SKATE AND ENGAGE:

The Laguna Skategarden and Civic Engagement Among Teens

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The Laguna Skategarden and Civic Engagement Among Teens

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And last, but certainly not least, to the teens at the Laguna Skategarden: you heartened me with your kindness, maturity, and many insights. I wish each of you much happiness and success in your life. Continue to speak, because you have so much to say.

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Contents

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List of Tables

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List of Figures

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1. Introduction to the Research

1.1   The Importance of Public Space

The public realm, including parks, plazas, and streets, can impact the lives of individuals in meaningful ways. A respite from the bustle of the city surrounds (Central Park in New York City); a scene for socializing and culture (Covent Garden in London); a symbol of history and beauty (Piazza San Marco in Venice); or the setting for social and political change (Tahrir Square in Cairo), public spaces are a vital component of every community.

Public spaces create a stronger sense of place or attachment to community due to the social opportunities provided (Project for Public Spaces 2000, 13-19). Social interactions in the public realm have even been found to alleviate stress and maintain health and well-being (Cattel et al. 2008, 556-57).

Teens benefit from spending time in public space in unique ways. Unlike adults, teens often have no private places that they can claim as their own. They therefore rely on public space as a place to go to be by themselves and to socialize with their peers. Within this setting, they have the opportunity to learn how to be comfortable with being alone, to be productive in their free time, and to build their identities and self-esteem (Owens 2002, 157). The public realm is also a context for adolescents to engage with members of their community and, in so doing, to develop in other meaningful ways.

1.2   Planning and the Decline of Civic Engagement

The topic of civic engagement received much attention after the publication of *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, in which Robert D. Putnam discusses the decline of civic engagement within the United States, most prevalently among its youth (Putnam 2000).[1] Putnam places the blame for this decline on several factors including, the pressures of time and money; electronic entertainment; and a shift in attitude toward civic engagement by baby boomers and their children (Putnam 2000, 283). He also places blame on suburbanization, sprawl, and long commutes.

The migration of Americans into suburban areas continues to rise. The highest percent change in population between 2000 and 2010 in California, for instance, occurred primarily in the Central Valley and Inland Empire (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Many cities in these regions reflect the norms of sprawl development - residents are isolated from one another and primarily dependent on their cars.

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[1] Putnam, along with Thomas H. Sander, more recently reported that the attacks of September 11, 2001 lead to a large increase in interest in politics and public affairs among American youth, however these effects may be most concentrated among Americans born in the 1980s. For those individuals born after that time, who are either too young to remember the event or were not yet born, the impact of 9/11 and the resultant interest in politics and public affairs is not yet known (Sander and Putnam 2010, 10-13).

According to Putnam, suburbanization, sprawl, and long commutes negatively impact levels of civic enagagement due to increased time spent in the car (and thus less free time for civic involvement); increased social segregation and social homogeneity typical of suburban life, which appears to reduce incentives for civic involvement (often it is the differences/conflicts among people within a community or across communities that inspire them to become engaged); and the lack of definition and "boundedness" of sprawl development (people are more likely to be involved in community affairs if that community is defined) (Putnam 2000, 204-15).

In many suburban areas similar factors have also lead to the demise of the public realm as a place for civic life (Kunstler 1996, 38).

1.3   Skateparks as the Public Realm

Skateparks are outdoor public spaces designed specifically for use by skateboarders. Although once seen as a fringe sport, skateboarding has gained mainstream acceptance and increased in popularity over the last several decades; the number of skateboard parks in the United States has grown from 165 parks in 1997 to more than 2,100 parks in 2008 (Howell 2008, 475). According to the SkatePark Association USA, there are at least 350 skateparks in California alone (SkatePark Association USA 2011).

Skateparks are now valued by a growing number of city officials and residents, as evidenced by the rise in development of these spaces and the adoption of skatepark policy documents by large cities, including Portland's *Skatepark System Plan* (Portland Parks and Recreation 2008), and Seattle's *Citywide Skatepark Plan* (Seattle Parks and Recreation 2007). No doubt, one of the contributing factors in this trend is that skateparks provide a unique setting for the teens who frequent these facilities.

1.4   The Study: Can a Skatepark Affect Civic Engagement?

The setting of the research conducted for this study is the Laguna Skategarden, a skatepark opened in 2008 in Sebastopol, California. The intention of the research is to determine if *this* public space impacts individuals' lives in meaningful ways. More specifically, does the use of the Laguna Skategarden affect the development of civic engagement among teens who visit the park today? And, what are the lasting effects on those individuals who were involved as teens in the planning process to establish the park?

Through observations and interviews with park users and other community members, this study analyzes the effect of the Laguna Skategarden on the development of civic engagement among teens. Assessing the lasting impacts of advocating for the skatepark as a teen was accomplished by interviewing adults who grew up in Sebastopol and were involved as adolescents in the planning process.

1.5   Report Organization

First, there is a brief description of the City of Sebastopol, followed by a history of the Laguna Skategarden, as well as the rules and regulations that govern the space. There is then a discussion of adolescent development and methods for measuring civic engagement among teens. Next, there is a review of the existing literature on teen civic engagement, public space (and specifically skateparks) and teens.

The findings from nearly 11 hours of observations conducted at the Laguna Skategarden are then reported. This is followed by the findings from interviews with teens who use the Laguna Skategarden and the adults who were involved as teens in lobbying for the park. Finally, there is a discussion of the research performed for this study and concluding remarks on the applicability of this study to other communities interested in designing spaces that promote positive youth development.

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2. Study Setting: Sebastopol, CA and the Laguna Skategarden

2.1 Location and Select Demographics

The City of Sebastopol, California is located 56 miles north of San Francisco in Sonoma County (see Figure 1). The City has a population of roughly 7,500 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) and is expected to grow to 8,600 residents by 2015 (City of Sebastopol Planning Department 2009, 12).

Figure 1. Sebastopol, CA is located 56 miles north of San Francisco in Sonoma County. Source: Base map data provided by County of Sonoma Permits and Resource Management Department (PRMD), https://gis.sonoma-county.org/catalog.asp. Map designed by author.

In the 2009–2010 school year, the most recent school year for which data is available, there were at total of 1,383 students enrolled at the two public high schools in Sebastopol (see Table 1).

Table 1. Student Enrollment at Sebastopol's Public High Schools

Name	Category of School	Enrollment 2009-2010
Laguna High School	Model continuation public	103
Analy High School	Traditional public	1,280
Total High School Students: 1,383		

Source: Education Data Partnership (Ed-Data), http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us (accessed May 2011).

2.2   Sebastopol Park System

In addition to the Laguna Skategarden, Sebastopol has four main City-operated parks and one park operated by the County of Sonoma (see Figure 2). These parks feature a variety of recreational facilities that may appeal to teens within the community. The Laguna Youth Park includes two baseball fields, and Ives Park, close to the town's commercial business district, has a baseball field and municipal swimming pool. Ragel Ranch Regional Park is a 157-acre County Park with several sports fields, tennis courts and a nature trail. The City has also purchased the half-acre parcel adjacent to the Laguna Skategarden and intends to expand the park to include more green space, several additional skateable features, play structures for two different age groups, and BBQs (Webster 2011).

2.3   A Brief History of the Laguna Skategarden

In 2008, the City of Sebastopol opened the Laguna Skategarden northeast of the town's central business district on Laguna Park Way. The combined skatepark and community garden was the result of a collaboration between the City and several organizations, including West County Skate Park Inc., a community-based nonprofit established specifically to advocate for this project.

The first attempt to create a skatepark in Sebastopol was in 1990 when the United Skates of America, a 4H youth development project, met with the Sebastopol City Council to propose the concept (City of Sebastopol and West County Skatepark Inc. 2002, A17). Although the City entertained the idea, it was eventually defeated. The City instead built a Teen Center at the location where the Sebastopol Youth Annex stands today.
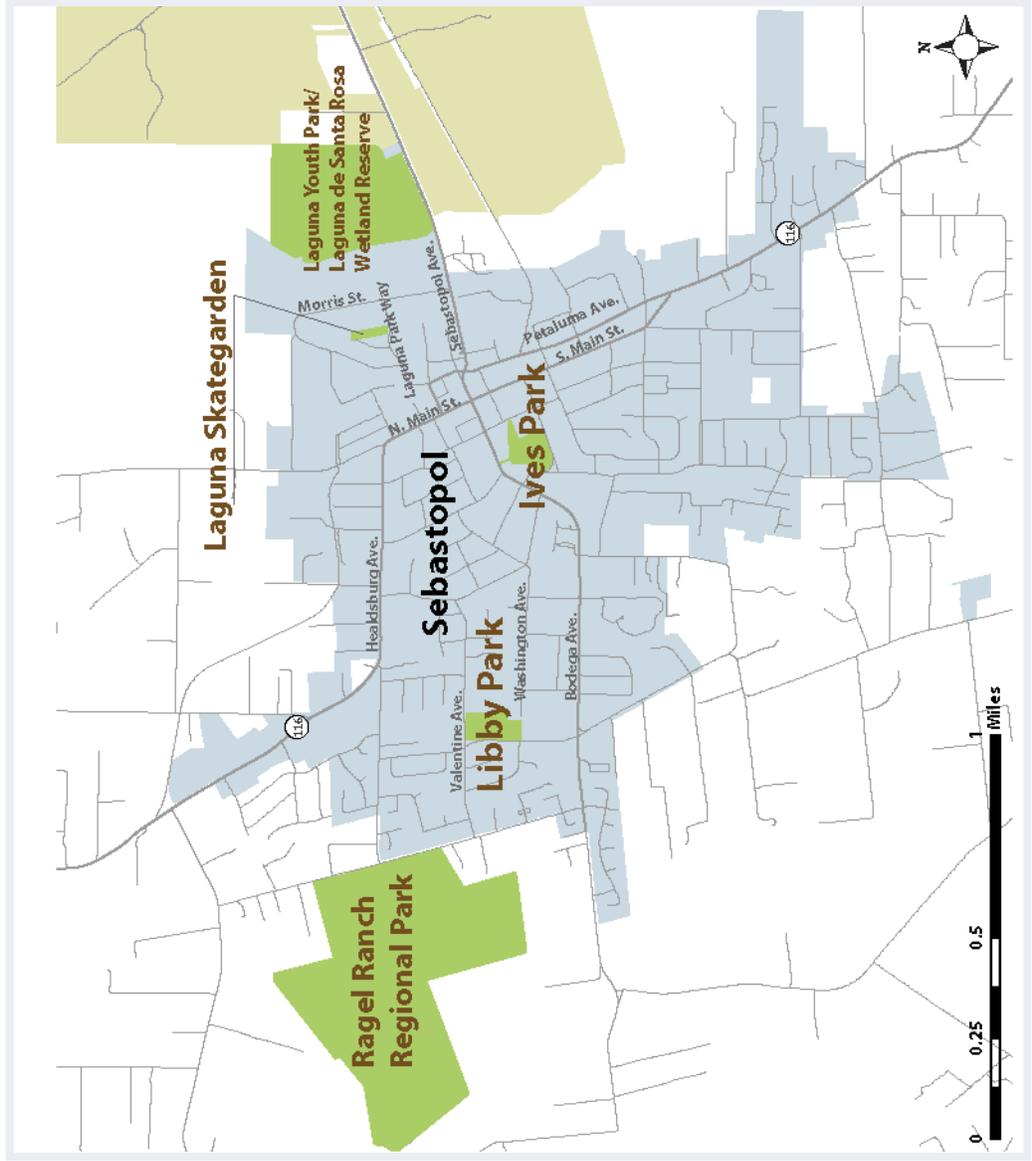
Figure 2. In addition to the Laguna Skategarden, Sebastopol has four main City-operated parks and one park (Ragel Ranch Regional Park) operated by the County of Sonoma. Source: Base map data provided by County of Sonoma Permits and Resource Management Department (PRMD), https://gis.sonoma-county. org/catalog.asp. Map designed by author.

Throughout the 1990s, various community members continued to approach the City about building a skatepark, including a grassroots committee comprised of a group of kids and several adult advocates. However every attempt eventually failed due to a lack of support and funding.

The demand for a skatepark stemmed from frustration among young skaters and the adults who advocated for them. Chapter 12.40 of the Sebastopol Municipal Code prohibits skating activities on streets and sidewalks in Sebastopol. More specifically, the ordinance prohibits skateboarding, roller-skating and in-line skating "on, along, or over any pedestrian walk or mall or privately owned roadway or parking area situated within a shopping center, on all sidewalks and streets within the central traffic district/ South Main Street (to its intersection with Petaluma Avenue), or within the Downtown Plaza" (City of Sebastopol 2002a, chap. 12.40). Skateboarding is also prohibited on public school grounds within 25 feet of any buildings, stairways, railings or other fixed structure per section 12.40.030 of the Municipal Code.

Noncompliance with the skateboarding ordinance is punishable by citation (City of Sebastopol and West County Skatepark Inc. 2002, A14). The City's Police Department responded to 52 skating incidents in 1999; 138 incidents in 2000; and 96 incidents in 2001 (Webster 2003, 5).

Skaters, who felt that they were the victims of unjust discrimination, grew frustrated and the encounters with law enforcement officers became increasingly contentious (Dippé 2010).

Figure 3. Chapter 12.40 of the Sebastopol Municipal Code prohibits skating activities on streets and sidewalks in Sebastopol. Reminders of this law are painted on the sidewalks in downtown Sebastopol.

In 1999, a group of parents, skaters, and other community members picked up where the previous grassroots effort had left off (Bill Cole [2003?], letter written to City of Sebastopol on behalf of West County Skatepark Inc.). By March 2000, after garnering the support of several members of the City Council, the group formed West County Skatepark Inc., a nonprofit organization established to advocate for a skatepark in Sebastopol (City of Sebastopol and West County Skatepark Inc. 2002, A17).

The Organization's board members, along with City Staff and a City Councilperson, began the hunt for a site suitable for the skatepark. Two of the City's parks and an area near the Sebastopol Community Center were considered, in addition to several private properties in and outside of the Sebastopol City Limits (Webster 2003, 2). Although none of these sites were deemed suitable for the project, the organization's efforts were successful in unifying the project's proponents, gaining the support of the City Council, and rallying the youth of Sebastopol to get involved by attending

public meetings (Dippé 2010), fundraising, and even preparing a presentation for the Sonoma County Parks and Recreation Commissioners (City of Sebastopol and West County Skatepark Inc. 2002, A18).

In October 2002, the City successfully negotiated the sale of a 1.05 acre site at 6700 Laguna Park Way (see Figure 4) (Webster 2003, 1). The property owner, who also owned land across the street from the site, had recently allowed the members of a displaced community garden to temporarily use his vacant lot after plans for redevelopment of the site fell through. After nearly two decades, and in spite of vehement opposition to the skatepark by certain neighboring residents and businesses (Webster 2011), the Laguna Skategarden finally opened its gates in September 2008.

The 15,000-square-foot skate facility (see Figure 5) is comprised of three skateboarding *bowls* (a concave structure shaped like a bowl that is inlaid into the ground and used for skateboarding) several ramps, and other built features, called *elements,* which are used for skateboarding *tricks*, the term used for the physical skills performed by skateboarders (see Figure 6).
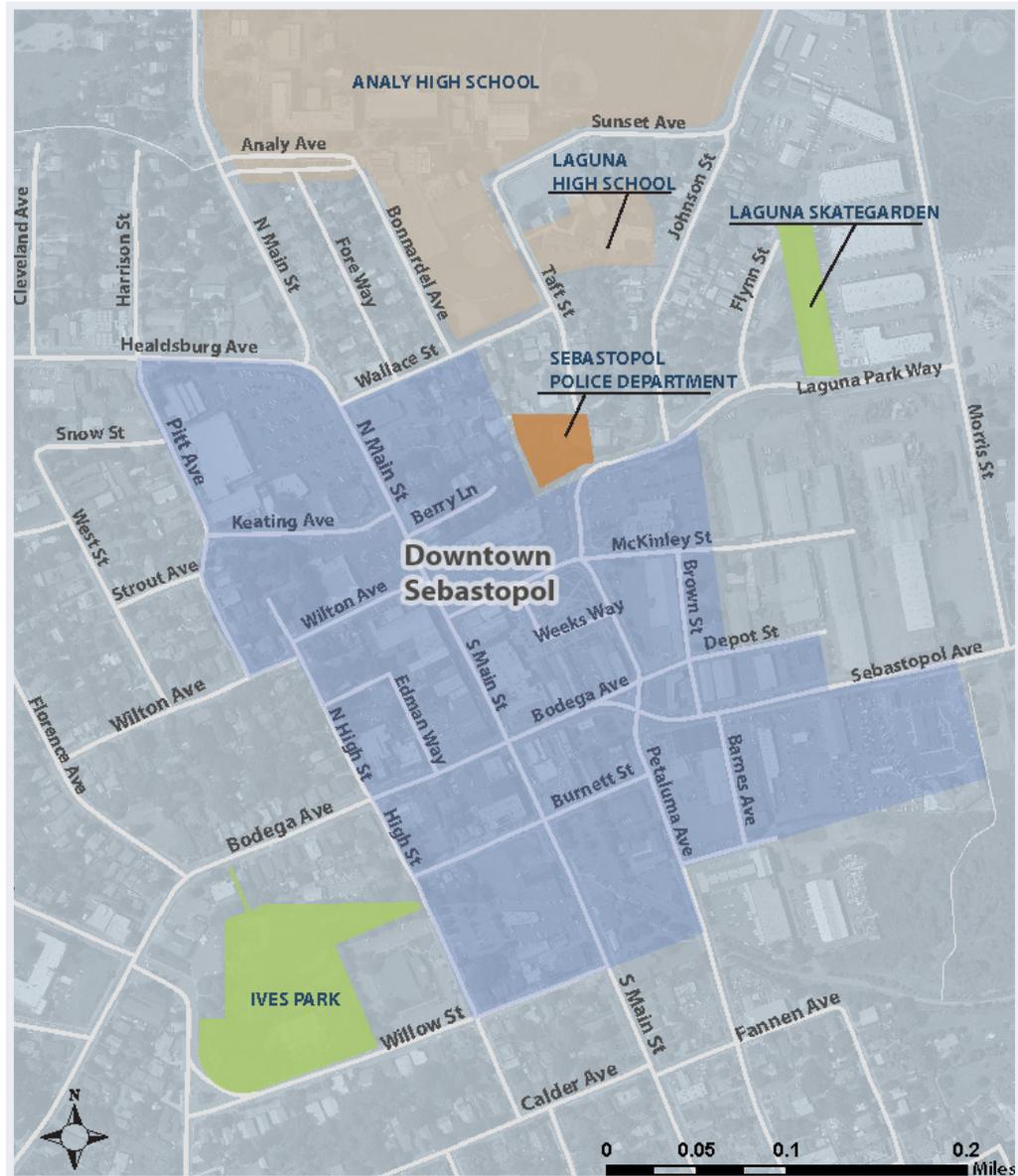
Figure 4. The Laguna Skategarden is located at 6700 Laguna Park Way, within 0.5 miles of Sebastopol's downtown commercial district, and both Analy and Laguna High Schools. The Sebastopol Police Department is within 2 blocks of the park. The area marked "Downtown Sebastopol" on the above map roughly corresponds to the area designated Downtown Core under the City of Sebastopol General Plan, December 2009. Source: Base map data provided by County of Sonoma Permits and Resource Management Department (PRMD), https://gis.sonoma-county.org/catalog.asp. Map designed by author.

