Chapter Five

MAKING THE SPACE ACCESIBLE AND SAFE

This chapter explores the social construction of space at Teen TechArts. Research has identified *safety* and *accessibility* as fundamental features of effective community-based youth environments. Traditional methods of studying space have tended to gloss over the *process* of creating and maintaining these features. Using a sociocultural approach, I argue that accessibility and safety are dynamic and co-constructed by adults and youth on a day-to-day basis. As youth participants develop a sense of safety and perceive the space as accessible, how a program promotes safety and accessibility must be renegotiated to meet youth's changing needs for safety. Additionally, consistent with the literature, Teen Tech Arts experienced tensions with the host institution that compromised their ability to create a safe space.

Space as an important aspect of community technology centers for youth

This chapter argues that two feature of the "space" that is created within Teen TechArts became central to the daily activities that adults and youth engaged in. Accessibility and safety are considered fundamental features of programs like Teen TechArts. However, careful analysis of these features revealed that not only were access and safety important, but great efforts were made by adults and youth to construct, organize and negotiate the space on a daily basis.

Accessibility is a core feature of community technology centers (CTCs). It entails not only people's access to the technology and opportunities to learn with technology, but also basic access to the physical space. Safety, on the other hand, is noted in the literature as a fundamental aspect of youth development programs. For a CTC also organized around youth development, these two design features go hand-in-hand in establishing the foundation for successful programs.

Accessibility

Over the past two decades, CTCs have been established to serve as community access points to technology for low-income families and families of color. Inherent in

their design is the notion that the physical space itself is accessible and open to as many people as possible. According to the *Start-up Manual* provided by CTCNet, an online network of community technology centers that also provides resources for existing and prospective practitioners within CTCs, the issue of "space and general ambiance" is [noted] as "equally important as the available software at the center." An entire chapter of the manual suggests ways that CTCs can create an environment that addresses participants' needs for instruction, visibility of resources available and outlines a set of considerations as to where best to locate a CTC. The manual implies that most CTCs are not free standing, independent entities, but rather expansions of existing services within an organization such as a YMCA or community center. Thus, decisions about where to locate the CTC depend on the sponsoring agency that may already have a space in mind. Locations of CTCs spans from open spaces within libraries, vacant apartments or common rooms in housing developments, children's wards in hospitals, storefronts and even a site that once was a gas station. Even with the expansive possibilities of locations of a CTC, accessibility is noted as a key factor in decision-making.

> "People need to be able to find the place easily, and they need to feel they can come and go without expense, without anxiety, and without physical obstacles…. It means a well-lit exterior. It means a location central to the intended participants; it may mean easy access by public transportation." (Stone, 1996)

The features of a CTC that are perceived by community members as welcoming, visible and convenient contribute to participants' sense of comfort and perception that the resources available are designed in their best interest. Before a CTC can begin to provide support and learning opportunities with new technologies, the CTC must first be accessible.

Safety:

For youth development programs, safety has a primacy in defining space that is akin to accessibility for community technology centers. Creating a safe haven for youth

is considered a primary aim underlying successful programs. Among practitioners and researchers of youth development, the notion of safety is characterized as both a physical and psychological phenomenon that jointly contributes to the healthy development of adolescents. At the most basic level, researchers have outlined that providing a physical environment that is free from violence and unsafe health conditions is the starting point to ensuring safe spaces for youth development (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1995; McLoyd, 1990, McLoyd, 1998). In addition, the definition for physical safety has been extended by school health professionals (Institute of Medicine, 1997b) and professionals working in the area of youth development programming design, implementation, and evaluation (Pittman et al., 2000b) to include "freedom from exposure to environmental hazards, infectious agents, and both unintentional and intentional injuries" (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002).

On the psychological dimension of safety, creating a structured and predictable environment where youth can engage in activities with peers and adults is considered important. The quality of interpersonal relationships that youth develop with their peers and with adults in these centers contributes to the sense of safety they feel in youth development centers. Whether or not youth feel welcomed and enjoy themselves while participating in activities serve as indicators of youth feeling safe in youth development organizations. The universe of organizations offering programs for inner-city adolescents is extraordinarily diverse, however effective youth organizations share the pressures and ills of contemporary inner-city America – unstable and depressed economies; spiraling demands for social and educational services; escalating levels of street violence, criminal activity, school failure, adolescent pregnancy, and other distress signals. Youth development organizations, "urban sanctuaries," are places of hope and give inner-city youth "an unusual chance to duck the bullets and change their lives" (McLaughlin, Irby and Langman, 1994, p.9).

