing the volunteers on the corner. I think the visual aid of that video is important to have. (3/18/13)

Not only was the video used to recruit volunteers, but it was also used to receive grants. In applications, the Jacobs Center grant writers would mention PSW's partnership with UCSD, that we made a video together, and that the video was provided gratis. They received grants from Starbucks, SDG&E and the city council (\$25,000).

When I asked if community members commented on the video after watching it, he said,

Not really, just you know in the hood they'd be like "Ah girl, I saw you in the video!" That kind of comment, but nothing businessy. Management did comment on the video – they liked the way it was done, they liked that it was free, those kinds of comments. But out in the community, we got more of the "oh you know, that's a cool video, we get to see...." Most the response was positive in the way of showing interest to help volunteer for the program, I think that's the best measure of the interest of the video. (3/18/13)

When reflecting on the video, Luis said that it also helped create a sense of legitimacy for some members of the group:

I think that when the video was being made and once it was done, it made us, the coordinators and some of the management team, almost like PSW was becoming more formal and becoming a real team. Like it was a real project. Because we were a pilot project at first, it was only supposed to be a 2 year project and then it carried on. And then you guys came on board when we were maybe in our 2nd year. So, it really started to feel, like it's really happening, this is becoming a real thing. (3/18/13)

According to Luis, the video contributed to forming a group identity and solidifying a sense of authenticity for the group. For residents the video was a 'cool' representation of PSW and potential volunteers liked that they got to see what the position entailed. For Jacobs Center managers, they felt the video appropriately represented the team and Center, and liked that it was made at no cost.

Despite structural changes in both the Jacobs Center and PSW over these three years, the video had acted as a useful representation of the group and had been accepted by audiences as a smooth and seamless portrayal of the work PSW did in the community. It seemed that the video remained a stable artifact frozen in time as PSW went through transformations.

However, when I met with Luis, PSW was no longer using the video. At that point, the master narrative had changed and the video was no longer accurately representative of the group.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

FINAL REFLECTIONS: MY STORY

*What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.*

*We shall not cease from exploration,
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.*
T.S. Elliot, Little Gidding, 1944

The excerpts above from T. S. Elliot embody the processes of inquiry in this project and my role as a participatory action researcher. As I engaged with the group over time, my understanding of PSW and its dynamics changed. These new ways of understanding the group retrospectively transformed my interpretation of earlier encounters and perceptions of the community I had helped create at the time. I started to notice intricacies and complexities to which I had previously been blind. It was only by arriving at the end of my project with PSW and its product, the video, that I was able to revisit the beginning and see it in a new light.

In his paper *Narrative Time*, Ricoeur writes,

The recollection of the story governed as a whole by its way of ending constitutes an alternative to the representation of time as moving from past forward into the future, according to the well-known metaphor of the arrow of time. It is as though recollection inverted the so-called natural order of time. By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to

read time itself backward, as recapitulating of initial conditions of course of action in its terminal consequences. In this way, a plot establishes human action not only within time...but with memory. Memory, accordingly, *repeats* the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of time as “stretching along” between a beginning and an end. (1980, p. 176, emphasis in original).

Following Ricoeur, it is inappropriate to rely solely on chronology to make sense of a story. As T.S. Elliot asserted, we must know how a story ends to (re)understand the beginning. Further, “even prior to such an evaluation, we cannot determine which events ‘belong’ in [a] sequence and which do not without having first defined its [the story’s] ending” (Mishler, 2006, p. 35).

This non-linear understanding of narrative time is an interesting point of departure for participatory action researchers. It puts a special emphasis on examining the research process, in light of its product. It is less about *what* is learned, and more about *how* it is learned. The longer the duration of study, the more likely that the researcher will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of earlier activities and events (Cole, 2014).