Figure 5. Laguna Skategarden Master Plan, 2004. Although this plan for the Skategarden is representative of the general layout of the park, there are several design variations from the park as it exists today, including landscaping and seating features. Source: City of Sebastopol Planning Department.

Figure 6. There are various skate elements at the Laguna Skategarden, including three bowls, which are concave, bowl-shaped structures inlaid into the ground (top image). Other elements include rails and ledges (lower image).

At the back of the park are 23 community garden plots (see Figure 7). There is also a bathroom facility on-site. The park is approximately 0.5 miles from the City's central business district and within 0.3 miles of both Analy High School and Laguna High School. The Sebastopol Police Department is less than two blocks from the skatepark (see Figure 4).

Figure 7. There are 23 community garden plots at the Laguna Skategarden.

There is a residential neighborhood to the northwest of the park, although there is no access to the park from this area (see Figure 8). The parcel immediately to the east of the skatepark is home to Key Auto Body, an auto repair shop, and immediately to the west of the park is a shooting range. The park is enclosed on all sides. Chain-link fencing is used to separate the park from the industrial facilities to the east, while a brick wall separates the facility from the shooting range next door. This wall is also used as a canvas for graffiti art, the only space in the park where graffiti is permitted (see Figure 9). There is a metal gate that runs along the south side of the park, facing Laguna Park Way. This is the location of the only entrance to the park.

Figure 8. To the northwest of the Laguna Skategarden is a residential neighborhood (top image), although there is no access to the park from this area. Immediately east of the park is light industrial use (bottom image).

Figure 9. The graffiti wall at the Laguna Skategarden.

2.4 Skateparks in Sonoma County

Within Sonoma County there are skateparks located in the City of Healdsburg; the City of Petaluma; the City of Sonoma; and the City of Windsor (see Figure 10). There are also two skateparks in neighboring Santa Rosa (approximately 7 miles from Sebastopol).

Despite the rise in popularity of skateparks, these spaces are not without issues in Sonoma County. According to Sebastopol's Chief of Police, Jeffrey Weaver, at a conference of Sonoma County Police Chiefs held in 2009, chiefs from two jurisdictions advised other law enforcement officers to avoid the establishment of skateparks in their communities (Weaver, 2011). One Chief reported that his officers would no longer patrol the skatepark in his jurisdiction because of the high number of incidents at this park.

Figure 10. In addition to the Laguna Skategarden, there are six other skateparks in Sonoma County. Source: Base map data provided by County of Sonoma Permits and Resource Management Department (PRMD), https://gis.sonoma-county.org/catalog.asp. Map designed by author.

2.5   Laguna Skategarden Rules and Regulations

Under California Health and Safety Code Section 115800, city and county operators of skateparks in California are not liable for any injury that happens as a result of skating in the designated park as long as the operator adopts an ordinance requiring any person riding a skateboard at the facility to wear a helmet, elbow pads and knee pads (State of California 2009, Section 115800). The operator must also post a sign at the facility notifying riders of these requirements and that failure to do so will result in a citation (State of California 2009, Section 115800). See Appendix A for the full text of California Health and Safety Code Section 115800.

To comply with the above regulations, the City of Sebastopol adopted Section 9.24.380 of the Sebastopol Municipal Code. The City's Skatepark Ordinance clearly states that the use of the skatepark is defined as a hazardous recreational activity under California law and that helmet, elbow and knee pads are required at the facility (City of Sebastopol 2002b., Chap. 9.24, Section 9.24.380).

Sebastopol strictly enforces the helmet law at the Laguna Skategarden. Violators receive costly citations (minimum $172) and the police regularly patrol the park for violators. Although many of the skateboarders who use the park are generally frustrated, and often angry, by the enforcement of this rule, Kenyon Webster, Planning Director, defends the City's position: "From the City's perspective, we spent millions of dollars and we have liabilities per our insurance policy. It's the police officers' job to enforce the rules" (Webster 2011).

Figure 11. Rules and regulations are posted at the Laguna Skategarden.

Jeffrey Weaver, who was one of the original advocates for the Skategarden, contends that Sebastopol police officers treat the teens with respect and that the City enforces skatepark regulations in a far less heavy-handed manner than in other jurisdictions. Weaver is an adamant supporter of the Skategarden referring to it as a, "tremendous community asset" and a symbol "that shows that the community cares about skaters" (Weaver 2011).

The City's Skateboard Ordinance also stipulates that the park is closed between sunset and sunrise; that graffiti is prohibited in the park; and that the City's Public Works Department is authorized, with the approval of the City Manager, "to temporarily close the skate area or the entire park in the event of any substantial vandalism, including but not limited to graffiti and other damage to the skate area or other park facilities" (City of Sebastopol 2002b., Chap. 9.24, Section 9.24.380).

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3. Assessing Civic Engagement among Teens: Civic Participation, Social Capital and Positive Youth Development

How can a skatepark impact civic engagement among teens? To answer this question, it is first necessary to define adolescent civic engagement. It is then necessary to explore how the places in which teens spend time and the people with whom that time is spent can inspire lifelong civic engagement.

Civic engagement is not necessarily about political participation or the support of government (although it certainly can be). It is simply about being engaged with one's community (Lerner 2003, 5-6; Flanagan and Faison 2001, 3). An adolescent's civic duty, civic skills, civic participation and social connections are referred to collectively by Bobek et al. as Civic Identity/Civic Engagement (Bobek et al. 2009, 615-27). This is inclusive of a teen's civic actions and his/her attitudes. Does he participate in activities at school? Volunteer? Take an interest in political, social or environmental causes? These activities can be organized (a school fund-raiser; volunteering at a health facility) or informal (signing an online petition; reading the newspaper). It also includes the relations and trust among peers and adults, often referred to as *social capital*.

Social capital is defined by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development as, "…mutually beneficial relations, trust and bonding with other people in the community" (Lerner, Lerner and Phelps 2008, 14). This type of capital, which develops as the result of formal networks (4-H, Kiwanis Club) and informal networks (book clubs, online forums, church groups), allows individuals to resolve collective problems more easily; leads to increased trust, which results in more productive communities; allows people to identify with others in their community; and improves the sharing of information, which may facilitate the achievement of shared goals or positive changes within a community (Putnam 2000, 288-89). These networks improve the welfare of both individuals and the community (Hyman 2002, 197). Social capital is not analogous to civic engagement, but it is a key ingredient: it is through these social interactions that we become engaged in our communities.

To understand how socialization can affect civic engagement, it is necessary to explore certain aspects of adolescent development. Much of the literature published on the topic of youth civic engagement since the 1990s discusses *positive youth development* (Larson 2000, 170-183; Lerner et al. 2002, 11-33; Damon, Menon, Bronk 2003, 119-28; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 263). This theoretical perspective in the field of human development posits that it is better to promote the positive behavior of youth than to try to prevent negative behavior (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 5-14; Sherrod, Torney-Purta and Flanagan 2010, 4). Furthermore, it is possible to change an adolescent's behavior and the way that he or she relates to the world if they are surrounded by an environment that promotes positive development (Lerner 2007, 30).

Central to this notion is the relationship between adolescents and the contexts in which they develop (Lerner et al. 2002, 11-33). The relation of individuals to the contexts in their lives - which for teens include family, peer groups, school, community and society - constitute the basis of their behavior and the way in which they develop

over time (Lerner et al. 2002, 13). These factors influence teens not only in terms of who they become as individuals, but also how they identify with their community.

There are various ways to operationalize positive development, including developmental *assets,* which are defined as key relationships, opportunities, values, skills, and self-perceptions (Benson and Scales 2009, 86). More specifically these are classified as *internal assets*, which are developed by a child on his/her path to self-regulation, and *external assets*, those provided by the adults and peers in a child's life (Blyth and Leffert 1995, 64-87; Benson et al. 1998, 138-59; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264). Internal assets are defined as: a commitment to learning; positive values; social competencies; and identity. External assets are defined as: support; empowerment; boundaries and expectations; and constructive use of time (Benson et al. 1998, 138-59; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264).

Another way to assess positive youth development is through the *5 C's* – competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion (Lerner et al. 2002, 16). Those adolescents who possess the 5 C's and live a life with adequate developmental assets are considered to be *thriving* (Benson et al. 1998, 148; Lerner et al. 2002, 11-33; Lerner 2004, 4-5; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 263-77) and will thus make an "optimal or idealized transition to the adult world" (Lerner 2004, 24).

Thriving is dependent upon the interplay between an individual's personal identity and the context - defined by both the places and people in one's life - that surrounds that individual. The result of this relationship is what is described as bidirectional development: thriving adolescents are supported by their contexts and in turn he/she makes positive contributions to those contexts (Lerner 2004, 43-60; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264). Thus, a child is thriving only if he or she is involved in a positive relationship with his or her community (Lerner et al 2000, 15).

Those youth who make contributions to self and to society are "people whose sense of self involves a combined moral and civic commitment to contributing to society in manners reflective of their individual strengths, talents, and interests" (Lerner 2004, 4-5). But, a thriving youth must also be part of a society that "values and supports the freedom to take the initiative to make such individual contributions" (Lerner 2004, 4-5).

Ultimately, a thriving adolescent will grow to be an adult who cares not only about himself, but also about his family, peers, community and larger society (Lerner 2004; Larson 2000, 170; Lerner et al. 2002, 15). This identity translates into positive adulthood and a life that involves positive behaviors, such as civic engagement, and the desire to contribute to helping the people and institutions within one's community. Lerner defines such an individual as one who possesses the Sixth C: Contribution (Lerner 2004, 4-5).

Benson and Scales argue that a key component of thriving in adolescence is identifying a "spark," or passion in life (Benson and Scales 2009, 91). More specifically, sparks are defined as self-identified interests or skills that provide adolescents "energy, joy, purpose and direction" (Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264). Thriving is achieved as sparks are identified and then supported and nurtured both by the

adolescent and other people in the adolescent's life, including family, peers and community members.

Those adolescents who have identified a passionate interest in their life, and who have people in their lives who nurture that interest, are "more likely to have other values and commitments to social contribution that bring benefit to their communities and wider society" (Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 273).

Thus any context, even a skatepark (and more specifically the people who make up the skatepark community), can contribute positively or negatively to an adolescent in meaningful ways. If the context is one that provides the assets necessary for positive youth development, then the adolescent will develop (or strengthen) those characteristics associated with a person who cares for self, others and the larger society. Such an adolescent is likely to grow into a civically-engaged adult.

To measure the impact of the Laguna Skategarden on levels of civic engagement among teens, it is necessary to examine current levels of civic engagement among the teens who use the park AND those factors associated with an adolescent who will likely be civically-engaged in the future.

As such, for the purposes of this report, civic engagement among the teens who use the Laguna Skategarden will be assessed from two different perspectives: 1) through an analysis of Civic Identity/Civic Engagement, defined by Bobek et al. as an adolescent's civic duty, civic skills, civic participation and social connections (Bobek et al. 2009, 615-27); and 2) through an assessment of the Skategarden as a context for positive youth development.

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4. Teens, Skateparks and Civic Engagement – A Look at the Literature

4.1 Introduction to the Literature

In preparation for researching the impact of the Laguna Skategarden on civic engagement among teens, the following literature review was prepared. Since there is little research on the impact of skateparks on civic engagement specifically, it was necessary to explore the various components of this topic. First, there is a discussion of the important role that public spaces play in the lives of teens, followed by evidence from the literature that teens are often excluded from public spaces. Next, there is a summary of the literature related to the reaction of skateboarders to this exclusion through acts of civic engagement. This is followed by findings from the literature on the psychosocial development that occurs at skateparks. There is then a section that discusses the siting of skateparks and the inclusion of teens in the planning/design of these facilities. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the criticisms of skateparks, followed by concluding remarks.

4.2 The Importance of Public Space for Teens

Whether it is a park, plaza, or the curb of a street, teens need their own space for rare moments of privacy and to "hang out" with their peers without adult supervision (Owens 2002, 161; van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 501-04). The importance of public space goes deeper than just casual socializing, however. As Nairn, Panelli and McCormack state, hanging out in public is an "important sociospatial process for young people" (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003, 10). Lieberg differentiates between "places of retreat," where teens interact with their friends away from adults, and "places of interaction," where they are "on display" within the community, while also observing the world. Each plays an important role in development during the teenage years (Lieberg 1995, 722).

Hall, Coffey and Williamson found that teens desire to find places where their presence is neither necessary (such as at home) nor compulsory (such as at school). It is in this space that social interactions occur and "significant aspects of young people's personal and social identities are affirmed, contested, rehearsed, and reworked" (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999, 506). Similar to Lieberg, the authors find that in occupying public space, teens are trying to make themselves known to the rest of the community and satisfy "the need for room to nurture and explore their emergent sense of themselves as individual people" (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999, 506).

Young people aged 13 to18-years-old in both a rural town and an urban city in New Zealand reported that the spaces where they felt "included" were those that, "provided a sense of comfort and/or familiarity with other young people" and were social in nature (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003, 22). As discovered by van Lieshout and Aarts, public spaces provide opportunities for teens to identify and interact with different groups, and thus to more closely define who they are as individuals (van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 502). Malone finds that the interaction of youth within community public space provides the opportunity "to try out new social identities," to "observe and engage in the development of the social and cultural capital of their

communities, and to learn skills of social negotiation and conflict resolution" (Malone 2002, 165). In order to facilitate social interaction among peers, Owens finds that the design of public space should be "adolescent friendly," with plenty of seating for group interaction and the potential for lingering (Owens 2002, 161).

In contrast, teens are also often drawn to isolated places, such as parking lots, backyards, and basements, where adults do not want to go (Lieberg 1995, 721-22). Jones and Graves discovered that the opportunity to hang out in a private space, without fear of being hassled by law enforcement, was so important to teens in a small community in Oregon that they were willing to spend time at a skatepark that was not a particularly good facility for skateboarding, nor for lingering – there was nowhere to sit, no drinking fountain and no bathrooms (Jones and Graves 2000, 142). The park became a successful gathering space in spite of its poor design because the teens really had nowhere else to go.

Of course while public environments can support the development of adolescents on both an emotional and social level, these spaces can also hinder such development (Owens 2002, 157). There is diversity in the experience of young people in public space (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003, 33-38). A place that one teen considers inclusive, might be considered exclusive by another. Further, teens create their own physical territories within public spaces, which can lead to conflicts among peers as well as with adults (Lieberg 1995, 735). There can also be conflict between the values and norms of different groups of teens (Weller 2006, 568-69).

4.3   The Exclusion of Teens from Public Space

Although we generally recognize that teens have unique needs and that access to their own space is important for social and emotional development, society has historically prohibited them from public spaces. By definition, public spaces should be open to every member of the public. However, the reality is that these spaces are often regulated, whether by law (Owens 1997, 155-56; Németh 2006, 300), design (Owens 2002, 156; Stratford 2002, 201-203), or in more abstract ways by making users feel unwelcome through the imposition of cultural values (Malone 2002, 161).

When Morrow asked a group of 12 to 15-year-olds about their neighborhoods, she found that the youths felt "mistrusted and not respected by the adults around them" (Morrow 2000, 146). This is often due to adults' preconception of teens as troublemakers (Owens 2002, 156; Jones and Graves 2000, 137), which is often fueled by the media (Malone 2002, 163; Owens 1997, 161; van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 502; Woolley and Johns 2001, 226).

Although hanging out is important for teens from a developmental perspective, it is often this very act that leads to mistrust among other members of the community. This lack of productivity is often perceived as deviance (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999, 506-07; Stratford 2002, 195) and teens are at times treated unfairly by law enforcement. After the media created a panic about a youth crime wave in Australia, policies designed to contain youth were adopted. At best, these were curfew laws. At worst, the police enforced these policies by publicly harassing and then detaining

youth (Malone 2002, 163).

The criticism of teens is not always unwarranted. They can be an intrusive, negative force in public space. It was discovered through observations of youth in the Netherlands, that teens have an informal impact on the unofficial policies that govern the public spaces where they hang out (van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 506-07). Through asserting themselves physically or audibly, the youth were able to set the tone for the space and in some instances determine who was permitted and not permitted to use the area. It was also possible that their behavior was unpleasant enough that other people were reluctant to use the same space (van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 506-07).