Not all CTCs are youth development programs, nor are youth development programs necessarily about providing access to technology. However, when a CTC

decides to not only provide access to technology to young people, but also to promote positive and healthy youth development then considerations for safety become as essential as accessibility. A sense of safety is the beginning of youth feeling a sense of belonging within the organization.

Although access and safety have been identified as fundamental features of community technology centers and youth development programs and researchers, practitioners and policymakers have begun to identify and outline the kinds of activities, attitudes and programmatic structures that promote a sense of safety and increase access to successful program, we know little about *how* programs actually create accessible and safe environments for the youth who participate in them. In this chapter, I will be fundamentally concerned with *how* access and safety are created and managed on a day-to-day basis. This chapter begins by presenting my expectations and first impressions of access and safety at Teen TechArts. Images of ideal programs that provide accessible and safe program is contrasted with my first impressions of the lack of these two features at Teen TechArts. Unlike other programs I have observed, Teen TechArts appeared to disregard for access and safety for its own participants. Then, this chapter explores the finding that although what I observed at Teen TechArts differed from literature-based descriptions of features, it soon became apparent that "space" was a central concern at Teen TechArts, albeit subtle and nuanced. Creating an accessible and safe space for the youth participants of Teen TechArts was in fact very important and together adults and youth strove to create and maintain such a space. Finally, this chapter describes the various strategies the program experimented with to create new practices to manage access and maintain a sense of safety within the program in ways that begins to demonstrate how Teen TechArts promoted a youth development environment.

Expectation of access

Over the past two decades the CTC movement has bolstered the establishment of over 1,500 new centers that provide points of public access to technology in low-

income communities and communities of color. A number of programs have been identified over the years as exemplars of model designs of a CTC (cite some EDC, CCT and SRI case studies). With respect to accessibility, Plugged In in East Palo Alto continues to represent an image of the ideal for CTCs amongst the network of community technology centers across the country, foundations and policymakers. Being one of the first community technology centers established in 1992, Plugged In was in the unique position of opening its doors in East Palo Alto, a low-income community of color surrounding by the growing Dot.com boom within Silicon Valley. Plugged In as a CTC became an icon of bridging the digital divide. In the beginning, Plugged In was situated within a commercial block filled with restaurants, liquor stores, a beauty shop, and other nonprofits serving the community[1]. Behind the building were apartments where many of the participants of Plugged In lived as well as a grocery store that catered to the Latino population in the community. Just blocks away from the center were an elementary and middle school, which served as a feeder to the after-school program at Plugged In. The space was situated in the middle of the block and it was a storefront that people from the street could easily access from the sidewalk. The program itself was visible from the streets. In addition, Plugged In was unique in that the entire front of the space had large windows spanning from the ceiling to the ground. People could easily look inside and see all the computers and people working individually and together around the computers. The door was also made of glass with its wooden frame and all the trimming of the face of the building painted a bright yellow. Along the top of the window was painted lettering "Plugged in: Learning Through Technology." And along the bottom of the window was a ribbon of youth artwork. On the front door was a sign with the hours of program operation and the program phone number clearly displayed. The doors were always unlocked during program hours and a staff person was always sitting at the desk near the front door to welcome people and direct them to the tools and activities they were interested in. Often

---

[1] In 2001, Plugged In was moved to a new location due to a city redevelopment project in the area where Plugged In was originally located. The access and visibility of the new site is much more compromised and faces some of the issues described in this chapter.

people would stop in and ask what Plugged In was as they passed by in their cars and on foot to one of the other business on the block, each detail contributing to a sense of accessibility – welcoming of local patrons.

Plugged In serves as one image of ideal access to a community technology center. There is visibility of the program from the street and there is easy access to the program from the street. The doors are unlocked and the signage for the program is well displayed. Not all CTCs provide the kind of visibility and access to a community that Plugged In was able to provide, however there are many programs that still provided open access to its target populations within the community. As mentioned above, many CTCs are established as extensions within an already existing organization. For these programs there is an assumption that although the program is not easily accessible to the general public within a community, the participants of the organization are aware that the CTC exists and are able to easily access the physical space of the CTC. For example when a YMCA, Boys and Girls Club or even housing development opens a CTC within their building, the members or residents of each institution will be able to locate the CTC through signs and flyers and have open access to the space when the program is open.