Many participatory action researchers engage with participants in media-based projects (e.g., Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, & Lennie, 2008; McIntyre, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Slater, Tacchi, Lewis, 2002), but they do not always examine the development of their projects over time in light of their products. Instead, they chronologically construct a narrative of their research project from which the final product is an end point of a linear sequence. I have followed this mode of analysis up until now. However, my understanding of the questions that motivated this thesis cannot be reduced to this linear narrative. The collaborative video production method proposed

here requires participatory action researchers, having reached the end and created a product, to return to beginning and recapitulate the initial course of actions. In this chapter, I return to the beginning of the project. I came to know it for the first time four years after it began. As a result of this method of understanding, field notes and events that I overlooked as I constructed a narrative of the project took on meaning when I was finally able to return to the beginning and re-experience it.

Re-gaining entry

Recall, that in Chapter Two I posed the question,
How might a researcher gain access to local knowledge and develop an insider's understanding of a group and its dynamics?

During the first stage of my research, all of my activity and interactions with PSW took place during weekly meetings at the Jacobs Center. Admittedly, when I started attending meetings I felt out of place. Thankfully, Makeba, my colleague from CREATE, had been attending meetings for some time prior to my entrance and knew Rhonda well. She helped ease my nervousness in addition to mediating my entry into the group. I was given access to these meetings and took field notes. However, gaining entry actually lasted over the duration of the entire research project. Only late in the process did I realize that during my early participation with PSW, I was participating in a discourse ruled by the master narrative.

Recall that at this first meeting, PSW was transitioning into a new stage of its development. They would be doing outreach to recruit volunteers. I wrote in my field

note that Rhonda specifically mentioned that “Project Safe Way [was] about building relationships” with businesses, churches, organizations, etc., and that they were “like a family” (Field note, 9/26/08). Volunteers were expected to get to know the kids and talk to parents. “Rovers” went to all the corners in the designated area to make sure everything was safe and nothing was “out of the ordinary.” The rovers would also bring water to the corner leaders on hot days.

When Ted addressed the group, I was impressed by how this older Caucasian man in a position of power addressed the audience of working class African-American and Latino men and women. He told anecdotes about his youth and having to work at a young age to help his parents financially and to learn responsibility. Through ‘signifyin’²⁴ and call and response practices (Alim, 2004), he started a dialogic exchange with the members to elaborate on the meaning of the PSW vest and to discuss the next phase of the program. Ted seemed genuine and authentic. He seemed to practice what he preached: openness, community building, participation, and acceptance.

Only later did I realize that Rhonda and Ted were propagating a master narrative of PSW that fit within the family discourse of the Jacobs Family Foundation (JFF). JFF was, in fact, a family undertaking. It had been founded the late Joseph Jacobs Jr., his wife, and three daughters. It continues to be led by members of the family, along with a

²⁴ ‘Signifyin’ has been described as “a means to encode messages and meaning in natural conversation, usually involving an element of indirection” (Alim, 2004, p. 403).

management team and advisory board. It had a “family feel” (Luis, 3/18/13). During one meeting, Rhonda said,

Jacobs is like a family organization and does not function like other businesses. They respect and are compassionate toward people’s needs. They understand that some people may need advances on their pay checks, but they still have a budget to adhere to. (Field note, 5/01/09)

Being introduced to the group this way framed my understanding of PSW as I continued to attend meetings. I saw and thought about the group through the lens of the master narrative and the family discourse. I thought that most members were on equal footing. It seemed that Rhonda and Ted were at the head of the family, and the other members were below. Rhonda would say things like, “*I am open and accommodating, but I ask that you give me a call or notify me if you are going to be absent*” (Field note, 2/20/09). I did not understand the power structure; I did not understand the difference between an area coordinator, corner leader, and corner volunteer. It was only later, when we started the editing process, that these hierarchical distinctions within the group became clear.