This is why teens are often viewed in a negative light by business owners - they fear that their presence will make other people, including money-wielding shoppers, feel anxious or apprehensive (Woolley and Johns 2001, 215). As a result, teens are often prohibited from public space (Owens 1997, 161-62).

Much of the literature on teens and public space includes research on skateboarders, a group predominantly comprised of male teens (Malone 2002; Owens 1997; Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003; van Lieshout and Aarts 2008). Conflicts within public space and the subsequent prohibition from space is an issue all too familiar to skateboarders in cities such as Amsterdam (Karsten and Pel 2000, 328), Hobart, Australia (Stratford 2002, 193-206) and Philadelphia (Németh 2006, 297-318; Howell 2005 32-42).

In Amsterdam, skaters conflicted with the owners of a grocery store, who were opposed to their use of a walkway near their shop (Karsten and Pel 2000, 337). Those skaters who used Franklin Square in Hobart were viewed as "unproductive" by the community, while commercial interests and consumers were seen as "productive" (Stratford 2002, 195). Conflicts also arose between skaters and non-skaters because these two groups have very different uses for the same objects within public space – skaters used stairway handrails, benches, and the edges around a garden for skate tricks, whereas non-skaters used these items more traditionally (Stratford 2002, 195). (Woolley and Johns challenge that the use of the built environment by skateboarders are unproductive acts of vandalism or social incivility by comparing the cost of these acts to the damage caused by cars to pavement and other infrastructure (Woolley and Johns 2001, 227-28)).

Both Howell (2005) and Németh (2006) use Love Park in Philadelphia as a case study to illustrate the exclusion of skateboarders from public space. It was here that an infamous and divisive showdown occurred between skateboarders (most of whom were teens) and the City of Philadelphia. Prior to the conflict, the presence of the skateboarders had helped to revitalize Love Park. The park became so popular with skaters that it developed into one of the most recognizable spaces for skateboarding in the world, generating significant revenue for the city (Howell 2005, 34).

Yet in 2000, Philadelphia adopted a policy banning skateboarding in and around the park, and established an around-the-clock police patrol to enforce the ban. Violations were punishable by a $300 fine and possible imprisonment (Németh 2006, 297) and

enforcement was often violent (Howell 2005, 34). Yet many residents and even some politicians supported the skateboarders using this space. As both Németh and Howell discuss, city officials prioritized their own vision of what a public space should be, even when that vision went against what was demanded by the community. As retold in "The 'Creative Class' and the Gentrifying City," when urban planner and author Richard Florida was asked to comment on Love Park, he stated, "Skateparks are very important to young people, an intrinsic part of their creative culture, part of their identity. We should be expanding skate parks…to take them away is to tell them that they are not valid. Big mistake" (Howell 2005, 35).

Woolley and Johns found that even in those instances that skaters were capable of sharing public space with other users and were "fairly understanding" of others' use, many members of the public compared skaters with beggars, vandals and drunks (Woolley and Johns 2001, 226). It is these conflicts that often drive teens to develop their own communities as a reaction to the hostility they feel from adults in public places (Morrow 2000, 150). In other instances, these conflicts will lead communities to create spaces for teens merely because they want to find a place for them to go where they will be out of sight and will not conflict with others (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999, 507; Weller 2006, 566-67).

4.4   The Skateboarder Strikes Back: The Rise of the Civically-Engaged Skater

Youth are prone to become more engaged civically when the issue directly impacts them or their futures are at risk (Youniss et al. 2002, 126-28). In the last several decades, many skateboarders, who, as previously stated, are predominately male teens, have reacted to exclusion, discrimination and mistreatment by engaging themselves in the political process. During the Love Park controversy in Philadelphia, skaters rallied for their right to skate by staging protests and establishing two non-profit advocacy groups (Németh 2006, 297; Howell 2005, 35-36). Their efforts drew much attention. In fact, the conflict over skateboarding in that city became one of the main debates in the mayoral election of 2003, with the two candidates split on the issue (Németh 2006, 301-302).

Fighting for the right to skateboard in shared public space is one form of civic engagement, but teens have also become engaged by fighting for the establishment of skateparks. Weller offers the example of a teen in England who was involved in campaigning for a skatepark by raising money, soliciting signatures for a petition, and then, along with his father, maintaining the skatepark's website (Weller 2006, 566). He then inspired a friend who lived in a neighboring town to campaign for a skatepark in his community (Weller 2006, 566).

While assisting the City of Portland in its search for a site for a new skatepark, a group of young skaters faced intolerance and a general lack of support by the community (Jones and Graves 2000, 139). The skaters took matters into their own hands, leading a grassroots effort to build the skatepark in a blighted location under the Burnside Bridge. The skaters collected debris from the surrounding area to build the park's infrastructure, enlisting friends with experience in building, concrete finishing and welding to help with the construction and design. They soon received the support of

local businesses owners, who grew to understand the benefits the skatepark brought to their community (Jones and Graves 2000, 139).

4.5   Positive Youth Development at the Skatepark

Skateboarding as an activity has many of the same benefits for teens as previously discussed with regard to public space. Skateboarding provides the opportunity to interact with peers (since many skateboarders are teens) and other members of the public (since they often skateboard in public places), which can provide the opportunity for learning communication and cooperation skills, and to build self-esteem and develop social competence (Owens 2002, 158-59).

Teens also engage in skateboarding as an opportunity to retreat with their friends away from adults. Although teens use various public and private spaces as the setting for this interaction, skateparks have become a popular place for teens to escape into a world that allows them to participate in an activity that they love, while also developing important social skills away from the watchful eye of adults. Skaters interviewed in the Netherlands reported that they did not have to listen to their parents' "nagging" when they visited the skatepark. Nor did they worry about getting hassled by people for acting or looking different than the norm (van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 504).

Skateparks can be a place where teens feel accepted, and where they are able to develop a sense of belonging and practice positive social norms through their participation in the skatepark community (Shannon and Werner 2008, 52). Petrone discovered through the observation of skatepark users that the skateboarders had created an organized system of rules, which were abided by park users. For instance, when there was a collision between skaters, they often apologized to one another, sometimes helped one another, and at the very least visually checked to make sure that the other person was okay (Petrone 2010, 122). Bradley found evidence to the contrary through direct observation of two skateparks in Australia. Although he found these spaces to be "peaceful and harmonious" and "friendly" places, there was not much social interaction and little prosocial behavior (defined as helping, sharing, and comforting) among the skaters. (Bradley 2010, 305). He witnessed no comforting when someone got hurt in a minor accident, even though teens had reported during interviews that such comforting was common (Bradley 2010, 305).

Skateparks also provide the opportunity to develop skateboarding skills, an act that takes on deeper significance for teens. As opposed to skating in the street, teens like the increased challenges posed by a skatepark (which have man-made *elements*, such as ramps, ledges, bowls etc., constructed specifically for performing skateboarding *tricks*) and the ability to improve their skills by watching others, which is essential to the development of skateboarding skills. Shannon and Werner found that teens developed social capital through informal mentoring in teaching tricks to peers and younger skaters (Shannon and Werner 2008, 53). Weller defines social capital as, "the resources individuals and collectives derive from their social networks; it is through social interaction that social capital is developed" (Weller 2006, 557-58). The adult supervisors of the skatepark felt that there was a "positive youth culture involving

cooperating and mentoring" at the facility that resulted from a shared desire among the teens to improve their own skills while helping others to also improve (Shannon and Werner 2008, 50).

Skaters also often become actively involved in skateparks by cleaning the facilities (Bradley 2010, 305) or by fixing, creating, or altering the built environment (Jones and Graves 2000, 139). At a skatepark in Lincoln City, Oregon, skaters built their own ramps adjacent to the city-built bowl, which was found to increase the skaters' sense of power and control over the skatepark (Jones and Graves 2000, 142). The active participation of skateboarders in maintaining the Burnside Project in Portland fostered a "sense of responsibility, ownership, and control over the project" (Jones and Graves 2000, 139). Teens were even found to police skateparks to prevent bad behavior (Bradley 2010, 301; Jones and Graves 2000, 144).

Adults who supervised an indoor skatepark reported that the teens who used the facility respected the rules, equipment and each other. The staff also viewed it as a cooperative environment where the skaters welcome newcomers and helped them out when they arrived (Shannon and Werner 2008, 51). Even in the absence of adult supervision, skateboarders at the Burnside Project, for the most part, adhered to the city-mandated rules and it was obvious that the skaters cared about the space. In fact, it was the skater's responsibility to maintain the area and skaters used a democratic process for making decisions about changes to the skate facilities (Jones and Graves 2000, 139).

In Amsterdam, skaters often came together to make repairs on their skateboards, especially at skate shops and the skatepark where tools were available (Karsten and Pel 2000, 336). An observed skatepark was found to have an "almost peaceful, genial and non-competitive atmosphere" (Karsten and Pel 2000, 335), although the authors suggest that this could be attributed to the fact that there was an absence of girls at the skatepark and thus the teens were not exhibiting the competitive behavior typically associated with males in the presence of the opposite sex.

Bradley had similar findings at unsupervised skateparks in Australia. He discovered that the skateparks provided the opportunity for teens to share knowledge, to encourage other skaters, and to "look after their own" (Bradley 2010, 298). This camaraderie among skateboarders helped young people to develop a sense of identity and self-confidence (Bradley 2010, 298-99) and the act of sharing knowledge through a social network could easily be classified as the development of social capital.

Petrone studied how conflict enables and/or constrains learning opportunities and identity formation among skateboarders at a skatepark in Finley, Michigan. He found that conflict can actually be a source of participation within the skatepark community. Through the cultural practice of verbal heckling and *snaking* - defined as accidentally or intentionally interfering with another skater through physical contact - the skatepark became the context to teach spatially appropriate behavior (through snaking) and ideological normativity regarding class and gender (through heckling) (Petrone 2010, 119-27).

Bradley offers one of the most extensive studies of skateparks. He assesses psychosocial development (development of social skills; self-esteem; cooperation; and respect for self, others and for the park itself) within the context of various skateparks in an Australian city (Bradley 2010, 288-323). Through interviews with skateboarders, he discovered that the skateparks were central to social integration and social networking for these teens. An adult interviewee said that for some of the kids who visited the park, the majority of the time was spent hanging out and socializing, not skating. What emerged through interviews was a belief among the teens that the skatepark provided an opportunity for social networking, learning cooperation, knowing one's place in society, communication skills, and building self-confidence (Bradley 2010, 299-300).

Bradley also conducted a survey of teen skateboarders and non-skateboarders to quantitatively analyze factors such as self-esteem; identity achievement; and quality of relationships with peers, with family and at school. He found that there was no significant difference between those teens who visited skateparks or who engage in skating and those who did not, although those teens who skated for at least one hour each week reported better relationships at school than did the other teens (Bradley 2010, 314-15). In the end, Bradley's survey of teens did little to support a hypothesis that skatepark use is associated with high levels of personal or social integration. He found that there was little difference between the skaters and all other teens who were surveyed with respect to these two variables (Bradley 2010, 315).

Overall, Bradley was able to draw no real conclusion about the contribution of skateparks to positive youth development, although he did find that "skaters on the whole are not alienated from mainstream institutions" (Bradley 2010, 319-20). Further, the activities that take place at skateparks, "have the potential to enhance participants' personal integration and social bonding in diverse ways" (Bradley 2010, 319-20).

Skatparks can also be contexts for negative social behavior. As discussed earlier, teens can be exclusionary in public spaces. They create groups, like tribes, in these public areas and determine who gets to be part of the group and who does not (van Lieshout and Aarts 2008, 507). Skateparks can also breed this sort of social segregation. At a skatepark in Amsterdam, there was a sort of hierarchy at the skatepark, with those who frequented the park regularly acting as if they owned the skatepark (Karsten and Pel 2000, 336). In Philadelphia, one skater spoke of cliques at Love Park, especially along racial lines (Németh 2006, 309). There can also be divisions among different age groups (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003, 33), along gender lines (Nairn, Panelli and McCormack 2003, 31; Pomerantz, Currie and Kelly 2004, 547-57), and among skaters from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Petrone 2010, 123).

4.6   Planning/Design of Skateparks to Facilitate Positive Youth Development

The placement and design of skateparks may help enhance the potential for positive youth development. Skateparks are often placed on the outskirts of town (Owens 2002, 160) or in undesirable (and perhaps unsafe) locations in an effort to push the teens out of the public spaces that other community members desire (Malone 2002, 164-65). While locating skateparks in more remote areas may appease those members

of the community who oppose skateparks (Jones and Graves 2000, 145), it also isolates skateboarders and/or reduces the likelihood that it will be used (Freeman and Riordan 2002, 313; Owens 2002, 160). Even if this remote location is successful for a while, teens will eventually stop going to the facility, winding up back out on the streets or in public spaces that better suit their needs, and leave the community searching for a new place to put them (Hall, Coffey and Williamson 1999, 508-09).

Skateboarders commonly desire to skate in places that are accessible and centrally located (Jones and Graves 2000, 145-46; Woolley and Johns 2001, 223-225), yet where they will not be harassed by anyone (Jones and Graves 2000, 136-148; Woolley and Johns 2001, 223-225), and where there is the opportunity to socialize with peers – both those who skateboard and those who do not (Woolley and Johns 2001, 223-225; Shannon and Werner 2008, 54).

Owens suggests that instead of creating separate places for teens, such as an isolated skatepark, communities should integrate these spaces into public areas, such as larger parks, so that there is the opportunity to interact with adults. This will allow them to become a part of the larger community (Owens 1997, 164; Owens 2002, 162).

Jones and Graves found that the successful skatepark is so much more than just the skateboarding elements that are constructed there (Jones and Graves 2000, 136-148). To become a successful community space, the skatepark has to appeal to teens who both skate and to those who do not skate. There must be the proper facilities to keep them there, including places to sit and hang out and other essential features for lingering, such as toilets and drinking fountains (Jones and Graves 2000, 146).

As skateparks become more common, cities are involving teens in the planning process and design of the parks (Jones and Graves 2000, 144; Freeman and Riordan 2002, 308). It is important to involve skateboarders so that their needs can be met (Freeman and Riordan 2002, 313; Malone 2002, 166; Woolley and Johns 2001, 228) since there are variations in the desired design for parks from one community to the next (Jones and Graves 2000, 146). Further, the recognition of youths as assets who should be included in the political process will improve civic competence among this group (Youniss et al. 2002, 129-33). The establishment of the park may also make the youth feel valued by the community – both as adolescents and as skateboarders (Shannon and Werner 2008, 51-52). In denying teens participation in the planning process, the community may not build a sense of ownership and responsibility for the space among teens (Owens 2002, 162), which could have long-term negative consequences.

Integrating skateboarders into the community has also resulted in unintended benefits for cities. Skaters who use skate spots at non-peak hours so as to avoid conflict with other users provide surveillance over the area during this time (Woolley and Johns 2001, 227). Skateparks in both Oregon and Philadelphia helped revitalize blighted areas (Jones and Graves 2000, 138-44; Howell 2005; Németh 2006) partly because skateboarders bring "youth and dynamism" into a community (Woolley and Johns 2001, 227). Howell asserts that a city's promotion of skateboarding culture and the presence of skateboarders can have the same positive impact on an economy as

their nurturing of other creative citizens, e.g. artists, etc. (Howell 2005, 32-42).

4.7   Criticism of Skateparks

There will always be the demand among skaters for access to skate freely in public spaces other than skateparks (Woolley and Johns 2001, 227). Although skateparks are a good place for skaters to develop their skills, some feel that they lack the freedom and spontaneity associated with the sport (Owens 2002, 158). As Freeman and Riordan discovered, some skaters will continue to skate on the street, even after a skatepark is established, due to accessibility; desire of skaters to show their skills to a wider audience; inadequate skateboard facilities; greater challenges; and the use of skateboards as a form of transportation (Freeman and Riordan 2002, 312).

In spite of their popularity, skateparks are often perceived negatively by community members, as are the skateboarders who use them. This is true of both adults and non-skateboarding teens (Bradley 2010, 288 -323). In Bradley's study, one mother stated that she found the skateparks to be "threatening," "lonely," and "ugly" places. A member of the City Council felt that the skatepark produced, "nothing but problems" (Bradley 2010, 296). While skaters found the skateparks to be friendly and supportive places, those non-skateboarding teens who didn't use the facilities were intimidated by the parks and viewed them as dangerous (Bradley 2010, 301).

Another criticism of skateparks is that they provide an excuse for city officials to prohibit skaters from using other public space (Woolley and Johns 2001, 215). Howell reviews existing literature on skateparks to show that city officials have used skateparks as a means to "reward and encourage specific traits in young people, principally personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurialism." This is primarily due to the fact that many cities in the U.S. now emphasize entrepreneurial governance and a shift in the citizen-state relationship from entitlement to contractualism (Howell 2008, 477). In other words, citizens are obligated to contribute their time and resources in exchange for services.

4.8   Conclusions from the Literature

Although the impact of a skatepark on civic engagement among teens may not be immediately apparent, the above literature provides the foundation upon which to gather research to support or refute this claim. Teens' demand for public spaces to call their own is evident. Yet, in spite of the developmental benefits they provide, our society has traditionally prohibited teens from public space through the establishment of laws or other acts of exclusion.

Some skateboarders who experienced such exclusion from their community reacted by voicing their right to public spaces. Others demanded the right to their own space; a space to skateboard freely with their peers, away from those who disapproved of the activity that they love. Through these acts, the skateboarders became civically-engaged.

Skateparks can also become a context capable of instilling the characteristics associated with an individual who cares about self, those around him/her and larger society.

5. The Laguna Skategarden Observed

Prior to conducting interviews with community members, The Laguna Skategarden was observed to better understand who visits the park and what activities go on there. Observations were also used to assess if the Skategarden is a context that promotes positive youth development.