An outsider's first look at access to Teen TechArts

On the surface, Teen TechArts appeared to be a CTC that was almost completely inaccessible to the community it was designed to serve. Access to the physical space was wrought with constraints related to its location within the larger institution it was housed within. Accessibility was an issue of the building itself that included how the institution managed of the flow of people to the CTC. In contrast to Plugged In and even CTCs within YMCAs and CTCs set-up within housing developments (Korbak, Penuel, & Daniels, 2000), there existed numerous barriers to Teen TechArts. It was located in the basement of the House of Faith building.

Although the House of Faith was a large, square, beige building on the corner of a major thoroughfare, Teen TechArts' presence or location within the building was

neither visible from the street nor easily accessed by youth in the community. There was only metal lettering along the top of the building facing Franklin Street that read "House of Faith." In fact, there were no signs on the building indicating that a CTC for youth existed inside the building.

The space that Teen TechArts occupied in the basement was an oblong space, approximately 15 feet wide by 40 feet long enclosed by a door with a glass window in it. There were no windows to the outside from this space. Within the basement, which was approximate 4500 square feet, there were also three small offices with doors, an open area, a bathroom and a large undeveloped storage space. The location of Teen TechArts lacked street level visibility and without any signage on the outside of the building, access to the space by youth in the community was seemingly compromised.

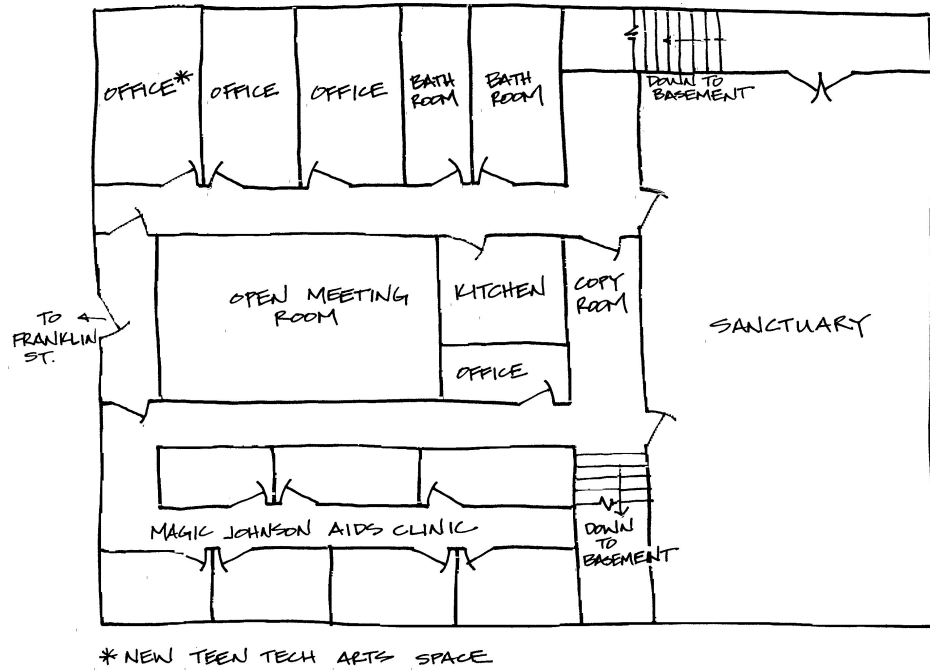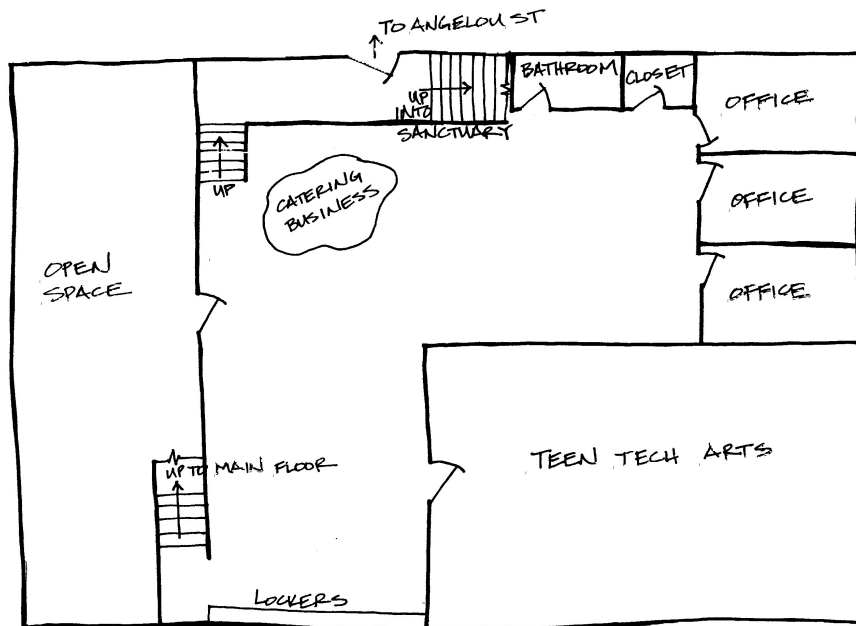**Figure X: Main floor of the House of Faith building**