Because I entered the project as a part of a larger project focused on Southeastern San Diego more generally, my goal at this point in the research process was to accumulate information about the neighborhood and local safety issues. Consequently, my field notes mainly contain “facts” about what was happening in the neighborhood, which were presented during weekly corner reports. Through these reports, I started to see the neighborhood differently. I had already worked at the learning center in SESD for two years, but that project involved driving to the center,

working in the center, and going home. While attuned to neighborhood safety issues, I was not aware of the extent of its safety problems, nor did I have a deep understanding of the kinds of community activities that were taking place to address them. Attending the meetings and hearing the weekly reports allowed me to see the neighborhood through PSW members' eyes. For example, one bit of insider knowledge I picked up was to watch the students as they frequented the gas station near the school. If students went into the gas station, got food, and were not rushing, then everything was OK; if they did not get food, or if they rushed out, it was an indicator that something might be wrong (Field note, 3/13/09). I learned about kids ditching and smoking weed in alleyways around the schools (11/20/08), about girl gang fights that happened in a canyon off of Imperial (Field note, 4/03/09), about a local shop owner's life being threatened by gang members when he tried to clean up his corner (Field note, 4/03/09), and about a kid being jumped at a track meet at Lincoln High School by a Skyline gang member (Field note, 5/07/09). Through such accounts of the members' weekly activities and interactions, a storied landscape of the neighborhood starting taking shape.

During this time, I also started building relationships with PSW members, mainly through small talk before meetings. The buffet style breakfast that was served before every meeting at this point served an important function in my entry into the group. Members and I would arrive at meetings early to enjoy a meal before business commenced:

As I was getting breakfast, I overheard a woman and man talking about how when they were young, they grew up with "bloody knuckles" because that was how they knew to get by. I then sat with Ned and Grant. I asked if most kids go home after school or to rec centers -- most go to

after school activities/sports or home or just hang around. Rec centers don't offer any activities anymore and cost money to do things. Somehow we started talking about politics. They said that Obama will probably get assassinated if elected. Ned said Joe Kennedy was a bootlegger and mafia gangster and owed some people money, which is why his family members keep getting killed.... Grant asked if I was a student, and explained to him what I do. Grant must have talked to Ned about me, because later he came up and asked if I worked at UCSD. I told him I am a graduate student and that I work at a learning center in the area. I'm attuning meetings to learn more about safety issues that affect the youth and in the hopes that PSW will also monitor the area in which the center is located. (Field note, 10/09/08)

I built rapport and had these kinds of loose interactions with members for several months. Since I was consistently present, I was recognized by members and we would exchange pleasantries, but we did not get to know each other well. Recall that it was after the one-year anniversary meeting, when the members went around the table to reflect on the year, that I started taking an interest in exploring the group itself. Makeba and I were inspired by the members' stories and struck by the powerful impact PSW seems to have on their lives and the community. We both felt a need to record and preserve their stories. As a participatory action researcher, I wanted to make the process mutually beneficial -- to us, the researchers, and to the group. This was the impetus behind the idea to make a documentary showcasing the members' personal narratives.

Viewed from the end, once we decided to make a video, my relationships with the members thickened. Until that point, I attended meetings but did not contribute much to the group discussion. The members seemed to perceive me as another "silent" community partner -- a good resource for the program (owing to my institutional affiliations), but not directly relevant to the members themselves. My interest in filming the members' personal stories and creating a documentary changed that. Now I served a

purpose, and together we could achieve a common goal. I started occasionally meeting with Daniel, who wanted to be involved in documenting the history of PSW. From this point on, when I attended meetings, members would give me hugs and tell me stories about their week:

Derrick got up and gave me a hug, I told him I would bring his DVD to him in the afternoon. They were talking about feeling blessed. Derrick told me that when he was leaving his corner yesterday, he found a piece of equipment a worker had left behind. It looked expensive, so he took it home with him to return it the next day. The following day, the worker was so grateful that Derrick had kept the tool safe that he gave him a \$20 reward. Had the tool been stolen, the company would have taken \$200 out of his paycheck. Later that day, a teacher came by and gave him a gift for all his hard work. He said that he felt very blessed. (Field note, 12/18/09)

When we started the interviews, I was granted access into the members' lives in a way that attending the meetings did not afford. Maurice (whose face was asked to be blurred in the video) invited us into his home and made Makeba and me a pancake breakfast during his interview. Most of the members wanted to be filmed on their street corners; DeeDee wanted to be filmed in her car while roving. This was the first time I was able to actually *see* and experience what the members did and get to know them as individuals.