5.1 Observation Methodology

Data was gathered on five different occasions between early November and early December 2010. Following a methodology similar to that used by Bradley in his observation of skateparks (Bradley 2010, 303), data was recorded in 20-minute increments during four unique times and days. Observations took place on five different days for a total of 640 minutes (10 hours and 40 minutes): 3 hours and 40 minutes of observations were recorded for two different sessions that occurred on weekdays in the afternoon/evening; approximately three hours of observations were recorded during the afternoon/evening on Veterans Day, a school holiday; three hours of observation took place on a Sunday afternoon; and observations were recorded for 40 minutes during lunchtime on a weekday.

Table 2. Date and Length of Observation Sessions at the Laguna Skategarden

Date	Time	Number of observed minutes	Category	Weather Conditions
Monday, November 8, 2010	3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	120 minutes	After school	Sunny and cool
Thursday, November 11, 2010	1:50 – 5:10 p.m.	200 minutes	School holiday	Sunny and warm
Sunday, November 14, 2010	12:30 – 3:30 p.m.	180 minutes	Weekend	Sunny and warm
Thursday, November 18, 2010	3:00 – 4:40 p.m.	100 minutes	After school	Sunny and warm
Friday, December 3, 2010	12:00 – 12:40 p.m.	40 minutes	Lunchtime	Overcast and cool (rained in the morning)

Total: 640 minutes (10 hours and 40 minutes) on five different days.

Data was recorded by hand for each 20-minute session on data intake sheets, which were modeled after observation sheets designed by the Project for Public Space (Project for Public Space Inc. 2000, 102-4). The intake sheet was modified after a trial observation period in October 2010. Although the intake sheet was originally designed to track the activities and behavior of each park visitor, it soon became clear that it was nearly impossible to carry out observations in this manner. Skateparks are very active places. Once skateboarders entered the park, they immediately began moving about. It was impossible to accurately track one skater or to associate an observed behavior with the many people recorded on the data intake sheet. Further, park visitors almost always stayed longer than 20 minutes. It was therefore extremely difficult to associate an observation with the correct person since he/she might have arrived during a previous observation session and would therefore not appear on the current intake sheet.

Although this study is focused on teens, it was appropriate to record data for all park visitors, as opposed to just teens, so that a clearer understanding of the skatepark as a context for adolescent development could be obtained. Observing the activities of all park visitors provides a more complete picture of the culture at the park and the experience of those teens who use the park.

Using Bradley's study as a model (Bradley 2010), the following data was recorded for all park visitors on Observation Data Intake Sheet 1: gender; age group (e.g. child, teen, adult); the park entrants' primary activity (e.g. skating, parent supervisor, socializing); and whether the person arrived in a group and the number in that group (see Figure 12).

Secondary activities and other behaviors were also recorded for each 20-minute session on Observation Data Intake Sheet 2 (see Figure 13). The activities on the intake sheet are largely based on Bradley's study in which he recorded pro-social vs antisocial activities at a skatepark (Bradley 2010, 304). Several of the activities Bradley defined as "pro-social" were: socializing; teaching/coaching; verbal encouragement; and taking turns/cooperating. In contrast, "anti-social" activities were defined, among others, as: taunting/bullying; verbal fighting and smoking.

Observations were also recorded less formally in hand-written notes. Similar to Petrone in his study of a skatepark, the notes were then analyzed and coded based on common themes (Petrone 2010, 121-22). The codes were largely based on the pro-social vs. anti-social activities identified by Bradley (e.g. socializing, encouragement, teaching, smoking, drug use, etc.) although other trends were also identified. The following codes were used: socializing; caring/concern; encouragement; teaching; trust/respect; focus/skill-building; separation by age group/intermingling of age groups; creativity.

Location: _____   Observation session log number: _____

Date: _____   Condition of day: _____

Time: _____   _____

			Age					**Primary Activity**								
Person no.	Male	Female	Child	Pre-teen	Teen	Adult	Elderly	Skating	Skating observer	Parent supervisor	Socializing	Participant in community garden	Art project/Graffiti Wall	Sit/relax	Arrived in group? (y/n)	No. in group
Totals																

Figure 12. Observation Data Intake Sheet 1. This sheet was used during observation sessions to record the gender; age group (e.g. child, teen, adult); the park entrants' primary activity (e.g. skating, parent supervisor, socializing); and whether the person arrived in a group and the number in that group. Cumulated results can be found in Appendix B. Source: Author.

Location: _____ Observation session log number: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Observed activities

Total

Socializing																					
Teaching/coaching																					
Sharing (skateboards)																					
Helping others																					
Verbal encouragement																					
Taking turns/cooperating																					
Cleaning up trash																					
Cleaning the bowl or ramp																					
Female/Male Interaction																					
Intermingling among groups																					
Intermingling between teens and adults																					
Intermingling among younger kids and teens																					
Vandalizing																					
Verbal fighting																					
Littering																					
Smoking																					
Drug use																					
Taunting/bullying																					
Physical fighting																					
Graffiti (not on graffiti wall)																					

Figure 13. Observation Data Intake Sheet 2 was used to record the secondary activities and other behaviors for each 20-minute session at the Laguna Skategarden. Cumulated results can be found in Appendix B. Source: Author.

5.2   Typical Observation Session

Observations were taken from one of the three benches on the west side of the park. Typically, observations occurred from the same bench throughout one day, however there were instances when it was necessary to move to another bench so as to avoid the sun during the middle of the day (two of the benches in the middle of the park are covered by a shade structure).

There were unique advantages to sitting at the different benches in the park. The two benches located under the shade structure were closer to the middle of the park and it was common for skaters to use these benches to take breaks. It was also easier to see the activities of park users at the two bowls located on the northern half of the park (see Figure 14), as well as the ramps and one ledge that was a popular place for skaters to rest.

In contrast, the bench closer to the skatepark's entrance provided far greater visibility of the bowl located on the southern half of the park and also of those people entering the park, which was crucial for data entry purposes. The bench located on the northern edge of the skate facilities at the border of the community garden was never used since it was too far from the park entrance, making it impossible to record the information on Observation Data Intake Sheet 1 (see Figure 12).

Observation Data Intake Sheet 2 (see Figure 13) was used to record the secondary activities and other behaviors for each 20-minute session at the Laguna Skategarden.

Figure 14. There were several potential observation vantage points at the Skategarden. However, it was not possible to sit closest to the two bowls at the northern end of the park (upper image) for observation sessions due to the distance from the park entrance. Instead, a bench at the southern end of the park, near one of the smaller bowls, was utilized (lower image).

The activities on Data Intake Sheet 2 are largely based on Bradley's study in which he recorded pro-social vs antisocial activities at a skatepark (Bradley 2010, 304).

5.3   Data Entry and Calculations

Data was transferred from the data intake sheets into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Each data intake sheet was placed into a separate worksheet within the same workbook. A compilation of the data from each worksheet was then created in two separate tabs within the workbook, one with data from Observation Data Intake Sheet 1, and another with data from Observation Data Intake Sheet 2 (the cumulated data can be found in Appendix B). In light of the format of the tables created in the individual excel worksheets, it was not possible to cumulate this data automatically. Instead, the data was cumulated by "cutting" and "pasting" the relevant data into a new worksheet.

5.4   Limitations of Observation Methodology

There were definite limitations to this research. Weather and time of year were very much a factor. The observations occurred from November to December, which is typically the start of the rainy season in Northern California. Many days of planned observation were missed due to rain (the park is closed when it rains). Further, the autumn days were getting cooler and the hours of daylight less, especially during the observation sessions at the end of November. Presumably, these two factors impacted the number of visitors to the park.

The time of year may have also contributed to the fact that few visitors to the community garden were observed. Perhaps the garden is more frequently visited during the summer months or spring. Ideally, observations would have taken place at various times throughout the year. However, with the limited time and resources available, this was not possible.

The location of park benches and the limitations of one researcher also limited the scope of the research. It was impossible to observe all activities at the 1.05 acre park at any one time. It was also difficult to observe the behavior on the east side of the park, which abuts a steep hill with grass and several trees. The area is not intended for use (although some kids and teens were observed using the hill to sit and/or play). The hill descends into the eastern perimeter of the skate facilities with a low wall at the border. Although skaters sometimes use the wall to sit or observe other skaters, it is not designed for other park visitors to use since it is a high traffic area for skateboarding and therefore unsafe for lingering.

Unfortunately, the lack of the benches on the eastern side of the park limited data gathering since much activity took place on this side of the park, especially among groups of teens and young adults. It would have been valuable to unobtrusively observe the on-goings of these groups, however this was not possible in light of the configuration of the park.

There is also the question of whether teens altered their behavior in light of the fact that an adult observer was present. Although it is difficult to definitively answer this question, it seemed that the skaters, including teens, were accustomed to sharing the space with non-skaters and adults, suggesting that their behavior was typical. It should

also be noted that there were few occasions that an adult (other than the observer) was not present at the skatepark. This suggests that teens are accustomed to spending time at the park under a "watchful eye."

Finally, lunchtime observations on a non-holiday weekday only occurred on one day due to time constraints. There were no visitors to the park for the 40 minutes that were observed, however it had rained earlier that day and it was still overcast and cool during the observation sessions, which likely explained the absence of visitors.

5.5   Observation Findings

5.5.1   Age and Gender/Primary Observed Activity of Skatepark Visitors

A total of 248 visitors were observed entering the park. Park visitors were overwhelmingly male (81.9%) and teens accounted for 29.4% of visitors (see Table 3). The majority of visitors to the park (56.9%) were skateboarders (see Table 4).

Table 3. Age and Gender Breakdown of Laguna Skategarden Visitors

	No. of people	Percent of total
Total	248	100%
Gender		
Male	203	81.9%
Female	45	18.1%
Age group		
Adult	101	40.7%
Teen	73	29.4%
Pre-teen	35	14.1%
Child	31	12.5%
Elderly	8	3.2%
Arrived to park alone:	108	43.5%

Source: Author.

Table 4. Primary Observed Activity of Visitors to the Laguna Skategarden

Activity	No. of people	Percent
Skateboarding	141	56.9%
Skateboarding spectator	45	18.1%
Parent supervisor	20	8.1%
Socializing	20	8.1%
Participant in community garden	9	3.6%
Art project/ graffiti wall	9	3.6%
Sit/relax	2	0.8%
Other*	2	0.8%

*Two adult males arrived to the park and raced remote control cars. Their primary activity was therefore classified as "other," since this was not an option on the data intake sheet.

Source: Author.

5.5.2   Primary Observed Activity of Teens

Skateboarding was the primary activity of nearly two-thirds of the teens who visited the Laguna Skategarden during the observation sessions. Of the 73 teens observed, 47 visitors (64.4%) were skateboarders. The other primary activities for teens were skateboard spectating; socializing; and one teen was observed sitting/relaxing (see Table 5).

Table 5. Primary Observed Activity of Teen Visitors to the Laguna Skategarden

Activity	No. of people	Percent
Skateboarding	47	64.4%
Skateboarding spectator	13	17.8%
Socializing	12	16.4%
Sit/relax	1	1.4%

Source: Author.

5.5.3   Other Observed Activities of Skategarden Visitors

Socializing was the most common secondary activity of skategarden visitors (see Table 6). There were 108 observed instances of socializing, which was nearly one-third of all of the observed secondary activities. Other pro-social activities that were observed included: taking turns/cooperating; verbal encouragement; teaching/coaching; intermingling among various groups, as further defined in Table 6 below; helping others; sharing skateboards; and art/photography/video.

Overall, anti-social behavior was infrequently observed. Of the total observations, only 5.4% were of anti-social behavior. It should also be noted that of the 11 instances of observed cigarette smoking, only 4 of the individuals appeared to be minors.

Littering was observed on several occasions. Drug use was directly observed only once and the incident involved adults only. On one occasion, a large group of non-skating teens arrived to the park in the afternoon. Although drug use was not directly observed, the behavior of the teens (two boys entering a single-toilet bathroom together) suggested either drug use or an exchange of drugs between the two parties.

Table 6. Other Observed Activities of Visitors to the Laguna Skategarden

Other activities*	Pro-social vs. anti-social	No. of observations	Percent of total observed activities
Socializing	Pro-social	108	32.7%
Taking turns/cooperating	Pro-social	64	19.4%
Verbal encouragement	Pro-social	48	14.5%
Teaching/coaching	Pro-social	29	8.8%
Intermingling among teens and adults	Pro-social	17	5.2%
Intermingling among groups	Pro-social	12	3.6%
Intermingling among children/pre-teens and teens	Pro-social	11	3.3%
Smoking**	Anti-social	11	3.3%
Helping others	Pro-social	10	3%
Sharing (skateboards)	Pro-social	7	2.1%
Art/photography/video	Pro-social	5	1.5%
Littering	Anti-social	4	1.2%
Drug use	Anti-social	2	0.6%
Taunting/bullying	Anti-social	1	0.3%
Female/male interaction	Pro-social	1	0.3%
Verbal fighting	Anti-social	0	0%
Physical fighting	Anti-social	0	0%
Vandalizing	Anti-social	0	0%
Cleaning up trash	Pro-social	0	0%
Non-permitted graffiti	Anti-social	0	0%
Cleaning the bowl or ramp	Pro-social	0	0%

*Entries in this category were not associated with a specific park visitor. The activities were observed for the entire park. Therefore, there is no relationship between the number of park visitors and observed activities. More than one activity could be recorded for one individual and other individuals did not engage in any of the above activities.
**Of the 11 instances of observed cigarette smoking, only 4 of the individuals appeared to be minors.

Source: Author.

5.6   Discussion of Observation Findings

Several main themes emerged from observations at the Laguna Skategarden:

- Socializing
- Intermingling among groups
- Importance of adult role models
- Encouragement
- Teaching/learning
- Skill-building/determination
- Trust
- Caring/concern/helping others
- Cooperation/sharing
- Creativity

Socializing was the most common secondary activity among both skaters and non-skaters. Interactions occurred between visitors of all ages and among different groups. Skaters, both young and old, welcomed each other. Many people (43.5% of all visitors) arrived to the park alone, yet often met up with old friends or new acquaintances. It was not uncommon to see adult skaters or teens greeting young children as they entered the park. Chance encounters were also observed, both between skaters and non-skaters. Many of the same people were observed at the park on multiple occasions. These individuals in particular were especially social with one another, although they were also welcoming to newcomers.

The park was often a lively, social scene. On one occasion, a skateboarding father arrived with his two young sons. He was welcomed by many of the skaters (he had been observed at the park during a previous observation session). Soon after his arrival, he set up an iPod and speakers at the middle bowl. The music added to the already social setting as the skating rose to a crescendo as the sun set. On another occasion, a group of adults repainting the graffiti wall held a small BBQ on the west side of the park.

Although the separation of park visitors by age group was commonly observed (pre-teens tended to stick to themselves most frequently), skating provided the opportunity for groups to interact and engage with each other. Encounters at the skating facilities encouraged intermingling among groups and the social, welcoming nature of the park facilitated positive interactions among people of all ages. Adult interactions between non-skaters were also observed. Parents bumped into each other at the park, as did adult skaters. The park was also a place to make new friends. Youth skaters, including teens, were observed introducing themselves to one another. It was not uncommon to see these new friends offering skateboarding tips to one another.

The adult skaters play an essential role at the Laguna Skategarden. As the elders at the park, the adult skaters set the tone for the space and it was clear that the adults were role models to the teens and other younger kids who visit the park. They nurture the young skaters and maintain a respectful and positive atmosphere. Adults were often

observed interacting with teens, pre-teens and children, offering guidance on skating or simply chatting.

Teaching and learning were commonly observed at the park. Skaters were constantly working to perfect their skills and learning from others was a large component of this practice. Teaching was observed across all age groups and amongst different peer groups. Teens were observed skating together both in and outside of the bowls, mirroring each other as they skated. One Sunday afternoon, two teens were observed skating together and working on their skills for several hours. They watched each other closely as they performed tricks and offered tips for improvement. The older skaters also acted as teachers to the younger skaters. This was true of adults teaching minors, and also of teens teaching younger kids.

Encouragement was another commonly observed occurrence at the skategarden. Adult skaters in particular consistently expressed encouragement both to other adults and to younger skaters, including teens. This often took the form of vocally cheering or banging one's board on the side of the bowl (another form of cheering) after someone landed a trick or excelled while skating in the bowl. The adult skaters seemed to go out of their way to encourage the younger skaters and acknowledge their efforts.

The Skategarden was also a place to build skills independently. The observed skaters possessed tremendous determination and focus. Several teens were observed on multiple occasions practicing independently, hour after hour. Failure to land a trick resulted in the repetition of the trick until it was performed correctly. Short breaks were taken for socializing, however these teens remained focused, even if repeatedly falling or even injuring themselves. Frustration was apparent but perseverance prevailed. Others slipped into their own space by playing music through headphones and skating around the park almost meditatively.

There was also trust within the skategarden community. During multiple observation sessions after school, youths arrived at the park and piled their backpacks on top of each other at one spot in the park. The kids seemed completely unconcerned about thievery. Kids also often arrived to the park alone. Although parent supervisors were observed, children and pre-teens arrived unsupervised on many occasions, suggesting that the park is considered safe by parents within the community.

Caring and helping others was consistently observed at the Laguna Skategarden. On several different occasions, teen skaters sustained minor injuries. On every occasion, the other kids were genuinely concerned and responded in a caring and mature fashion. After one skater fell off his board, skaters called out to make sure that he was okay. They then gathered closer and ensured that the injured skater had not hurt his head, repeatedly asking him how he felt.

Respect was also extended from one skater to another. When skaters failed to land tricks or fell off their boards, the other skaters did not mock, tease or taunt the fallen for his shortcomings. There was only one instance of taunting observed throughout the observation hours.

Skaters also regularly cooperated with one another. Two teens were observed skating together on a Sunday afternoon. When one teen's board broke, his friend rushed to his aid. They then sat together on a bench trying to fix the board. In another instance, a teen asked his peer to move a barrel from one location to another so that it could be used for performing a trick. When the teen who was appointed the task began to struggle with the barrel due to its weight, the other teen rushed over and they instead worked together.