Figure XX: Basement of the House of Faith building

Once youth were aware that Teen TechArts existed in the basement of the House of Faith, getting inside of the building presented another challenge to

accessibility. All participants to programs and services housed in the basement of the House of Faith were required to use the side doors, which were located on Angelou Street. Unfortunately this door was locked at all times and there was no reception person at these doors. There was a doorbell located on the wall next to the doors, but rarely was the doorbell answered unless one of the programs in the basement was expecting someone. In contrast, the clients served by the House of Faith's main programs gained access to their services through the front doors on Franklin Street, which were unlocked during business hours. Once they were inside the main floor of the building they entered into a small foyer where there were two chairs a plant and a small reception window with a bell to ring for someone let you inside. Even this space appeared to be predictable, welcoming and validating of the clients visit to the building. The potential limitations to access for visitors to Teen TechArts became clear for me early on in this study.

> Field notes 9/4/01: I couldn't get into the building today. I had made arrangements to meet Georgia in the lab after another meeting in the city. As I was heading over to the program I called the lab phone. There was no answer so I was directed to voicemail. I left a brief message letting her know I was on my way. The base for the phone used in the lab is actually upstairs in a shared office space with Derek. Each day Georgia or Ryan must get the phone and bring it downstairs. The reception is not that good in the basement so sometimes it does not work well. As I pull up to the building I call the lab again. No answer. I ring the doorbell a few times and one time a man wearing an apron comes up the stairs and I wave. He heads back down the stairs. I assume he recognizes me as someone related to Teen TechArts and is going to get Georgia or Ryan. But he never returns. I have never been through the front doors before and did not know anyone else in the organization, but thought I'd walk around and see if there was another way to get inside the building. I found another set of doors, but there were no signs and it looked uninviting so I headed back to my car and called the lab again. No answer. I decided to call Georgia' cell phone hoping perhaps she might hear that phone in the basement. No answer. After about fifteen minutes I decided I would just head home.

I had been to Teen TechArts several times prior to this visit. Each time I rang the doorbell on Angelou Street and shortly thereafter Georgia or a child came up the stairs to let me in. Until this visit, where I faced several challenges (e.g., an inability to make

contact with someone in the lab by phone, a lack of face recognition with staff of the restaurant business, and little understanding and introduction to the larger institutional staff and space) I had not considered the issue of accessibility as a significant aspect of Teen TechArts abilities to promote an accessible after-school program in the South Metro neighborhood. In this personal experience the practices for creating and maintaining an accessible space that I describe later in this chapter become

Finally, issues around accessibility at Teen TechArts were compounded by how the House of Faith managed the flow of people to the program. If a young person should come through the front doors of the building trying to get down to Teen TechArts, they would find a sign next to the reception window that read "Anyone for Teen TechArts, Go Around." When they walked around the building to the doors on Angelou they found locked doors and played their luck as I did hoping that if they rang the bell someone was going to come and open the doors for them. Once a young person was let in the building, there was no signage that directed them to the room where Teen TechArts was located. The first and only sign for the program was outside the program doors, a small 8 _ by 11 sheet of paper that read "Teen TechArts" and listed Georgia and her two youth staff below in smaller font.

The initial encounters with issues regarding access to Teen TechArts present conflicting evidence of an effective community technology center for youth given the image of the ideal of Plugged In. The lock doors, lack of street-level visibility, difficulty of navigating through the institution to the program space and numerous indicators of an unwelcoming environment for youth posted by the House of Faith argue against Teen TechArts as an effective community-based youth organization. With so many aspects of a fundamental feature of the program being compromised, it seemed as though Teen TechArts was inaccessible to the youth in South Metro. On the contrary, further examination of the issues surrounding access exhibited continuous efforts by the adult staff and youth participants to create and negotiate structures and processes whereby youth managed to gain access to the program on a regular basis. Instead of inaccessibility being an issue for the program, accessibility became a significant and

fundamental issue of creating a youth development space. How the adult staff and youth participants co-constructed an accessible space will be taken up in later section. First, I describe my expectations and first impression regarding the second aspect of space – issues of safety.