Also, it was not until I started filming the members on their corners that the significance of the PSW vests and walkie-talkies really resonated with me.

I then went down to film Gina. I drove down to 47th and Market. No Gina. I waited around, taking this opportunity to see what it might feel like to be a PSW corner leader. I felt out of place. Standing on a corner surrounded by an auto shop, a small market, and a Buddhist gift shop, I waited as students from Gompers walked by in crowds. Diagonal to me was the gas station Paul told me about in his personal narrative – it used to be run down and the owner had remodeled it. A group of about 5

older men were standing between the gas station and a vacant lot. They were looking at me, probably wondering what I was doing there. Standing there, I realized the importance of the vest. The vests give them purpose, and I think more importantly, signals their purpose to others. Without the vests, they would just be a person standing on a corner.

After about 7 minutes, I started walking back to my car, when I saw Gina. There had been a stabbing on the trolley, so she was late. She said this all very nonchalantly, simply stating that things had to be re-routed because the trolley was now a crime scene. We walked to the corner, she put her things down, put her vest on, and stood. Gina is an older Black woman, maybe late fifties, early sixties. Gray hair, over weight, stout. We decided not to do the interview today because the corner was very loud and I was afraid we wouldn't be able to hear her clearly. Instead, I took b-roll footage. A lot of kids pass by that corner. And a lot looked at me in wonder. Occasionally, Gina would proudly tell them, "It's all about me today." One boy asked me what I was filming. Another threw a pen across, yelling, "flying pen," presumably hoping it would get caught on film. Gina told him to be nice.

This is also when the value of the walkie-talkies hit me. If a fight or altercation were to take place, as an older woman, Gina may not be able to handle it or may get hurt in the process. Having the walkie-talkie probably gives her a sense of personal safety. And this also speaks to the power of visibility and presence. Again, she is not an intimidating woman (and I had similar thoughts when interviewing Randy on his corner). Why does having an older lady in a bright yellow vest deter crime and fights and increase safety? Because she has the power to contact others to come to her aid and contact the police? (Field note, 4/25/10)

When Ted and Rhonda had talked about the vests and walkie-talkies when they presented the master narrative, it was evident that the items were important artifacts in the world of PSW, but it was not clear to me why. In the personal narratives, which I had begun collecting prior to this moment, the members talked about the vests as actors that contributed to the construction of their PSW identity. Once I experienced being on the corner by myself their weekly reports became more meaningful.

Narrative identities

In Chapter Two, I asked,

What do group members' personal stories reveal about PSW?

The answer to this question should be apparent from my account in Chapter Five. Prior to collecting the members' personal narratives, I knew very little about the members even though I had attended meetings for eight months. During the meetings, some members would occasionally make side comments, such as "*I used to be scared of seeing the white and black cars [police cars] when I was doing bad*" (Randy, field note, 11/20/08) and "*I had to get over snitching to regain the community*" (Derrick, field note, 3/20/09). At the time, I actually found it kind of odd that they said such things while giving corner reports. It was not until the one-year anniversary meeting that I started to get a deeper understanding of the role PSW played in the members' sense of self.

A characteristic of my field note from that anniversary meeting reveals my rudimentary state of understanding of the group at the time, which in retrospect seems odd. I did not put names to reflections. This faulty documentation clearly reflects my perception of the group at the time as being one unit, the family members of the master narrative. The only person I did single out in my notes was Madison, the representative of the Councilman, an outsider like myself. It did not matter to me who said what since PSW was a family in which members related to each other as equals.