On one occasion, a teen's board got away from him and interfered with another skater. He apologized politely to the other skater, who then picked up and returned the board to the owner. In another situation, a board flew out from one teen's feet and a pre-teen ran after the board to retrieve it for him. Unofficial rules of conduct that ensure skaters' safety were also observed. For instance, when a board flies out from someone's feet when he is skating in the bowl, people nearby yell, "board," so that everyone is aware of the potential danger posed by the run-away skateboard.

Creativity was regularly observed at the park, both by skaters and non-skaters. The graffiti wall on the west side of the park is a constantly changing art exhibit. A group of adults gathered on a Sunday afternoon to repaint the wall; a fresh base coat was painted in the morning and the group of artists worked all day creating a new installation. The artists reported that this happened at least twice a month. On a separate occasion, two young adults were taking photographs of the graffiti wall for an art project.

On several occasions teens were observed filming each other while skating, either on video cameras or on their cell phones. An adult skater reported that many teens use video editing programs to create their own short films, which they then upload to websites or Facebook pages (Dippé 2010).

5.7   Conclusions from the Observation Findings

Observing the Laguna Skategarden revealed that this active, social setting provides a nurturing space for skateboarders, both young and old. There is a strong sense of community at the park, one that emphasizes respect and support for one another. It is a place where knowledge is shared across generations, new friends are made, and people appear to genuinely care about one another.

6. **In Their Own Words: Interviews with Teens at the Laguna Skategarden**

In order to answer the research question posed by this study, interviews with teens who frequent the Laguna Skategarden were conducted. As defined in Chapter 3 of this report, civic engagement is assessed from two different perspectives: through an analysis of Civic Identity/Civic Engagement, defined by Bobek et al. as an adolescent's civic behaviors, skills, connections and commitment (Bobek et al. 2009, 615); and through an assessment of the Skategarden as a context for positive youth development.

6.1 Defining the Questions

It was first necessary to determine what questions to ask of the teens to accurately measure if the use of the Laguna Skategarden affects civic engagement.

The questions posed to teen interviewees were largely based on The Saguaro Seminar's, *the 2006 Social Capital Community Survey Wave 2*, and the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)'s, *Civic Engagement Quiz* (Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America 2006; The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) 2006).

The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University's Saguaro Seminar survey was originally administered in 2000. The questions were asked of nearly 30,000 people to measure the connection of individuals to their family, community, and civic institutions.

CIRCLE, an affiliate of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, conducts research on civic and political engagement specifically among young Americans. The Civic Engagement Quiz was administered in 2006 and a total of 1,700 youth were surveyed.

To answer the research question posed by this study, questions were modeled after those developed by CIRCLE and the Saguaro Seminar to relate specifically to the Skategarden (e.g. interest in news about the Skategarden; volunteering at the Skategarden). These questions were asked during interviews to measure how the Skategarden influences those factors associated with the development of civic engagement. A list of all questions asked of the teens can be found in Appendix C.

Each question was then categorized according to Bobek et al.'s model of active, engaged citizenship (Bobek et al 2009, 615-27). Bobek et al.'s study used data from a survey conducted by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development that measured the impact of participation in the National 4-H Council (the Nation's largest youth development organization) on positive youth development and civic engagement (Lerner, Lerner and Phelps 2008, 1-20).

In an attempt to construct an integrated measure of civic engagement that includes emotional, cognitive and behavioral components "that encapsulates the civic behaviors, civic skills, civic connections, and civic commitment of youth," Bobek et al.

operationalize the idea as "Civic Identity/Civic Engagement" (Bobek et al. 2009, 615). Based on the results from the 4-H survey, they were able to identify a six-factor model of Civic Identity/Civic Engagement. The six factors are:

- **Neighborhood social connection** – a sense of generalized reciprocity, trust and bonding to others in one's neighborhood;

- **Peer social connection** – a sense of generalized reciprocity, trust and bonding with friends and classmates;

- **Adult social connection** – a sense of generalized reciprocity, trust and bonding with adults and teachers;

- **Civic duty** - the desire and mindset to make positive contributions to society;

- **Civic skills** - the ability to be involved in civil society and democracy; and

- **Civic participation** - participation in activities for the betterment of one's community (however narrowly or broadly defined)

(Bobek et al. 2009, 616-18).

Social connection is essentially synonymous to *social capital*, which is defined in Chapter 3 of this report. To remain consistent with the terminology used in the majority of the other research cited in this report, the factors that Bobek et al. associate with social connection were combined into one category and referred to instead as, *social capital/social trust*.

Those interview questions that did not fit into the above categories but were related to positive youth development, were categorized as, *developmental assets.* As previously stated, developmental assets, which are defined as key relationships, opportunities, values, skills, and self-perceptions (Benson and Scales 2009, 86), include internal assets, which are developed by a child on his/her path to self-regulation, and external assets, those provided by the adults and peers in a child's life (Blyth and Leffert 1995, 64-87; Benson et al. 1998, 138-59; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264). Internal assets are defined as: a commitment to learning; positive values; social competencies; and identity. External assets are defined as: support; empowerment; boundaries and expectations; and constructive use of time (Benson et al. 1998, 138-59; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264).

Thus, the following categories were used to categorize the interview questions for this study:

Table 7. Categories of Questions asked of Teens who use the Laguna Skategarden

Category	No. of Questions in Category
Social capital/social trust	10
Civic skills	15
Civic duty	4
Civic participation	3
Developmental assets	6
General*	6
Total	**44**

* General questions included: teen's name; age; school; involvement in extra-curricular activities; and general questions about the Skategarden.

Source: Author.

The Civic Identity/Civic Engagement factors above are designed to measure current levels of civic engagement among youth - in assessing the adolescents' civic duty, civic skills, social capital and civic participation it was possible to better understand the civic identities and civic actions of the teens and how the Skategarden affects them.

In fully analyzing the responses to these questions it was also possible to extrapolate factors associated with positive youth development, including developmental assets and the 5-Cs, as discussed in greater detail in Section 6.3. Thus, in assessing these factors in the present, it was possible to analyze if the Skategarden is a context for positive youth development, providing the assets necessary to lead a teen on the path to a civically-engaged adulthood.

6.2   Conducting Teen Interviews

6.2.1   Recruiting Teens for Interviews

Several methods were used to recruit teens for interviews. Posters advertising the research project were hung at Analy and Laguna High Schools, the skate shop in downtown Sebastopol, and the Sebastopol Public Library. The superintendent of West Sonoma County Union High School District was informed of the research through email, and in-person meetings were held with the principals of both Analy and Laguna High Schools to introduce them to the research project and the recruitment process. Ultimately, however, face-to-face interaction at the skategarden was the most effective means of recruiting teens for interviews; all but one teen interviewee was recruited at the skategarden. After frequent visits to the skategarden over several months, a rapport was established with several of the skaters, both teens and adults. This was

advantageous from a recruitment perspective.

Once approached, teens were given a brief description of the project and then informed that they were required to receive parental consent to participate in the research. This process was refined as time went on. At the start of the recruitment process, teens were given a letter and consent form to take home to their parent(s). This method proved ineffective. Teens were then approached and asked for their home mailing address and their parent's contact information. The letter and consent form were then sent directly to their parent(s) with a request to sign and return the paperwork via mail or via their child.

Once parental consent was received, interview dates and times were arranged with teens via email, phone or texting. Those interviewees who were 18-years-old were not required to received parental consent, and instead signed their own consent form.

6.2.2   A Typical Interview Session

All interviews took place in-person between December 14, 2010 and February 8, 2011. Five of the interviews took place at the Laguna Skategarden; one took place at the public library; and one was held outside of a restaurant. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Although interviews took place in a public setting, teens were asked to sit in a quiet spot, away from friends and other distractions. All teens were informed that their names would not be used in the published report. They were also informed that they were free to decline to answer any questions posed.

There were a total of 44 questions asked of the teens. Interviews were semi-standardized, meaning that all questions were asked of each teen in the same way, but the sequence was sometimes amended and teens were often probed for more information (Fielding 1993, 136). The interview questions were designed to provide structure to the dialogue, however the tone of each interview was casual and teens were encouraged to speak openly and honestly.

6.3   Methods for Analyzing the Interviews with Teens

A combination of coding techniques was used to analyze the interview data. This method was used in order to assess the responses with respect to both Civic Identity/Civic Engagement, and to determine if the Skategarden is a context for positive youth development.

The semi-standardized structure of the interviews and the nature of the questions used in this study lent itself to a coding scheme commonly used in quantitative analyses. These coding schemes are typically derived from a "preexisting theoretical stance, and then an effort is made to see if the data fit the coding scheme" (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong 2005, 430). As such, a fairly complete coding scheme was developed prior to going into the field. These codes were based on Bobek et al.'s (2009) six-factor model of Civic Identity/Civic Engagement, defining factors important to civic engagement, as discussed earlier in Section 6.1 of this report.

Thus, the questions asked of teens were assigned one of the following primary codes:

- **Social capital/social trust[1]** – a sense of generalized reciprocity, trust and bonding to others;
- **Civic duty** - the desire and mindset to make positive contributions to society;
- **Civic skills** - the ability to be involved in civil society and democracy; and
- **Civic participation** - participation in activities for the betterment of one's community (however narrowly or broadly defined)

  (Bobek et al. 2009, 616-18).

The analysis also required the development of a coding scheme to connect the data by common themes, concepts, and issues (Monette, Sullivan, and DeJong 2005, 431). This was achieved by developing a matrix that utilized primary codes, secondary codes and pattern codes to properly organize the data for analysis.

The interviews were first transcribed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. In separate tabs within the spreadsheet the questions were then divided by each primary code, for a total of five groups of questions. Within the tab for each of the above codes, secondary codes were added in separate columns next to the primary code. The six factors defined by Bobek et al. (2009) were used as secondary codes, in addition to the broader category called developmental assets:

- Neighborhood social capital/social trust
- Peer social capital/social trust
- Adult social capital/social trust
- Civic duty
- Civic skills
- Civic participation
- Developmental assets

The secondary codes that relate to social capital/social trust (neighborhood; peer; and adult) are more specific than the primary codes used for this topic so as to allow for a more refined analysis of this factor.

After the coding was complete, the spreadsheet had six separate worksheets: one for each of the above primary codes; one worksheet for questions related to developmental assets; and one for general questions. Each worksheet had a column for the interview question; the interviewee name (inserted as the teen's pseudonym, as

[1] Bobek et al. (2009) use the term "social connection" in their six-factor model, however for the purposes of this report, the term social capital/social trust, which essentially has the same meaning as social connection, was used instead. This decision was made so as to remain consistent with the terminology used in the other research cited in this report.

listed below); the response to the question; the date of the interview; the primary code for the question; and each of the secondary codes used in this study.

The answer to each question was then analyzed to determine: 1) If the response was an indicator of the primary code; and/or 2) If the response was an indicator of one or more of the secondary codes. This method was used to uncover themes elicited by the response to each question and also across the questions.

The following is an example of a question from within this spreadsheet (please note, that the rows and columns were transposed for formatting purposes):

Table 8. Sample of Coding Methodology Used for Analysis of Teen Interviews

Question	26. What if public officials asked everyone at the skatepark to help clean up the park because there was a lack of funding and the City could no longer maintain the park on its own - how likely is it that people who visit the skatepark would cooperate?
Interviewee	Josh
Response	"Yes (it's likely that people would cooperate), if it's for the survival of the park." He said that he would take it upon himself to help out and that other skaters would do the same.
Civic duty (Primary Code)	X
Neighborhood social capital/social trust	
Peer social capital/social trust	X
Adult social capital/social trust	
Civic skills	
Civic participation	X
Developmental assets	
Date	December 14, 2010
Source: Author.	

Pattern codes, which are "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 69) were then added to the spreadsheet in order to extrapolate information associated with *positive youth development* and *adolescent thriving*. This includes identifying developmental assets; and the 5 C's – competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion (Lerner et al. 2002, 16).

Finally, it was necessary to thoroughly analyze the primary, secondary and pattern codes to discover if the Skategarden affects both the requisite factors for current civic engagement among teens, and also the predictors of future civic engagement into adulthood.

6.4   Limitations of Interview Methodology

There are certainly limitations to this research. Only seven teens were interviewed for this study. There is an obvious weakness in drawing conclusions from such a small group. Furthermore, those minors interviewed for this study were required to receive parental consent to participate in this research. Though the teen interviewees were selected randomly, ideally, the opinions of all teens who were interested in commenting on the park would be included in the study, not just those who were able to acquire consent from their parents. Finally, for a more comprehensive study, it would be ideal to analyze the opinion of non-park users and their views on the impact of the park on teens in the community. Unfortunately, with the time and resources available for this study, this was not possible.

6.5   An Introduction to the Teens

A total of seven teens (six boys and one girl) were interviewed for this report. They all frequent the park regularly (on average 3 – 4 days per week). All teens, with the exception of the female interviewee, are avid skateboarders. A brief description of the teens follows. Please note, since many of the interviewees were minors, real names were not used in this report in an effort to protect their privacy. Instead, a pseudonym is used for each teen.

<u>The Skategarden Teens</u>

JOSH
Age: 15 years old.
Place of residence: Sebastopol.
School: Analy High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: Visits the park almost every day.
Other activities/hobbies: Drawing, surfing.

KATIE
Age: 15 years old.
Place of residence: Sebastopol.
School: Analy High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: 3-4 times per week.
Other activities/hobbies: Takes piano lessons once a week. Does not skateboard, but many of her friends are regulars at the skatepark.

MATT
Age: 16 years old.
Place of residence: Occidental.
School: Analy High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: 3 times per week.
Other activities/hobbies: Snowboarding.

MIKE
Age: 15 years old.
Place of residence: Santa Rosa.
School: Laguna High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: Every day after school.
Other activities/hobbies: Skates the streets and around town in Santa Rosa. Goes to Santa Rosa skatepark. Competes in skate competitions. Shoots videos at the skatepark that he then posts on YouTube.

DANIEL
Age: 18 years old.
Place of residence: Sebastopol.
School: Laguna High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: 3-4 days per week.
Other activities/hobbies: Art, including graffiti art, and music.

ANTHONY
Age: 18 years old.
Place of residence: Santa Rosa.
School: Mesa High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: 1-2 days per week.
Other activities/hobbies: Trained and competed in boxing for six years.

SCOTT
Age: 18 years old.
Place of residence: Sebastopol.
School: Analy High School.
Frequency of visits to Laguna Skategarden: 3-4 days per week.
Other activities/hobbies: Graffiti art, painting, drawing, playing guitar and listening to music.

6.6   Results from the Interviews with Teens

All interviews took place between December 14, 2010 and February 8, 2011. The names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. Instead, a pseudonym is used for each teen.

The teens' perspectives on social capital/social trust are presented first in Section 6.6.1. This is followed, in Section 6.6.2, by a review of the responses to those questions designed to measure the teens' civic duty, civic participation and civic skills and the impact of the Skategarden on these factors. Finally, Section 6.6.3 summarizes other themes related to positive youth development, providing a summary of the teens' comments that relate to the developmental assets derived from spending time at the Skategarden.

6.6.1   Social Capital/Social Trust

As a traditionally marginalized group, skateboarders often form tight-knit groups, bonded by their passion for skateboarding and motivated by their desire to skate. In Sebastopol, this passion provided the fuel to fight for the creation of a skatepark. And the Skategarden now allows for the perpetuation of this culture across generations.

Socializing is an essential component of the Skategarden culture. For several of the interviewees it is as important, if not more important, than skateboarding. The teens reported that they generally go to the Skategarden with friends or arrive by themselves to meet up with friends.

Meeting new people and making new friends at the Skategarden is also very common for the teens. "I've met people I probably never would have talked to otherwise," Josh said. Katie spoke of instances when the Skategarden provided the opportunity to talk to kids from school who she had never interacted with before. And Anthony spoke of the friendships he has made at the park and how skateboarding provides a foundation upon which to develop these relationships. "The more times you skate and hang out (with new friends), the more chance it will be a lasting friendship."

Mike, who lives in Santa Rosa and visits the skategarden every day after school, met so many new people from Sebastopol when he started visiting the Skategarden that he transferred to Laguna High School (located several blocks from the skatepark) so that he could spend more time with his new friends.

Of course not everyone is going to feel welcome right away. Anthony mentioned that when he first started coming to the park he was intimidated because he could not skate well. However, once he met people and became a better skater, he felt more comfortable.

Each of the teens also discussed friendships with and/or the opportunity to meet people outside of their peer group. Daniel spoke of a "brotherhood" at the park, comprised of both older and younger skaters. Interacting with skaters both young and old was cited by every teen as extremely important not only for developing new skills

in skateboarding, but also as a key factor in setting the tone at the Skategarden – a generally peaceable and friendly place.

Adult skateboarders play a very important role in the lives of teens at the Skategarden. Social capital is evident in this cross-generational skateboarding community and it thrives both in and out of the skatepark. It goes beyond learning new skate tricks or getting a ride from an older skater to a new skate spot. Five of the teens reported that they kept informed about the Skategarden prior to the park's opening through older members of the skateboard community. Josh, Daniel and Scott received information from local adult skateboarders, including Kevin Quinn, the owner of a retail establishment in Sebastopol that sells skateboards and skateboard equipment and sponsors a skate team for local kids. The teens were knowledgeable about many details of the planning process, including the hard work of the park advocates and the tremendous challenges they faced.

The social capital continued to grow once the Skategarden gates opened. This is important for the teens on a practical level - teens mentioned contacting adult skaters about issues at the park – and also on a more profound level - the teens are able to spend time with positive adults who share their passion. As Daniel pointed out, only after the Skategarden opened did Sebastopol teens have this opportunity.