Expectation of safety

> *"Adolescents' development and growth can take place only when personal safety is assured" (McLaughlin, Irby and Langman, 1994, p.104)*

In the field of youth development, a seminal piece of work by McLaughlin, Irby and Langman (1994) presented six exemplars of neighborhood youth organizations as "urban sanctuaries" that offered youth in inner-cities "support, guidance, safety, companionship and opportunities to learn and grow" (p.9). In all six programs, safety was identified as the number one quality of an effective program by both the youth and staff. For example, Michael Carroll, the founding "wizard" of the BEST (Building Educational Strategies for Teens) program characterizes his job as first and foremost about "providing safe passage and protection" for the youth from the Francis Homes housing project. However, he also describes safety as something beyond providing shelter from physical harm and describes BEST as a place that protects youth "from the psychic harm dealt daily from police, [people on the streets], schools and the family"(p.104). In addition, "He describes BEST as 'kind of a sanctuary for the kids.' There is 'chaos' outside, but when they come through BEST's heavy steel door they can hope to find calm and security" (p.88).

BEST is an after-school and summer day camp program, whose purpose is to support educational and self-development. Housed in two church buildings youth from the Francis Homes housing project come in after school to get themselves a snack, do their homework, play games or work on special projects and occasionally participate in discussions about fieldtrips. The only entrance to BEST is a pair of doors covered in double-run steel webbing. Inside the space, youth are greeted by Harriet Caldwell, "the

grandmother who for more years that she would ever tell had been the combined

greeter, social chair, and household manager for BEST" (p.87) and familiar faces in the

twenty-four full-time and fifty teenage staff who are ready to sit and work on

homework, projects or to play board games.

Among practitioners and researchers of youth development, BEST represents an

image of the ideal safety that neighborhood youth organizations provide inner-city

youth.

> Everyday life at BEST in many ways resembles the typical family as many
> Americans imagine it…. The building that houses BEST, its staff and its youth
> have become a refuge and a warm, welcoming family place for the young people
> of Francis Homes (p.88).

Creating a sense of safety is at the forefront of all effective neighborhood

programs that promote youth development. It creates the foundation of a program's

success in being able to provide activities that youth want to participate in, can learn

and grow from and contribute to because they have found "calm and security."

Programs like BEST epitomize the importance and impact of creating a safe space for

youth.

An outsider's first look at the safety of Teen TechArts

Similar to other urban sanctuaries, Teen TechArts was located in a

neighborhood that was filled with unsafe physical and psychological experiences. One

block from the program was South Street, which was filled with SROs, Single Resident

Occupancy, overnight hotels, liquor stores, triple X-rated stores, check cashing and

pawn shops, a needle exchange program and under-resourced ministries (Georgia –

trspt.1, 1/24/01). During the day and night, South Street was filled with people who

were homeless and "really loaded on something, be it crack or heroin, whatever it is…

there's a lot of selling that goes on" (Georgia – trspt.1, 1/24/01). From the other side of

the building there was a Parks and Recreation Center and an elementary school with

more trendy, upscale restaurant serving the growing Web, online and design industry that had been creeping into this neighborhood along the waterfront since the late 1990s. The neighborhood was still predominantly one of low-income housing, public housing, nonprofit subsidized housing and senior housing with a majority of Filipino, Latino and Russian families living there.

It was not uncommon for a staff, upon arriving at the House of Faith, to comment on the smells, sounds and sights of unsavory activity in the surrounding neighborhood. A common greeting by various staff of Teen TechArts was to comment on the degree to which they could smell the urine from the sidewalks that day, as though they were discussing the weather. And if it should happen to be a particularly difficult day, they extended the comment to how little or how much human defecation could also be found on the sidewalks.

> It's a place where there are a lot of vagrants. It's hygienically not ideal, for various reasons. It's totally inappropriate for youth services (Derek – trspt.1, 9/27/01).

Once youth made it inside the building, there were many different features of the space that made it unsafe and uninviting to youth. The location of Teen TechArts within the building was a small room in the basement with no natural light. Poor lighting in the basement made for getting to the program from the top of the stairs sometimes a "scary" experience for younger children. In addition, the one bathroom in the basement was small, dilapidated and lit by one dim light bulb. There was no outer door to the bathroom either. Many times children expressed being afraid to go to the bathroom alone. Teen TechArts had shared the basement space with several other agencies and services over the years, only one of which provided services to youth (Prospects for Youth High School). Often times the smells from the catering/restaurant business would overwhelm the basement air space and made it difficult for the staff and youth to concentrate. When this would happen the only thing the program could do is to shut its door and turn on their fan, which only accentuated the fact that Teen TechArts was a

youth development program with no natural light or windows. According to Georgia, this was in violation of a community program's basic function to provide a safe space for healthy youth development.