As individuals emerged from the personal narratives, my perception of the group changed. The seemingly random comments in earlier meetings, no longer seemed so

random. Randy had been a hustler and a gambler, so his previous fear of police made sense. Derrick had been a gang member; he had been part of a culture in which snitching was seen as an abhorrent act. The members' present role as enforcers of the law and insurers of safety contradicted their past self images. These side comments were occasions for the members to solidify their identification as 'givers' not 'takers' in the community.

At the same time as I was gaining a deeper understanding of the group through the personal narratives, the members continued to maintain and reinforce the master narrative. Despite individual differences, they emphasized the role of the vest, building relationships, and deterring deviant behaviors. The narratives reinforced the principle of group acceptance formulated in the master narrative -- although many had been criminals, the program was giving them a second chance and their pasts were not held against them. I still had the impression that PSW was a family and everyone worked together to facilitate positive change in the neighborhood. I was even more impressed with the affective nature of the program. All the members spoke so passionately about being part of PSW and the work they were doing.

Dynamics revealed

The third set of questions I posed at the beginning of this thesis was:

How can you design a collaborative visual-based project that that is mutually beneficial to the group and the researcher? What does that project reveal about how a group

constructs self-representations? What new insight into the dynamics of community life become available using this approach?

The initial idea for making the video was to collect local stories from the neighborhood to gain situated knowledge about the area as a means to creating interventions. That idea quickly morphed into creating a promotional video to be screened at a specific PSW fundraising and recruiting event. This shift in orientation, and the concomitant invitation to PSW members to help in making the video was crucial to the methodological requirement of PAR that the research be of mutual benefit. They benefited because they were able to use the video to *show* potential volunteers what they do. The video project was critical to enabling me to learn how the group created a collective self- and social representation and about the dynamics of the group, which had not been visible to me during my previous activities.

As I have already noted, during the first two stages of the project, I understood PSW and its members in terms of the master narrative. I was affected by the members' stories and how fervently they talked about the program and the team. My understanding up to this point, combined with their own invocations of the master narrative, had given me no reason to question that narrative. However, once the production process began, I gained a new perspective on the group and how the group members worked within the master narrative to create their own stories about their neighborhood, PSW, and themselves.

Constructing the filmic narrative was truly a collaborative endeavor, but it was not a family undertaking. Only the area coordinators, salaried employees of JFF, were

part of the team. That subgroup and I did in fact operate in a collaborative fashion to create the future representation of PSW, but the dynamics and divisions of labor during production were complex. I found myself positioned as the one pushing for internal inclusiveness in terms having all active team members' voices heard. After hearing the members' personal narratives, I started to care about the members and be invested in the team. The coordinators were intent on including outside, peripheral players, many of whom I had never (or barely) heard mentioned before making the video. The coordinators' choices and preferences ran counter to the master narrative as I understood it, which until this point had framed my understanding of the group. My idealistic bubble was burst. The image I had of PSW as a big happy family was being dismantled.

In the course of the editorial choices and justifications inherent in the production process, I became aware of a hierarchical division within the group. Initially, the group appeared to be organized as depicted in Figure 8.1 below, but I came to see it was structured more like the depiction in Figure 8.2:

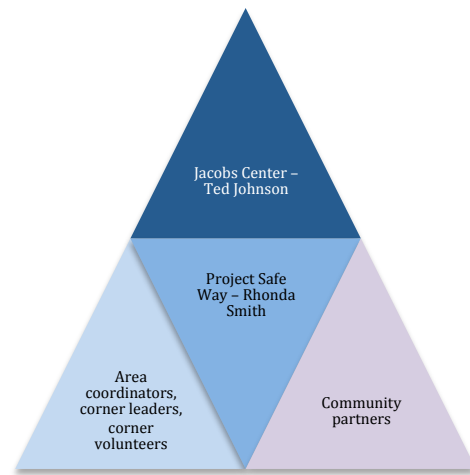


Figure 8.1: My understanding of the structure of PSW at the start of my participation.