The presence of adult skaters is also critical to the success of the space. Scott spoke of the respect that the teens have for adult skaters and the fact that teens are more likely to respond to the enforcement of rules or requests for assistance in maintaining the park if they come from these adults, as opposed to police officers or city employees. And the teens carry the tradition forward. They see themselves as role models to the younger skaters at the Skategarden. Each of them emphasized the importance of the space being open to all ages and the pride they take in interacting with younger skaters and teaching them new skills. Josh even offers lessons to younger skaters in his free time.

In contrast, there is less opportunity for social connection in other contexts in the teens' lives. All of the teens were able to describe their neighbors by physical appearance or age, but only three were able to identify any of them by name (Josh, Scott and Anthony mentioned interacting with at least one neighbor frequently). Only Katie reported that she and her family had worked with their neighbors to fix or improve something in their neighborhood.

Another important component of social capital is trust. In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam states that individuals who are more engaged in community life are more trusting of others and are more trustworthy themselves (Putnam 2000, 136). Further, social capital is dependent on reciprocity, which requires trust among the members of a community (Putnam 2000, 134-35).

The Skategarden teens had mixed feelings on trust. When asked if they could trust people at school, only Anthony felt that his classmates were trustworthy. They were also split in their feelings on the trustworthiness of people in general; some of the teens felt that people, especially in Sebastopol were trustworthy, other teens felt that

people could not be trusted, or only trusted once they got to know them.

All of the teens, with the exception of Matt, felt that social networks were an important component of trust. They expressed that they are far more likely to trust people who they know or when they are a part of their community. When asked if the people at the Laguna Skategarden can be trusted, the teens were again split. Katie, Mike, Scott, and Anthony all felt that people who visit the park are trustworthy, especially since they know so many people there. Matt, who had his phone stolen at the park, disagreed, as did Josh and Daniel. Interestingly, however, when asked if a lost item at the Skategarden would be returned to the rightful owner, both Josh and Daniel, who expressed a lack of trust in people, both believed that a lost item would eventually be returned to the owner. Josh even spoke about finding his helmet at the park after he lost it. Many of the teens emphasized the importance of community/social networks in this situation, telling stories about lost items that older skaters collected and returned to them or that peers had found and returned.

6.6.2   Civic Skills, Civic Duty and Civic Participation

The Skategarden plays a significant role in the teens' lives in terms of civic participation. These actions may be classified as either civic activity: time spent in formal activities giving back to others; or civic helping: time spent helping others in informal settings (Lerner, Lerner and Phelps 2008, 14).

Several of the questions asked of teens were related to charitable work and volunteerism. With the exception of Katie, who had volunteered at an animal shelter, the only volunteerism that the teens discussed was directly or indirectly related to the Laguna Skategarden. Three of the boys discussed actions they took to help out at the skatepark. Josh spoke about picking up trash, scraping gum off sidewalks and cleaning up at the park. In addition to helping to paint over illegal graffiti at the park, Scott also volunteered in the community garden prior to the skatepark opening, helping to clean the area and pull weeds. Ironically, the only volunteer work that Matt, Mike and Daniel spoke of was related to their fulfillment of community service hours after receiving citations at the Skategarden for not wearing a helmet.

Only three of the teens named charitable or faith-based organizations to which they have made a donation and both Katie and Josh discussed donating money to West County Skatepark when the organization was raising funds to build the Skategarden. Katie remembered frequently putting money into the organization's donation cans at local businesses when she was younger. In discussing her contributions Katie said, "If it's something that will impact my town, I'm more likely to help because I can see a direct effect."

Daniel recently made a contribution to the park by building a skate "grind box" (see Figure 15) in his construction class at school. The wood and metal box was placed on the sidewalk and the new element soon became a focus for the teens, who took turns practicing tricks on Daniel's creation.

Teens were asked if skateboarders would help out at the Skategarden if the City asked for their support in cleaning the park because it no longer had the resources to do so. Josh responded that if it was for the survival of the park that he would take it upon himself to help out and that he knows many other skaters who would do the same. Anthony felt that people would help out, but only if there was a direct connection to skating, such as maintaining the skate facilities or sidewalks. If the task did not relate to skating, such as pulling weeds, then the request would face opposition. Katie agreed, stating that there would definitely be support among skaters for anything associated with skating, but probably not for other tasks.

Several teens specifically referenced their own efforts or the efforts of other skaters as evidence that the Skategarden community is committed to keeping the space open. Both Daniel and Scott mentioned that skaters, both young and old, already contribute to cleaning and policing the park and locking the gate at night. They indicated that they both recognized the value of these contributions to this space. Scott spoke about the numerous times that he has painted over illegal graffiti (i.e. graffiti anywhere other than on the graffiti wall) after a temporary closure of the park due to a vandalism infraction. He said that it was important to him to paint over the graffiti, often paying for the paint with his own money, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of all of the other skaters who will miss out on a day or more of skating when the park is closed.

Teens were also asked about their level of interest in current events, public affairs, and social/political causes; keeping up-to-date/discussing the Skategarden; and also the teens' civic voice and his/her ability to take civic actions.

There was only moderate interest in keeping up-to-date with current events by reading the newspaper or watching

Figure 15. Daniel, a Skategarden teen, built the above "grind box" in his construction class at school. The metal-framed wood box is used for practicing skateboarding tricks.

the news on television among the teens interviewed. Three of the teens said that they stay informed by reading the newspaper or watching the news on television with their parents. The other teens were less interested in keeping up with the news, citing their teachers as their primary news source. Both Scott and Mike, who expressed little interest in reading the newspaper or watching the news, said that when there's a major event, they will go online to read about the story. The teens also generally expressed a lack of desire to inform themselves about politics or a cause that interests them. Several of the teens expressed that they feel too young to yet be engaged by politics or to take an interest in public affairs.

When asked if they ever read a newspaper article about the Skategarden, the teens all said that they rely on their friends and older skateboarders in the community for news related to the park. Several of the teens said that they regularly discuss the park with their friends inside and outside of school. Matt revealed that he not only kept informed about the Skategarden grand opening back in 2008, but he wrote an article for his school newspaper about the event.

In discussing their interest in the "politics" or current events at the Skategarden, all of the teens spoke about events related to skateboarding, such as a recent visit to the park by a professional skateboarding team. They also discussed more serious issues at the Skategarden. All of the teens, except Katie, spoke angrily about the enforcement of the helmet law and the harsh fines that accompany infractions. Several of the teens shared stories about conflicts with the police at the park and the many citations that they and their friends have received for not wearing their helmets. The teens spoke passionately and eloquently about this topic and several of the teens were knowledgeable about the specific state laws regarding skateparks and the use of helmets.

Teens also spoke a great deal about their views on the City's policy on vandalism. Sebastopol's Skatepark Ordinance stipulates that the Public Works Department is authorized to temporarily close the park in the event of vandalism, including graffiti (anywhere but on the graffiti wall). The teens contend that skaters are never responsible for the vandalism, so why must they suffer the consequences? As Daniel points out, skaters would never do something that would infringe on their right to skateboard: "They assume that it's the skateboarders, but why would we do that? Then we can't skate."

Daniel then provided evidence of his ability to constructively deal with his frustration. He and his friends arrived to the skatepark one day to find the gates locked. The teens walked to the police station to inquire about the closure. They were told that the park was closed due to vandalism and were then instructed to take their complaint to City Hall, which they did. Daniel spoke to a City Supervisor who then accompanied the teens back to the park and allowed them to paint over the illegal graffiti so that the park would be reopened. In retelling this story, Daniel seemed empowered by his ability to not only address the situation, but also to get the park re-opened.

Teens were also asked how they would feel and how they would respond if the City decided that it was going to permanently close the Laguna Skategarden. Answers varied from apathetic to angry. Anthony said, "I'd think, 'that sucks,' but I wouldn't do anything about it." Katie seemed more concerned about not having a place to go after school than about any sort of injustice related to the closure. Matt decided that he would write a letter and find a way to make clear to the City how the park helps teens.

Mike, Scott, and Josh said they would respond to a park closure by staging a protest. Josh's plans included visiting a sporting goods store, buying tents and camping out in front of the park. "They are not going to take it from us," Josh said. "We worked too hard. We are just doing what we love to do." Daniel expressed that he would be, "pissed off," if the City closed the park. Skaters would then have nowhere to go where they

were welcome. Scott said that he would feel let down. "I've been skating since I was 5-years-old and I've spent so many days in this town dealing with people getting mad at (skaters)," Scott said. If they closed the skatepark, "it would bring that feeling back, the feeling that I don't have a place in the community." He also said that he would feel sorry for future generations because they would have to go to Santa Rosa to develop their skateboarding skills at a skatepark.

Toward the end of the interview, teens were asked, "How much of a difference do you think that you can make in your community?" The answers were varied. Josh confidently responded, "The sky is the limit. If I put my mind to something, I can do anything." Scott felt that he can make a difference if it is for a worthwhile cause to which he feels committed.

The rest of the teens were dubious about their ability to make a difference in their community. Interestingly, however, they all spoke about the power of groups to effect change. Katie said, "By myself, I don't think that I can make a difference; but if I get my friends behind it, and my parents, then I can get a lot done." Anthony agreed: "If I really try, I can make a minimal change…a large group would be more successful. There is definitely power in (many) voices." Matt expressed a similar sentiment, "Sometimes one person does something and it can catch on and pick up momentum and then there's a positive vibe. This can make a huge impact." Although he quickly added that this is also dependent on the commitment of the person and sometimes on money. Mike stated that he would not be able to make much of a difference in his community, nor would he make much of an effort to get involved with a cause. However, when asked if he would make an effort if the cause was related to the skatepark, Mike said that he would then make an effort to get involved, as long as there were other people who were willing to help him.

6.6.3   Positive Youth Development at the Skategarden

The following is a summary of responses to questions that addressed positive youth development and developmental assets, including internal assets (a commitment to learning; positive values; social competencies; and identity) and external assets (support; empowerment; boundaries and expectations; and constructive use of time) (Benson et al. 1998, 138-59; Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264).

Interviewees were asked for their opinion on the types of values that the Skategarden instills in teens. Interestingly, all of the answers were related back to skateboarding. Josh spoke of the dedication of skaters and how they push themselves to learn new tricks: "You are pushing yourself constantly. You see someone doing a cool trick and then you go out and do it and you try to perfect it." Josh continued, "The element of control takes a lot of discipline," adding that he sometimes spends four to five consecutive hours practicing one trick.

Both Anthony and Mike shared similar thoughts on the value of learning from other skateboarders, and they both emphasized the importance of social interactions at the park that provide the opportunity to learn from one another.

Katie, who does not skateboard, spoke of how skaters need to be aware of their surroundings when they are using the park facilities so as to avoid collisions with others. She also spoke of the need to allow others equal access to the space. Scott echoed this statement, "You have to respect other people (in terms of sharing the skateboarding facilities). Each person needs to get a run in…you give people their turn." He astutely concluded, "It's such a small thing at the skatepark, but in my life it's taught me how the world should be…everyone needs to get their trick in and you have to respect that."

Matt felt that the Skategarden provides teens an alternative to other, less positive activities, such as using drugs or getting involved with gangs.

For the teens interviewed, parental support for skateboarding and the use of the Laguna Skategarden was very strong. All seven teens reported that their parents support him/her visiting the Skategarden and that they frequently or occasionally talk to their parents about the park or about skateboarding in general. Daniel said that his mom, "would much rather he be at the skatepark than doing other things."

All of the teens considered the Skategarden to be a safe and peaceful place. They spoke of very few instances of fighting or bad behavior. Words used by the teens to describe the "vibe" at the Skategarden included, "mellow," "laid back," and "all good." Scott described the people who hang out at the park as, "very positive," and Katie described it as a place where skaters can, "get rid of all their worries for the day."

Adequate enforcement is of course necessary to keeping the park safe and conflict-free. Several of the very same teens who spoke negatively about the enforcement of the helmet law and the City's policy on vandalism also spoke about the importance of regulations. These teens stated that the Skategarden is safer than other places where teens hang out in Sebastopol, specifically because the cops are always around. Teens who prefer to engage in illegal activities, such as smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol (or at least to engage solely in these activities) do not visit the Skategarden because it is difficult to escape from a watchful eye.

"You have to watch out here because the cops are always around…so people are better behaved here than at other skateparks or at people's houses," Mike explained. Scott said that he is also less likely to get into trouble because the Skategarden is a place where teens are expected and encouraged to spend time, as opposed to other public places in town: "People don't see you as a kid on the street. They see you as someone who is doing something."

This is not to say that the teens were naïve to the fact that drug-use occurs at the Skategarden, nor that they were opposed to it. Some of them even spoke openly about using marijuana. Those who did discuss the topic emphasized that the drug is used responsibly and respectfully. Josh said that when people smoke marijuana they do so in the back of the park. "Skaters have respect," Josh said. "The teens who smoke (marijuana) wouldn't do so in front of the younger kids."

Both Scott and Katie noted the distinction between skateboarders who smoke marijuana, and the other teens who smoke and then have nothing to do with their free time. Although neither seemed offended by the use of marijuana among skaters, they both expressed concern about adding additional seating at the park, fearful that people will come to the park specifically to use drugs, imposing a negative influence on the space.

6.7   Summary of the Teen Interviews

Social connections play a huge role in the lives of teens at the Skategarden, both among their peers, and with the younger skaters and the adults who visit the park. For most of the teens, this connection was unique, since many of them lacked similar social connections with neighbors or classmates or a sense of trust in their peers at school. The teens also take pride in serving as role models to the younger skaters who use the park, thus perpetuating the learning and camaraderie that defines this space.

In general, the teens did not express a sense of civic duty or demonstrate their civic skills in terms of taking an interest in politics or public affairs outside of the Skategarden. Nor did the teens have much interest in informing themselves about current events, social or political causes, or volunteering within their communities. However, the Skategarden was found to positively impact the civic duty/civic participation among most of the teens. Many of them expressed their duty to the Skategarden and the meaningful ways in which they participate at the park. They spoke of the actions they have taken (picking up trash, removing graffiti, policing the park) or would take to help out at the park if they were asked to do so. These same teens referenced their civic skills in discussing their ability to make a difference in their community, either on their own, or with the help of their friends and family. And they were able to relate this sentiment back to the Skategarden and the hypothetical actions that they would take to protest a permanent closure of the park.

The interviews also revealed that the Skategarden is a safe place for teens to visit, where they use their time productively, whether by skateboarding or socializing. There is an opportunity for learning from peers and older skaters, as well as for teaching. The Skategarden impacts these teens' lives in meaningful ways.

7. Interviews with Adults Involved as Teens in the Establishment of the Laguna Skategarden

In order to answer the second component of the research question posed by this study, it was necessary to interview adults involved in advocating for the Skategarden as teens. This provided an understanding of the lasting impact, if any, on civic engagement among those individuals who were involved as teens in the planning process to establish the park.

7.1 Conducting Adult Interviews

7.1.1 Recruiting Adults for Interviews

The first step taken to find adults who were involved as teens in advocating for the Skategarden was to contact members of the board of West County Skatepark, the non-profit organization established solely to advocate for the Laguna Skategarden. One of the board members of this organization, David Dippé, was involved both as a teen and as an adult in advocating for the skatepark.

Nicholas Joseph and Trevor Bouchard, the two other adults interviewed for this section of the report, were recruited at the Laguna Skategarden, where they are regular visitors.

7.1.2 A Typical Interview Session

The interviews took place between November 11, 2010 and February 8, 2011. All interviews were held in-person and lasted between a half hour and one and a half hours. Interviews were semi-standardized, meaning that all questions were asked the same way, but the sequence was sometimes amended and interviewees were often probed for more information (Fielding 1993,136).

7.1.3 Methods for Analyzing the Interviews with Adults

Although coding was utilized in analyzing the adult interviews, the method was far less rigorous than that used for the interviews with teens. Once transcribed electronically, pattern codes were added to the interview notes by hand. The codes were then analyzed to determine themes, discussed below, and to derive conclusions, which are shared later in this report.

7.2 Results from the Interviews with Adults

David Dippé, Nicholas Joseph and Trevor Bouchard were all involved as teens in lobbying for a skatepark in Sebastopol. During the many attempts carried out over more than 15 years, each of these men was involved at one point in time. They shared a common motivation for engaging in this process: the right to skateboard. Although the Skateboard Ordinance that prohibits skating in much of Sebastopol still exists, skateboarding is a far more mainstream sport than it was 15 -20 years ago, when the men interviewed began to skate. All of the men spoke of their negative experiences as

adolescents with police officers, who they feel mistreated skateboarders in Sebastopol at that time. The heavy-handed enforcement of the ban on skateboarding on Sebastopol's streets lead to constant run-ins with the law, costly citations and a feeling of marginalization from the community.

7.2.1   Experience as Teens

As a skateboader growing up in Sebastopol, David Dippé channeled much of his energy into skating and fighting for skateboarders' rights. In 1990, he joined a group of friends in the very first attempt to get a skatepark established. After that attempt failed, he was later involved in another unsuccessful bid for a park. "We thought that we needed someone to just listen to us," David recalled. "If they heard what we had to say, then how could they say, 'no' (to building a skatepark)?" He soon came to realize that few people were willing to listen.

David, who is now 34-years-old and lives in Santa Rosa, recalled his feelings of frustration as a teen. He felt as if the rest of the community viewed him as a criminal for participating in the activity that he loved. After spending a couple of years outside of Sebastopol in his early 20s, David returned home to find that not much had changed. The next generation of skateboarders were dealing with the same issues that he had faced as a kid. Empathetic to their struggle and resolved to finally see the City open a Skatepark, David joined forces with a group of engaged parents and community members who were willing to put up a fight for a skatepark one final time.

They soon formed a nonprofit organization, West County Skatepark, to advocate for the park. David was named a member of the board, devoting roughly 20 hours per week to the project. He was heavily involved in all aspects of the project, including garnering support from the City Council, fundraising, site selection and the design of the skate facilities.

Nicholas Joseph, who is 30-years-old and still lives in Sebastopol, described skateboarding as a teen as significant since it gave him a sense of independence and liberation. He started attending City-sponsored skatepark meetings when he was 14-years-old because he felt that a skatepark would be a positive thing for the community, describing the idea as, "a dream come true."