The youth at Teen TechArts also experienced unsafe interactions with staff from other House of Faith programs. They had been spoken to in ways that were condescending, authoritarian and disrespectful. Their presence in the building was often questioned. For example, Keiko, who had been a youth staff at Tech Arts for over a year and tried to save money by bringing her own dinner and snacks to work and leaving them in the refrigerator in the staff kitchen. One day when she was heating up her dinner, Nonni, the House of Faith Deputy Director found her in the kitchen and asked what she was doing. Keiko often recounted this experience when describing how she felt that Teen TechArts was not welcomed by the House of Faith. Although she had been a participant of the program for over a year and had frequented the kitchen on numerous occasions, she still "felt like an unwelcome guest" when she stepped outside of the Teen TechArts' door. On other occasions youth who were walking up and down the stairs laughing and talking had been scolded for "being too loud."

Teen TechArts appeared to be less than exemplary in its efforts to be a youth development focused CTC. However, a different picture emerged under further investigation. In the following sections I present the experience of the youth and the collaborative efforts of Georgia and the youth to increase access and maintain a level of safety that made the youth consider Teen TechArts an urban sanctuary. Close observations of their participation along with formal and informal conversations with adults and youth revealed that access and safety were important aspects of promoting a youth development space for its members, in particular the staff.

The experienced "reality" of access & safety at Teen TechArts

From an outsider's perspective, it appeared that this program faced numerous challenges and constraints to their program planning and design for a youth development focused CTC. From my observations, the inaccessibility and invisibility of

the space meant that rarely would a youth from the neighborhood happen upon the program on their own. But there were always lots of children at Teen TechArts. Not only were there youth who had grown to be "lab members" of Teen TechArts, but also new youth came through on a regular basis. In fact, in one year Teen TechArts served approximately 250 unduplicated youth from the South Metro neighborhood. On an average day of programming approximately forty youth came and participated in technology-related activities, with an average between 45-75 unduplicated youth per month.

Attendance On a Good Day	
Prospects	25
Harriets	10
OLMs	5
Youth Staff	2
Neighborhood	15
TOTAL	**77**

A primary way that the program served the neighborhood children was essentially through word of mouth. During one interview, the program director even likened the program to a "Speakeasy," which actually helped her to frame how she would go about making the program accessible to youth. After facing much resistance and policies regulating signage for other House of Faith services, Georgia was resigned to posting signs only outside of the Teen TechArts door and within the space.

> At the beginning I pushed for a vinyl banner, Oasis, the girls program in the neighborhood that also rents space within a larger institution, has a small pink sign to direct folks to the program from the front doors of the institution. I have brought up the idea of posting a sign on the Angelou St. doors that lead down to the lab, but because of the 'institutional hurdles' I knew I'd have to fight through, I've just come to think of recruiting and access to Teen TechArts like a Speakeasy. People just know and find it (Georgia – trspt.12, 3/27/02).

The Speakeasies of the 1920s were places where people had to "speak easy" and credit whomever sent them. They typically had code words for people to be allowed in and were fronted by chaste stops as barbershops, ice cream parlors or tearooms (Clark, N., 1976). In a similar way, Teen TechArts was a place that youth from the neighborhood learned about by knowing the right people (adults and youth) and participating in the right programs (programs that Teen TechArts partnered with). In addition, youth continued to patron Teen TechArts because it provided something they considered relevant and valuable. Through networks and building recognition Teen TechArts developed practices to mediate access and safety within inaccessible and unsafe surroundings.

Youth came to the program in several ways including:

- participating in other local youth agencies,
- living in the surrounding neighborhood of Teen TechArts,
- being friends with a youth who participated through the above channels, and
- being related to someone who worked at the House of Faith.