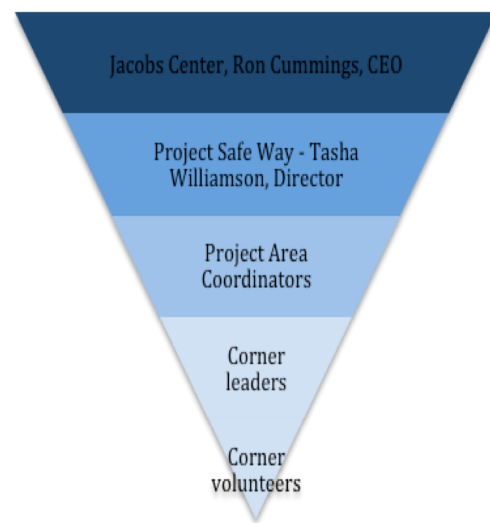


Figure 8.2: My understanding of the structure of PSW at the end of my participation.

I had already started to notice a structural shift during one of the meetings before we started making the video:

Rhonda had the group split into the area coordinators and safe passage people. Each group sat on opposite sides of the room. I stayed with the safe passage folks....Once they finished talking about action items, about 10 minutes passed by until Rhonda split the group up again. This time, the corner supervisors got together with their area coordinators to discuss more specific action items. For example, I met with Bobby, Tom, and Martha (safe passage, corner supervisors) and Luis (area coordinator). (Field note, 12/18/09)

At this time, before beginning the editing process, I had not as yet interpreted this mode of organization hierarchically. I was aware of the distinct positions -- area coordinator and corner leader -- but I was unaware of the power differential. I was also unaware of the difference between a corner leader and a corner volunteer. It was only once we began the editing process that I became more aware of the changes:

I arrived to the usual meeting room, but it was closed and I didn't see anyone outside. I wondered whether the meeting had been cancelled and no one told me....I called DeeDee....I asked if there was a meeting today, and she told me they were having a quick 30-minute meeting because the area coordinators were then meetings with Ted. They were in the community room at the Jacobs Center....The team was sitting at two round tables. At first it seemed as though the corner leaders were at one table and the area coordinators at another.....[After the meeting] we gathered in a circle, held hands and Paul led us in prayer. The groups dispersed. Ted had arrived they were getting ready for the area coordinator meeting. I was talking with Toni about rescheduling her interview, when I was asked to move. They were bringing the tables together so the group could sit around one table. I thought this was interesting. Why hadn't they done this for the corner leader-area coordinator meeting? It seems that phase II and the designation of area coordinators, has set a pretty clear hierarchy that was not as apparent before. (Field note, 2/26/10)

As indicated by the field note written during the editing process, the hierarchy was concretized and the different positions carried new meaning for me. Area coordinators had begun to work directly with Ted and had their own office in the Jacobs Center,

whereas before, only Rhonda did. They were now physically and fiscally embedded in the institution while the other members of PSW remained on the periphery.

The editorial team's decisions can now be seen as oriented toward making PSW look professional and create a polished representation of the group consistent with the master narrative. They wanted to represent "up" in the hierarchy (see figure 8.2) and I wanted to represent "down." At the time, I did not understand the importance of featuring people in positions of power talking about PSW, rather than highlighting the everyday people that constituted the group and did the ground work. The latter seemed more appropriately representative to me; not owing to some grand principle of equity, but rather, because this was the impression of PSW I had developed during my time spent with the group. I also failed to understand why they had me reshoot Luis's and Paul's interviews. Even Jaime, an area coordinator, came to me and *"told me he would like to redo his interview. After watching the DVD I gave him, he felt like he fumbled on words and didn't sound professional"* (Field note, 4/10/10). I did not think his manner during the interview was that big of a deal. I actually liked that the footage was authentic and did not seem rehearsed. I also did not understand why they censored members' narratives. From my perspective, these decisions prevented a genuine portrayal of PSW.