Similar to David, who was a friend of Nicholas in childhood and remains so today, he wanted to express his opinions to the public about skateboarding and, since there was so much opposition to the skatepark and to skateboarders, he hoped to help people see the positive aspects of skating.

Ultimately, however, Nicholas did not feel that he had much power to make a difference. In his view, the City could have done a better job of letting the kids know that they had a voice and that their opinions were valid. "Maybe they did give us that," Nicholas added, "But I don't remember it."

Trevor Bouchard, who is 25-years-old and lives in Santa Rosa, got involved in lobbying for the Skategarden as a teen because he wanted a place to skate that was closer to home; otherwise, he had to find a ride to the skatepark in Santa Rosa. Trevor originally got involved through friends, several of whom had parents who were members of West County Skatepark. Trevor spoke irreverently about his experiences in the planning process. He never thought that the skatepark would get approved, mainly due to the community's resistance to the project. In the end, Trevor's involvement in the process did not prove to be a positive experience as a teen. Although he tried to help as much as possible, he grew despondent due to the negative reaction of other members of the community.

7.2.2   Involvement as Adults

All three men are still very much involved in the Skategarden. David volunteers with the City and he, along with four other community volunteers, has a key to the Skategarden's gate. He is responsible for locking the gate one night a week, at which time he patrols the park for litter or lost belongings. He has assisted in cleaning up illegal graffiti and facilitating the re-opening of the park when it has been closed due to vandalism. He also continues to visit the park regularly for skating. The kids (and adults) who frequent the park all know him by name and several of the teens interviewed for this study spoke of the pivotal role that he played in the establishment of the park, as well as in its maintenance today.

Nicholas, who visits the Skategarden several times a week, is involved in less defined, yet no less meaningful ways. When asked if he would be as involved with the community in Sebastopol if the Skategarden did not exist, he responded, "I'd be involved in certain ways, but they probably wouldn't be as constructive. I get burned out on this town and I often want to leave. The fact that the park is here, even if my involvement is only skating and maybe talking to a kid, is maybe one of the most productive things that I can do in this town."

Trevor visits the Skategarden almost every day and is well-liked by the teens. Although he does not see himself as a traditional role model for the kids, he takes pride in his involvement in their lives and the kindness and respect that he offers to the youth at the park. "I'm here being positive every day," Trevor said.

7.2.3   The Skategarden and Teens Today

All of the men agreed that the teens of Sebastopol are far better off than they were as kids because of the Skategarden. They also all felt that the Skategarden is a positive place for teens. Nicholas expressed that Sebastopol skateboarders now have a place to go and skate where they aren't harassed and where they feel accepted. "They are part of a community that, for the most part, sees the park as a positive place," Nicholas said.

Nicholas continued, "A lot of kids are starting to skate just because the park is here. And if they weren't skating, then who knows what they would be doing?" When asked about drug-use at the Skategarden, he said, "Even if it doesn't entirely keep kids away from drugs and alcohol, it helps a lot. And at least they are skateboarding. Drugs

and alcohol is not all they're focused on. They're hanging out and socializing, not wandering around aimlessly."

As Trevor puts it, "When I was a kid, there were a lot worse places."

In David's view, the Skategarden also brings families together. Parents can watch their kids participate in the activity that they love. David recalled that his father only saw him skateboard once as a child when they took a trip to a skatepark in Sacramento. When a child plays an organized sport, such as soccer or football, there is a far greater likelihood of parental involvement because these activities are sponsored by schools or other organizations. The Skategarden provides a similar opportunity to skateboarders and their parents.

David also spoke of the pride that the Skategarden fosters within the kids who use it: "They feel like it's their home." He also believes that the teens understand that they are representatives of the park and of their community and that that impacts their behavior at the Skategarden.

Nicholas expressed a similar sentiment: "(The teens) feel like it's *our* space. That it is specifically for them. That, in and of itself, is empowering. If anything comes up about the skatepark, they will identify with it and they will have a sense of empowerment and a sense that their voice is valid."

Finally, in speaking about the significance of his own relationships with other skaters when he was a teen, David spoke of how the Skategarden magnifies exponentially the emotional benefits of skating for kids today, "The park provides a far better experience from an emotional perspective (than skating out on the street)," David said. "It's also a healthy, productive place where one can gain a sense of accomplishment," he continued. "Kids have to drive hard to be good skaters. This gives them an identity and builds their self-esteem."

7.3   Summary of the Interviews with Adults

The experience of lobbying for a skatepark as a teen was not necessarily a positive one for the men interviewed for this study. They were marginalized as skaters by much of the community and they faced tremendous opposition in their fight to build a skatepark. For Nicolas Joseph and Trevor Bouchard, the experience was mostly insignificant in their lives as adolescents and has done little to motivate them toward continued political participation into adulthood. David Dippé had a unique experience. Although he experienced the same frustrations as the other two men, he continued to fight for a skatepark in Sebastopol into adulthood. Although there were lapses in his involvement over the nearly two decade process, he kept returning to the fight, eventually joining the board of West County Skatepark. He played a pivotal role in the skatepark approval and planning process and continues to serve as a volunteer, locking the skatepark gate one night a week and regularly participating in the maintenance of the park. David has also committed himself to serving teens in his professional life by working with adolescents who have behavioral and psychological issues.

All of the men are still very much a part of the skateboarding community in Sebastopol and contribute to both the Skategarden and the community by frequently visiting the park and interacting with the younger skaters. The park provides the men a unique opportunity for social connections, both with their peers and with younger skaters. They play a significant role in the adolescents' lives and in many ways set the tone for the park. Although the level of involvement at the Skategarden varies among these men, they are all engaged in meaningful ways.

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8. Discussion of the Findings: Does the Skategarden Affect Civic Engagement?

Through an analysis of the data gathered through observations at the Laguna Skategarden and interviews with both teens and adults who use the skatepark, as well as other members of the community, conclusions are drawn below to answer the research questions posed by this study: Does the use of the Laguna Skategarden affect the development of civic engagement among teens? If so, how does the skatepark impact both those teens who use the skatepark today and those individuals who were involved as teens in the planning process to establish the park?

The Laguna Skategarden was found to positively impact civic engagement among teens in the present, and also to provide the developmental assets requisite for nurturing thriving adolescents who are moving along a path toward an adulthood in which they make contributions to society.

The impact of involvement in the planning process for the park as teens varied among the men interviewed for this study and conclusions on causation could not be drawn. As adults, however, these men play an important role in the success of the park and the Skategarden also contributes to their lives in meaningful ways.

8.1 The Impact of the Skategarden on Civic Identity/Civic Engagement Among Teens

The Skategarden was found to affect levels of Civic Identity/Civic Engagement (civic duty, civic skills, civic participation and social capital (Bobek et al. 2009, 615-27)) among those teens interviewed for this study. The teens' desire to pursue their passion motivates their behavior at the Skategarden. They are more inclined to participate in maintaining the park because they understand that this will allow them the continued use of the space. Youth are prone to become more engaged civically when the issue directly impacts them or their futures are at risk (Youniss et al. 2002, 126-28). And this is not unique to teens. Political involvement among adults is also often motivated by self-interest (Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss 2002, 266). Teens are learning how to serve society by learning how to serve their own interests. In defining what is important to them as individuals, they are developing their civic identities and a clearer understanding of what it means to be part of a community.

The teens spoke passionately about certain issues at the park, including the City's policy on vandalism and what they consider to be unfair treatment of skaters by police officers. Expressing their dissatisfaction with park policies and regulations is, in and of itself, an act of civic engagement for these teens. Obedience to the law is not analogous to good citizenship and democracy is dependent upon tolerance of objections to the status quo and activism on the part of the engaged (Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss 2002, 265). The Skategarden teens' ability to express their attitudes on these topics is a step toward identifying what is important to them and how to serve their interests, as well as the interests of the community to which they identify. And for those teens who took actions to deal with issues at the Skategarden constructively - as was the case when Daniel went to City Hall to inquire about the

park being closed, or when Scott painted over illegal graffiti, spending his own money to buy paint - they realized their civic potential and how to serve their community. Serving self at the Skategarden has translated into teens' contributions to the larger Skategarden community.

Overall, the Skategarden teens did not express a sense of civic duty or demonstrate their civic skills in terms of taking an interest in politics or public affairs outside of the Skategarden. Nor did the teens have much interest in informing themselves about current events, social or political causes, or volunteering within their communities. In contrast, many of them did express their duty to the Skategarden and the meaningful ways in which they participate at the park. They spoke of the actions they have taken (picking up trash, removing graffiti, policing the park) or would take to help out at the park if they were asked to do so. Many of the teens also referenced their civic skills in discussing their ability to make a difference in their community, either on their own, or with the help of their friends and family. They were also able to relate this sentiment back to the actions they would take at the Skategarden.

8.2   Is the Skategarden a Context for Positive Youth Development?

Based on observations of the Skategarden and interviews with teens, it was clear that the park provides the developmental resources that nurture adolescent thriving (i.e. an adolescent who takes actions to serve not only himself, but also parents, peers, community and society), and thus set that adolescent onto a path to a positive adulthood (i.e. one in which he cares not only about himself, but also about his family, peers, community and larger society) (Lerner 2004, 4-5; Lerner et al. 2002, 15; Benson and Scales 2009, 90).

One of the primary reasons that the Skategarden is a context for positive youth development is because it provides a space for teens to pursue their spark in life. Sparks, which are defined as "a passion for a self-identified interest, skill, or capacity that metaphorically lights a fire in an adolescent's life, providing joy, purpose, and direction," are central to the notion of thriving (Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 264).

Skateboarding is a passion that influences the Skategarden teens' lives in many ways. Some of the teens visit the skatepark every day after school. Mike, after making so many new friends at the skatepark, transferred schools so that he could be closer to his newfound community. Two of the teens interviewed hold part-time jobs at local skateboard shops and Mike is the manager of the local skate team. Skateboarding also intersects and parallels other cultures that celebrate art and music. Several of the teens have embraced these creative outlets in addition to skating. Scott and Daniel both use graffiti as an art medium, and Scott and Mike enjoy making videos at the skategarden that they then post online.

Identifying a spark in life is not necessarily enough, however. Teens must also be surrounded by people who nurture that interest. Such adolescents were found to be "more likely to have other values and commitments to social contribution that bring benefit to their communities and wider society" (Scales, Benson, and Roehlkepartain 2011, 273).

Observations at the Skategarden revealed that skateboarding is an activity that is equally popular with adults as it is with youth in Sebastopol. It is the interaction of adult skaters with their younger counterparts (or groms, as they are affectionately called) that has created a unique culture that supports teaching, learning and brotherhood. The teens also take pride in serving as role models to the younger skaters who use the park.

Thus, the Skategarden is a place where kids are receiving the developmental assets that they need to thrive. This is highly dependent on the involvement of the adult skaters who serve as role models to the teens. The space may not succeed otherwise. To their credit, the teens do their part to set the tone of the space, but ultimately it is the adult skaters who spend time there who are responsible.

Peer social connection, which is another component of positive youth development, also plays an important role in the lives of teens at the Skategarden. For most of the teens interviewed this connection was unique since many of them lack similar relationships with classmates or a sense of trust in their peers at school.

Many of the teens who use the park get out of school in the early afternoon and come straight to the Skategarden. None of the teens interviewed spoke of other extra-curricular activities that they participate in at school. If the Skategarden was not in Sebastopol, where would these kids go? And would the alternative be as productive or as positive a place? The Laguna Skategarden is a place to be physically active; a place for teens to dedicate themselves to an activity that they love; a place to be creative; and a place to learn that there are rules in this world - even rules that we do not agree with or support.

For the teens interviewed at the Skategarden and what appeared to be the case for many of the other teens observed at the park, the Skategarden is a unique context that serves as a setting for positive development and the growth of social capital. It is home to a skateboarding community that supports the passion in these teens' lives. This compels them to be actively engaged in the community and to learn and grow through the interactions with peers and adults who share their passion. The Skategarden teens demonstrated that they are serving themselves, their peers, and their skateboarding community. Thus, Skategarden teens are thriving and are more likely to be on a path to a positive adulthood in which he/she is civically engaged.

8.3   The Impact of Involvement in the Planning Process on Adults

The impact of lobbying for the skatepark as a teen varied among the men who participated in this study. For Nicolas Joseph and Trevor Bouchard, the experience was mostly insignificant in their lives as adolescents and has done little to motivate them toward continued political participation into adulthood. David Dippé, on the other hand, continued to fight for a skatepark in Sebastopol into adulthood, eventually joining the board of West County Skatepark. And he continues to participate in the maintenance of the park to this day.

While the initial evidence suggests that there may be an association between David's involvement in the skatepark planning process as a teen and his level of civic engagement later in life, the direction of causality between these two factors cannot be proven. Furthermore, to draw any general conclusions on causation, it would be necessary to conduct more broad-based research and to specifically ask adults involved in the planning process as teens if that experience lead to future civic engagement.

Although the impact of the men's involvement in the planning process as teens is unclear, it is certainly evident that the Skategarden contributes to these men's lives in meaningful ways. All are still very much a part of the skateboarding community in Sebastopol. In return, they make contributions to this community by visiting the park and interacting with younger skaters. These relationships are very significant not only to teens, but also to the men themselves. They are nurturing their own passion for skateboarding and also that of the younger skater. These men are pivotal in making the park a context that promotes positive youth development by serving as positive role models in the lives of the adolescents who use the park.

9. Lessons Learned from the Skategarden: Planning Public Spaces that Foster Civic Engagement Among Teens

The Laguna Skategarden proves that providing public space to teens to develop their passion can inspire them to serve not only their own interests, but to also serve their community. But building a space is not enough. It must be the right space – one that becomes a context for youth to develop in positive ways. The results of this study hold valuable lessons for any community interested in building a public space that supports positive youth development and fosters civic engagement among teens, whether that space is a skatepark or another type of facility.

9.1 Give Teens a Voice and Find (the Right) Adult Advocates When Designing the Space

It is the responsibility of community leaders to include youth in the planning process and to help them find their voice. Instead of having them be observers of the dialogue, the community must find constructive ways to engage youth and to keep them engaged. Teens need the support of adults who are willing to champion their cause and guide them through the inevitable hurdles and opposition that they will face during the process. This requires parent and community-member advocates, such as the West County Skatepark, and City officials, such as Kenyon Webster, who are committed to the cause. And community members must be highly organized and have a unified voice so as to effectively deal with government officials (Webster 2011). Ultimately, it will be the adult advocates who have the resources and political might to push the project forward. City officials should be honest with teens about the reality of their efforts and work with teens to find the right advocates within the community to assist them with their campaign.

Ideally, adults who share the same interests as the teens for whom the space is designed should be involved in the project. Including adult skaters in the design of the Skategarden is a large component of the success of the park. Adults who understand the activity or community who will use the space hold valuable insight. Their involvement also lends credibility to the project in the eyes of teens and is significant from a developmental perspective since it teaches them that members of the community with which they identify (a community that may traditionally be marginalized) can effect change through positive action and commitment to a cause. Once built, the space can serve as a source of pride for the community that it serves. In turn, the space will be respected and cared for. At the Skategarden, the adult skaters have instilled in the teens an understanding of how hard they work to get the park opened. The teens honor this.

If there are no adults in the community who are willing to advocate for the effort, city officials should work to provide teens with the resources to educate themselves on the work of others who share their interests. Skateboarders, for instance, have developed a voice that has positioned them as legitimate and valued members of many communities. Advocacy groups, including SkatePark Association USA, offers assistance to individuals interested in opening a skatepark in their community. Skaters for Public Skate Parks, in conjunction with the Tony Hawk Foundation and the International

Association of Skateboard Companies, offers a 128-page document called, "Public Skatepark Development Guide: Handbook for Skateboard Advancement" (www. publicskateparkguide.org). The Guidebook advises skaters on how to contact local government officials and engage oneself in the planning process.

While involving teens in the planning process can provide a unique learning opportunity to teens and can make them feel valued by their community, adults stand to learn a great deal too. Teens, and especially skateboarders, are often perceived in a negative light. However most teens, including all those who were interviewed for this study, did not live up to this reputation. When asked about their ideas for the vacant parcel next to the Skategarden, which the City intends to develop into an adjoining park, the teens had wonderful, creative ideas for the space. They also had a unique understanding of the area, as well as of their community. Several teens discussed the possible negative consequences of additional seating at the park, arguing that it may attract drug-users and transients. Other members of the community and even public officials may not otherwise think of these valid concerns.

Further, when properly executed, the creation of a space such as a skatepark can positively impact the relationship between community members and teens, reducing conflict within the community. Sebastopol's Police Chief Weaver reported that not only have there been very few incidents at the Skategarden since its opening, but that there has been a dramatic shift within Sebastopol's skateboarding community in terms of their relationship with law enforcement - encounters are now much more "low key," according to Weaver.

Teens have a meaningful voice and are capable of contributing to their communities in very positive ways. Communities must find ways to acknowledge this voice and include teens in the decision making process when designing a space for their use. Only then will they feel like valued members of their community.

9.2   Location and Design of the Facility: Adequate Oversight and Attracting the Community

In addition to being a well-designed skate facility, the Skategarden is also a beautiful and welcoming space that attracts many non-skaters. Unlike some other skateparks that are nothing more than a concrete-covered parcel on the outskirts of town far from any foot traffic or regulation by police or adults, the Skategarden is unique, both aesthetically and also because it incorporates a community garden, bathroom facility, shade structure, graffiti wall, and benches. These features make this a more attractive space to visit for non-skaters. The result is a vibrant skatepark, as opposed to just a place to skate. These factors are especially important for communities that do not have a strong adult skateboarding community; creating a space that is inviting to other members of the community is essential in terms of supervision and maintenance of the space.