At Teen TechArts, the youth from the South Metro neighborhood most likely had their first interaction with the space as part of an existing group that came regularly to the lab (e.g., Harriet/YMCA, Prospects). Through these partnerships, youth were introduced to the program, where it was located within the building and how one gained access to the space. Another channel by which youth found Teen TechArts was through "sister" youth programs in the neighborhood such as the South Metro Parks and Recreation center down the street and Oasis, a girls program, a few blocks away. Although Teen TechArts did not provide formalized classes to participants of these programs through a regular partnership, the three programs shared youth participants. Many youth would spend their after-school hours in these three organizations participating in different activities on different days of the week. In addition, the three

programs were aware of each other's services and strengths. When they had a participant with a need that could be addressed by one of the other programs they would refer youth appropriately. This also extended the accessibility of Teen TechArts. Through these partnerships, Teen TechArts was able to maintain a full and active program. In the following sections I describe some of the key practices developed by Georgia with the youth to manage access to Teen TechArts and create a sense of safety for the youth and staff within the program

Practices for making Teen TechArts a Speakeasy

> Space is a huge issue right now, and we had hoped to have had that addressed already with the build-out of the facilities. Even when they are built out, there will still be the issue of having a youth-friendly environment with regard to everybody who works here, everybody who comes here. So a lot of people who come here for other services as well as the many members of the church who undoubtedly are very sympathetic to young people and many of them have their own children, they [inaudible] exist, and they don't know the role it has here, so they don't know how to relate to this [Teen TechArts]. They don't know who the staff is… So, space is the first issue immediately, just to be able to keep up the level that we need and to expand the programs… So that would be the first issue… I guess… addressing space in the content of an emotional and psychological and cultural space as well. (Georgia – trspt.6, 9/4/01)

The constraints and challenges of access and safety became apparent to Georgia during the first summer that the program was opened. The lack of street level visibility, prevalence of unsafe activity on the streets around the building, and locked doors compromised her ability to conduct outreach in the typical fashion.

Through a gradual acceptance of the inaccessibility and lack of safety surrounding Teen TechArts, Georgia turned to experimenting with different strategies for (1) managing and enhancing access to participants and (2) creating and maintaining a sense of safety for participants while at Teen TechArts. In the following two sections I describe the moves Georgia made to increase the sense of access and safety for its participants and the actual practices that were implemented.

Practices for managing access to the space

Outreach and locked doors:

Early experiments focused on outreach and managing the locked door to the building. The lack of reception system at the Angelou Street doors created a little game out of hoping that someone would hear the doorbell and provide an escort to the lab. To resolve this, Georgia developed a system with the youth to answer the door to let youth in. Being the sole staff person during program hours, she wasn't able to constantly respond to the doorbell.

> So, we actually have a regular policy with the kids who are there a lot, who are there very often, where if we hear the doorbell ring, we send one of them up to get someone. And they know very well, because there are glass doors, if it's someone you know, if it's a kid you know, go ahead and let them in. But if it's anyone you don't know, just kind of look at them and hold up your finger like, 'Just a minute,' and then come back to the lab and tell us (Georgia or Ryan) and we'll take are of it (Georgia – trspt.6, 9/4/01).

This strategy for managing access seemed to work for the most part. It was difficult to know if there were any youth who weren't able to get in because no one answered the doorbell and had to find somewhere else to go. It may be that participants understood this as part of the Speakeasy nature of the program, that on some days you managed to get inside and others you didn't.

At the beginning, Georgia also made face-to-face visits to South Metro Parks and Recreation Center at the end of the block, to the Harriet Tubman Elementary School a few blocks away, and to the children who played on the short block between Teen TechArts and the Rec Center to recruit youth to participate at Teen TechArts. Further, she drew upon her previous experiences at other after-school and community-based programs in deciding to bring in groups of students through partnerships developed with other local youth serving agencies. In addition to having days where the neighborhood kids that had been coming during the summer could continue to

participate she brought in groups through existing youth organizations to increase the number of youth who were able to participate, were aware of the program and understood how to gain access. A mixed design with structured groups and "drop-in" neighborhood kids also facilitated her ability to sustain a level of energy and planning the program required of her. As the sole staff of the program she could only handle a finite number of youth who wanted to participate at Teen TechArts. The number of computers in the lab also helped to manage the level of activity. There were only ten computers in the lab, which defined how many youth could meaningfully participate in activities during the day. (The structure of activities are described in greater detail in the in the next chapter).

Over a short period of time word of mouth and partnerships had created a full program with a constant flow of regular and new participants each day, participants who understood the system for access.