It was only a few years after the video was made, when I interviewed team members, that I could more fully make sense of their orientation to the power structure of PSW within Jacobs. For the area coordinators, PSW became a "real" team only once it was formalized; in other words, once the area coordinator positions were created.

They wanted to construct a representation in which PSW would be socially recognized as a legitimate project. This meant highlighting Phase II of the project and aligning themselves with the interests of community leaders and of JFF. When making the video, I was immersed in PSW's past while they were looking towards its future.

Methodological (re)considerations

As I discussed in Chapter Two, there is long history in academia of ethnographers studying small groups in urban settings. Early researchers in this tradition participated in the lives of the people they were studying for extended amounts of time to uncover the social structures that organized their worlds. They listened to their stories and participated in their everyday activities. Their goal was to advance academic knowledge and offer new understandings of a community to a society at large. They did not make the search for practical solutions to perceived needs or collaborating with participants part of their methodology. Nor did they offer a chronological account of the work followed by the kind of reflective critique offered here.

A more recent trend in in small group urban ethnographies emphasizes the researchers' role in the research process and the need for academics to create mutually beneficial relationships with participants. Ideally, participatory action researchers design projects that bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation *with* others. Here though, the researchers rarely foreground their changing understanding of the group as the research process progresses.

Collaborative video production projects, as I hope I have illustrated in this thesis, adhere to the principles and ideals of PAR and allow researcher to engage with participants in mutually beneficial ways. The method highlights the research process itself and considers it as a story unfolding. Mishler says that narrative researchers rely on the ending of a story to make sense of it:

we go back and forth, between our understanding of the whole and its parts, engaging in a repetitive recycling of interpretive moves towards a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of a story and how it is put together. (2006, p. 47)

I think the same can be said for participatory action researchers. It was not until I returned to the beginning at the end that I could truly make sense of the project.

This project also highlights the importance of research that continues for years - well beyond the normal time span of a PhD dissertation project. Moreover, one has to enter such projects fully expecting them to “change course” in the process of their own development (Cole, 2014). Hence the importance of documenting one’s participation with participants during all stages of a project, from its beginning to its end. Early field notes and other artifacts are essential to this process because only later can their understandings be evaluated. It was only once I created a video with PSW, that is, entered in to the completion phase of a final product, that I (re)gained an understanding of the group. Suddenly, events that had taken place months prior, and were overlooked at the time, become newly significant and meaningful. Had I stopped working with PSW at any earlier stage than I did, I would have left with a different understanding of PSW in its community context.

This method allows participatory action researchers to expose the dynamics involved in creating a collective social- and self-representation by documenting the exclusions and additions that are necessary to compress the events into the representation. The video hides all the contradictions, tensions, inclusion, exclusions, and negotiations that went into making it. Viewers watch the video and see PSW as a team of passionate volunteers investing in their community and trying to make a positive difference in their neighborhood (Field note, 7/30/14). The video seems to retell the master narrative, though we know from Chapter Six that the master narrative was not always put into action by the members. The video-making process was reminiscent of making enamel crafts, in which you begin by arranging individual beads on a surface. You then put the design into the oven. The individual beads then melt together to create one integrated smooth surface. People only seeing the final product would not know about all the distinct beads that went into making it. They only see the united polished surface, much like the video, which conformed to the master narrative with which we began.

In closing, CVP projects have the potential for unveiling the complex dynamics of community life in a way that benefits both the researcher and the participants. Importantly, they create opportunities for researchers to develop meaningful relationships with participants. I found my time with PSW both informative and inspiring. I have since participated with another non-profit organization in a CVP project and hope to continue doing so in the future as an engaged university participatory action researcher.

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