The location of the Skategarden within 0.5 miles of both public high schools, the Sebastopol Police Department and the City's central business district is also critical

to its success. Youth can easily walk to the park after school, affording them the independence to travel to and from the park and also to local businesses for further interaction with their community. Although there is little foot traffic near the park, the proximity to the police station and also the consistent visits by adult community members ensures the space is adequately monitored. The space is large enough, however, that teens are also afforded privacy and the opportunity for the social interactions that they crave when visiting public places.

Adequate oversight of the Skategarden by police and adults, both skaters and non-skaters, is also very important in making it a context for positive youth development. Several of the teens explicitly stated that they believe that the teens who frequent the Skategarden are more inclined to refrain from illegal activity because of the consistent visits to the park by law enforcement.

In communities where adults are unable to take on this level of involvement, instating policies designed to promote self-policing among teens, such as Sebastopol's policy on vandalism, may be effective. Both Police Chief Weaver and Planning Director Kenyon Webster believe that the City's policy has been effective in this regard (Weaver 2001; Webster 2011) and the comments from the Skategarden teens corroborate this claim.

It is essential, however, that communities find the right balance between enforcing regulations and respecting the rights of the users of the space. A failure to do so will lead to conflict and resentment. A certain level of contention may be inevitable in a public space designed for teens, but it does not need to define the space. Communities must work hard to foster positive relations between law enforcement and teens. If there are adults who spend time at the space, then law enforcement should try to form an alliance with these individuals since they have a great deal of influence on the teens. The Skategarden teens demonstrated that they are not responsive to regulations when they come from people who they do not respect. It behooves the police (and the entire community) to improve relations with the teens and those adults who influence their views. An important goal of any community should be to treat teens with respect so as to elicit positive behavior from them in return. It is also important, as in the case of Sebastopol, to have the support of the police chief. City officials and advocates for any project designed for teens should work to gain the support of local law enforcement.

9.3   Provide a Space for Teens (and their Role Models) to Pursue their Passion

The Laguna Skategarden is a skaters' space. It is loved and valued by the skaters who use it. The adolescents who visit the park understand and honor this. The teens are highly motivated by the pursuit of their passion. They want to continue to skate and they take actions and behave in ways that will allow them to do so. By serving their interests, they also serve their community.

The teens' actions are also guided by the adult skaters who frequent the park. They admit that they are more likely to respect the park and follow rules because of the

involvement of the elder skaters. Both Police Chief Weaver and Kenyon Webster agree that role models are one of the most important components of the success of the Skategarden (Weaver 2011; Webster 2011).

The dedication of these adults to the space, some of whom were involved in the nearly twenty-year battle to establish the skatepark, is essential. Volunteers, including David Dippé, lock the gate at night and make sure that the park is clean and that the kids are safe.

The presence of adults who teens will (justifiably) respect and admire is vital to fostering positive youth development. Communities should find adults who share the same passion as the teens who use the space and encourage them to actively participate in the space once it is open. It is also important to recognize the passion specific to the jurisdiction. The intention should not be to build a space for an activity, but instead to build a space for a community to become active. This requires identifying a committed group that desires a space to pursue their passion. For Sebastopol, this was skateboarding, for another community it may be something else. Only then is it possible to create a context to inspire teens to make contributions to their community, develop in positive ways and ultimately to grow to be civically-engaged adults.

10. Conclusions on Public Space and Teen Civic Engagement

Public spaces provide individuals the opportunity to build ties to other members of their community. For teens, these interactions take on deeper significance when they are bonded to the other users of the space by a shared passion. If monitored and cared for, a public space that facilitates such interactions can become a context for positive youth development and within this space teens will be inspired to make contributions to their community. They will also acquire assets requisite to progressing on a path to an adulthood in which they are civically engaged.

Creating a context for positive youth development requires certain key ingredients, including adequate oversight and active involvement by other members of the community. It also requires finding the right community to inhabit the space. The Laguna Skategarden in Sebastopol is a true extension of the individuals for whom the space was designed.

Although no conclusion could be drawn with regard to the lasting impact of involvement in the skatepark planning process and future civic engagement among the adults interviewed for this study, these adults play a pivotal role in the multi-generational skating community that makes the Skategarden special. The social connections at the park, which are rooted in a shared love of skating, allow both teens and adults to develop in positive ways. The teens are acquiring developmental assets from their peers and from the positive adult role models they encounter, while the adults are nurturing the younger skaters, and in doing so also nurturing themselves. By sustaining this connection and through active participation in the maintenance of the park, these skaters are making meaningful contributions to their community.

The preceding study shows that by indulging teens' passions and providing a context that promotes positive youth development, adolescents will come to recognize their civic potential and make contributions to society. Strengthening the public realm, by building skateparks or otherwise, is an opportunity for communities to provide a context for this positive development.

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Appendix A

California Health and Safety Code Section 115800 (State of California 2009)

State of California. 2009. *2009 Health and Safety Code. Section 115775-115800, Part 10, Chapter 4, Article 2, Wooden Playground Equipment.*

> *Section 115800*
>
> (a) No operator of a skateboard park shall permit any person to ride a skateboard therein, unless that person is wearing a helmet, elbow pads, and knee pads.
>
> (b) With respect to any facility, owned or operated by a local public agency, that is designed and maintained for the purpose of recreational skateboard use, and that is not supervised on a regular basis, the requirements of subdivision (a) may be satisfied by compliance with the following:
>
>> (1) Adoption by the local public agency of an ordinance requiring any person riding a skateboard at the facility to wear a helmet, elbow pads, and knee pads.
>>
>> (2) The posting of signs at the facility affording reasonable notice that any person riding a skateboard in the facility must wear a helmet, elbow pads, and knee pads, and that any person failing to do so will be subject to citation under the ordinance required by paragraph (1).
>
> (c) "Local public agency" for purposes of this section includes, but is not limited to, a city, county, or city and county.
>
> (d) (1) Skateboarding at any facility or park owned or operated by a public entity as a public skateboard park, as provided in paragraph (3), shall be deemed a hazardous recreational activity within the meaning of Section 831.7 of the Government Code if all of the following conditions are met:
>
>> (A) The person skateboarding is 12 years of age or older.
>>
>> (B) The skateboarding activity that caused the injury was stunt, trick, or luge skateboarding.
>>
>> (C) The skateboard park is on public property that complies with subdivision (a) or (b).

City of Sebastopol Municipal Code. Chapter 9.24, Section 9.24.380.
(City of Sebastopol 2002b)

9.24.380 Skatepark.

In addition to other provisions of the Municipal Code and other applicable law, any skatepark on City property shall be subject to the following provisions.

A. Hours of Use. Notwithstanding other provisions of this Chapter, unless otherwise approved by the City Council, or by City Manager approval of a special event permit, the park will be closed to the public between sunset and sunrise, with specific hours within such period set by the Public Works Department based on staffing availability and related operational and budget considerations.

B. State Law. Users are hereby on notice that skatepark use may be defined as a hazardous recreational activity under California law.

C. Helmet, Elbow and Knee Pads Required. It shall be unlawful for any person riding a skateboard, in-line skates, and skates at any City skatepark, or any other designated public recreational park or area in which skateboarding, in-line skating and skating is permitted, to fail to wear a helmet, elbow pads and knee pads.

D. Prohibitions. No person shall operate, drive or ride upon any skateboard, in-line skates or skates, bicycle, unicycle, horse or any other animal in any park or park areas except in areas posted and designated for such use.

E. Smoking. There shall be no smoking of tobacco or other products in any park that includes a skating area.

F. Portable stereos. Music from portable stereos or other such devices that is clearly audible and causes discomfort or annoyance to any reasonable person of normal sensitiveness at any residential parcel or a place of business shall be prohibited.

G. Prohibited items and activities. The following items and/ or activities are prohibited in any area specifically designated for skate use: glass containers, food, drink, vehicles, bicycles, unicycles,

tricycles, motorcycles or wagons, automobiles, animals, or other domestic animals, portable jumps, ramps or other moveable objects, or the throwing of objects such as Frisbees, balls, or other objects.

H. Vandalism. Graffiti is prohibited in the park.

Closure. In addition to other Municipal Code provisions regarding park closure, with approval of the City Manager, the Public Works Department is authorized to temporarily close the skate area or the entire park in the event of any substantial vandalism, including but not limited to graffiti and other damage to the skate area or other park facilities.

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Observation Data Intake Sheet 1 was used to record the number of people who visited the Laguna Skategarden for each 20-minute observation session, as well as each visitor's gender; approximate age; primary activity; and whether he/she arrived in a group. Information on groups is not included in the table below.

Cumulated Results from Observations at the Laguna Skategarden – Data Intake Sheet 1.

Observation Log No.	No. of Park Entrants	Sex		Age Group					Primary Observed Activity						
		Male	Female	Child	Pre-teen	Teen	Adult	Elderly	Skateboarding	Skateboarding spectator	Parent supervisor	Socializing	Participant in community garden	Art project/graffiti wall	Sit/relax
1	7	6	1	1	2	2	1	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
2	5	5	0	2	0	2	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
3	7	6	1	0	5	1	0	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	0
4	18	14	4	0	1	15	2	0	3	1	0	14	0	0	0
5	7	7	0	2	1	0	3	1	4	1	1	1	0	0	0
6	8	8	0	0	1	6	1	0	5	2	1	0	0	0	0
7	20	19	1	3	6	6	5	0	16	1	1	0	0	2	0
8	6	4	2	0	2	0	4	0	2	2	1	0	1	0	0
9	12	8	4	0	0	4	6	2	5	3	0	0	4	0	0
10	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
11	7	5	2	0	1	2	3	1	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
12	8	7	1	2	1	1	4	0	6	1	1	0	0	0	0
13	9	7	2	0	1	4	4	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	0
14	11	11	0	3	0	4	4	0	9	1	1	0	0	0	0
15	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
16	3	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	19	16	3	2	4	1	12	0	9	4	1	0	1	2	0
18	6	5	1	0	1	3	3	0	4	0	1	0	0	1	0

Cumulated Results from Observations at the Laguna Skategarden – Data Intake Sheet 1 (continued)

		Sex		Age Group					Primary Observed Activity						
No. of Park Entrant	No. of Park Entrants	Male	Female	Child	Pre-teen	Teen	Adult	Elderly	Skateboarding	Skateboarding spectator	Parent supervisor	Socializing	Participant in community garden	Art project/graffiti wall	Sit/relax
19	21	16	5	2	4	7	7	1	13	4	2	0	0	2	0
20	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
21	9	6	3	1	1	2	5	0	5	2	2	0	0	0	0
22	8	5	3	0	0	2	6	0	2	1	0	3	0	2	0
23	7	6	1	1	1	1	4	0	3	1	2	1	0	0	0
24	4	3	1	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
25	6	5	1	3	1	0	3	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
26	16	13	3	3	0	2	11	0	12	1	2	0	0	0	1
27	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
28	5	1	4	2	0	0	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
29	8	7	1	2	1	0	3	2	6	0	0	0	2	0	0
30	4	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total*	248	203	45	31	35	73	101	8	141	45	20	20	9	9	2

*The total number of "primary activities" does not equal the total number of people because during one observation period two adult males arrived to the park to race remote-control cars. Their primary activity was recorded as "other," since this activity was not an option on the data intake sheet.

Observation Data Intake Sheet 2 was used to record the secondary activities and other behaviors for each 20-minute observation session at the Laguna Skategarden. The activities on Data Intake Sheet 2 are largely based on Bradley's study in which he recorded pro-social vs antisocial activities at a skatepark (Bradley 2010, 304).

Cumulated Results from Observations at the Laguna Skategarden – Data Intake Sheet 2: Secondary Activities of Park Users

Observation Log No.	Socializing	Teaching/coaching	Sharing (skateboards)	Helping others	Verbal encouragement	Taking turns/cooperating	Cleaning up trash	Cleaning the bowl	Female/male interaction	Intermingling among groups	Intermingling between teens and adults	Intermingling between teens and younger kids	Art/photography	Vandalizing	Verbal fighting	Littering	Smoking	Drug use	Taunting/bullying	Physical fighting	Graffiti (not on graffiti wall)
1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	5	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0
5	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	12	0	1	1	3	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	6	2	0	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	6	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	7	0	0	0	7	8	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	6	4	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
14	4	1	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	5	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
16	3	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
18	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	2	1	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
21	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
22	4	2	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
23	7	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
24	3	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
26	2	4	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
27	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
28	4	2	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
30	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	**108**	**29**	**7**	**10**	**48**	**64**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**12**	**17**	**11**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**11**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**

91

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Appendix C: Questions for Teens Interviewed at the Laguna Skategarden

Questions fell into six categories:

Category	No. of Questions in Category
Social capital/ social trust	10
Civic skills	15
Civic duty	4
Civic participation	3
Developmental assets	6
General*	6

Total: 44 Questions

*General questions included: teen's name; age; school; involvement in extra-curricular activities; and other general questions related to the Skategarden.

Each question and the corresponding category and source is listed below:

	Question	Category	Source
1.	What is your name?	General	Author
2.	What city do you live in?	General	Author
3.	What is the name of the school that you attend?	General	Author
4.	How often do you visit the skatepark?	General	Author
5.	When you are not at the skatepark, tell me about the activities in which you are involved? Sports? Clubs at school?	General	Author
6.	When you go to the skatepark, who do you go with? By yourself? With friends? Do you usually go with the same group?	Social capital/ social trust	Author
7.	Who do you interact with at the skatepark? Do you talk to people who you don't know?	Social capital/ social trust	Author

8.	Have you made new friends through the skatepark? Do you talk mostly to your friends or do you find that you also talk to other people who you don't know?	Social capital/ social trust	Author
9.	Have you participated in an activity other than skateboarding when visiting the skatepark? For example: The community garden? Art project? Another activity?	Developmental assets	Author
10.	Do you think that the teens in your community are better off since the skatepark opened? Why?	Developmental assets	Author
11.	Do you think that the entire community is better off since building the skatepark? Why?	General	Author
12.	What do you think of the "vibe" at the skatepark? How would you describe the type of people who hang out here and how they interact?	Developmental assets	Author
13.	In your opinion, what types of values does your skatepark provide to teens?	Developmental assets	Author
14.	How often do you read the newspaper or watch the news? This could be online content too.	Civic skills	Saguaro Seminar 2006
15.	Have you ever read a newspaper article about the skatepark? If so, did you read it because it was assigned at school or did you read it during your free time?	Civic skills	Author
16.	If something happened and the city decided that it had to close the skatepark, how would you feel? Would you do anything in response?	Civic skills	Author
17.	Do you volunteer?	Civic participation	Saguaro Seminar 2006; CIRCLE 2006
18.	Have you ever made a contribution to a charity that is important to you?	Civic participation	CIRCLE 2006
19.	Do you feel that you can trust people at the skatepark?	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006

20.	How about people at school, can you trust them?	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
21.	How about people in the neighborhood where you live, would you say that you can trust them?	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
22.	"In general, do you feel that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
23.	So let's say that you lost your wallet or school bag with money and your phone or ipod in it and it was found **by a classmate** at your school, how likely is it that it will be returned with the money and your phone or ipod? [If necessary, prompt with very likely, somewhat likely, not at all likely].	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
24.	And what if you lost your wallet or school bag with the money and your phone or ipod at the skatepark and it was found by a **complete stranger**, how likely is it that it will be returned with the money and your phone or ipod in it?	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
25.	"Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the local community where you live. If public officials asked everyone to conserve water or electricity because of some emergency, how likely is it that people in your community would cooperate — would you say it is very likely, likely, unlikely, or very unlikely?"	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
26.	What if public officials asked everyone at the skatepark to help clean up the park because there was a lack of funding and they could no longer maintain the park, how likely is it that people who visit the skatepark would cooperate?	Civic duty	Author
27.	How interested are you in politics and public affairs in general?	Civic duty	Saguaro Seminar 2006
28.	How interested are you in what's going on within your community in terms of politics and public affairs?	Civic duty	Saguaro Seminar 2006

29.	Can you tell me about something that you've done to inform yourself about a cause that interests you?	Civic skills	Saguaro Seminar 2006; CIRCLE 2006
30.	How interested are you about what happens here at the skatepark? What are you interested in?	Civic duty	Author
31.	And how do you keep up-to-date on what's going on at the skatepark?	Civic skills	Author
32.	Do you and friends ever talk about the skatepark? When you are at the park? Or when you are at school or hanging out at other places?	Social capital/ social trust	Author
33.	What about your parents, do you ever talk about the skatepark with them?	Developmental assets	Author
34.	"Next I have a few questions about your IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS. These are the 10 or 20 households that live closest to you. About how often do you talk to or visit with your immediate neighbors — just about every day, several times a week, several times a month, once a month, several times a year, once a year or less, or never?"	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006
35.	In the past two years, have you or your family worked with others to get people in your immediate neighborhood to work together to fix or improve something?	Social capital/ social trust	Saguaro Seminar 2006; CIRCLE 2006
36.	What about at the skatepark? Have you ever worked at the skatepark to fix or improve something?	Civic participation	Author
37.	Besides school, what other places do you visit in your community where you can interact with your friends?	Social capital/ social trust	Author
38.	How do those places compare with the skatepark? [If necessary, is the skatepark as social of a place as the other places where you hang out with your friends? How so?]	Social capital/ social trust	Author
39.	How much of a difference do you think that you can make in your community?	Civic skills	Saguaro Seminar 2006

40.	How do you think your parents feel about the skatepark? Do they support you coming here?	Developmental assets	Author
41.	Do you know how long it took to get the park built?	Civic skills	Author
42.	Do you know of any other organizations that were involved in the establishment of the park?	Civic skills	Author
43.	Are you familiar with the non-profit, West County Skatepark?	Civic skills	Author
44.	I have heard that they city bought the piece of land next door to the skatepark. Do you know what they plan to do with it? Follow-up: There's a chance that they might build a park for little kids. Do you think that that's a good idea? Why?	Civic skills	Author