Keys for the youth staff – distributed responsibility for recognition

Another dilemma related to access arose when Georgia decided to take on youth staff. Keiko and Tania were working between five to eight hours per week on various projects for the lab. Because Teen TechArts was an after-school program, many days Georgia and Ryan would not arrive until the afternoon (Arriving between 11AM-1PM and staying until 7PM-8PM). Being under 18 and due to organizational bureaucracies, Georgia could not give Tania and Keiko keys to the building, but asked Derek if she could give both young women keys to the lab. If the girls could manage access into the building then they would be able to get inside the lab with their keys. It was ironic, but not surprising given the location of Teen TechArts, that Georgia and the youth staff found it much easier developing face recognition with the staff of the catering/restaurant business than gaining face recognition with the House of Faith staff that worked upstairs. By giving the young women keys they were able to pick up their paychecks on days when Georgia was not in or came later in the day (Paychecks were left in their files in Georgia's desk in the lab. In addition, often Keiko and Tania worked on projects

that needed to be accomplished before participants arrived to use the computers. For example, on several occasions, Keiko came in to load software or trouble-shoot a computer. Tania also worked on design projects for the lab and would use a computer that was not being used by a participant. Finally, with their own keys to the lab these two women were able to arrange times when they could come into the lab to work on their own personal projects before Georgia and Ryan arrived at the lab.

The strategy of giving youth staff keys to the lab and developing face recognition with the restaurant employees that Keiko and Tania worked at Teen TechArts increased access for these young women. Their ability to gain access to the lab was ensured and for Georgia it also meant that she could depend on them to follow through with assignments in her absence. Coincidentally, giving the youth staff keys to the lab also contributed to their sense of ownership of the space and greater commitment to the program. It increased the level of responsibility the young women had to the program. This strategy may have been initiated to reconcile a logistical need to ensure access to the space, however, as I describe in later chapters, providing the youth staff keys came to have greater impact on their use of the space, identification with technology, accountability to their responsibilities and expectations held by Georgia, and how they participated.

In addition to the ways the youth staff gained access by developing face recognition with the restaurant employees, youth participants also employed the technique of "distributing responsibility for recognition." Becoming a familiar face to as many different adults who worked in the House of Faith became an emergent strategy in gaining access to Teen TechArts. Over the years, the youth staff, original lab members and even some neighborhood youth managed to become familiar enough with some of the House of Faith staff and were able to gain access to Teen TechArts. The original lab members were even able to pop into Teen TechArts on days that weren't scheduled as their lab time. They came through the front doors and someone from the House of Faith staff would let them in. The original lab members were an especially charming and charismatic, introducing themselves to any and all individuals that they did not know.

They were also skilled in remembering everyone's name. Victoria, a younger lab member, was the same way. She developed relationships with various administrative staff of the House of Faith. She was able to navigate her way through the entire building and access any resource she needed. All the staff welcomed her. Her bright eyes, cherub cheeks and mature conversational skills won all the staff's hearts. And then there was Sam. He belonged to the Cruz family, one of the neighborhood youth who appeared out of nowhere on his scooter in the middle of the day. We never knew why he wasn't at school, but he, too, was able to come and go out of the building because of a relationship he had built with Norma, the office manager. They were buddies.

Escorting groups of youth

Another strategy for managing access was walking participants to and from the program was one of the many routines of Teen TechArts. This routine stemmed from both the inaccessibility and safety issues described above. It became a strategy Georgia used to get youth to the lab. For the Original Lab Members, being walked home was a way for Georgia to gain the trust of the parents to continue to allow the girls to participate at Teen TechArts after school rather than heading straight home. For the Harriet Elementary/YMCA after-school program, being picked up and then walked back to the school was the arrangement made between the two programs to continue their participation from the summer. In the beginning staff from the YMCA program walked groups of kids to Teen TechArts and stayed for the duration of class and then walked the youth back to school to be picked up by their parents. Due to a staff shortage at the YMCA program, Georgia and Ryan began picking up groups of kids and walking them to and from Teen TechArts. The Teen TechArts' staff took the children through a circuitous route from the school to the lab in order to cross streets only at signal lights and corners. The walk took approximately 10 minutes even though it was only three blocks away. From school, the Harriet groups walked up Davis Street to South Street, passing by the play yard of the school, and then some housing developments and a hardware/moving equipments store. As they crossed South Street and began walking

back up Davis Street, they passed the South Metro Recreation Center. As they crossed Angelou and began to walking up the street along the Teen TechArts side, they passed a newly renovated apartment complex. On the way they passed by "George" who was usually sitting on a milk crate surrounded by his shopping cart and perhaps listening to music on is radio. Georgia or Ryan said hello to George and he usually responded by greeting them all. Finally, the group walked by apartments where some of the neighborhood participants lived, the gated parking lot where House of Faith staff parked their cars, a t-shirt factory and then the glass doors of the House of Faith that led down to TTA..

Figure XXX: Walking route from school to Teen TechArts
[Will need to draw in lines.]
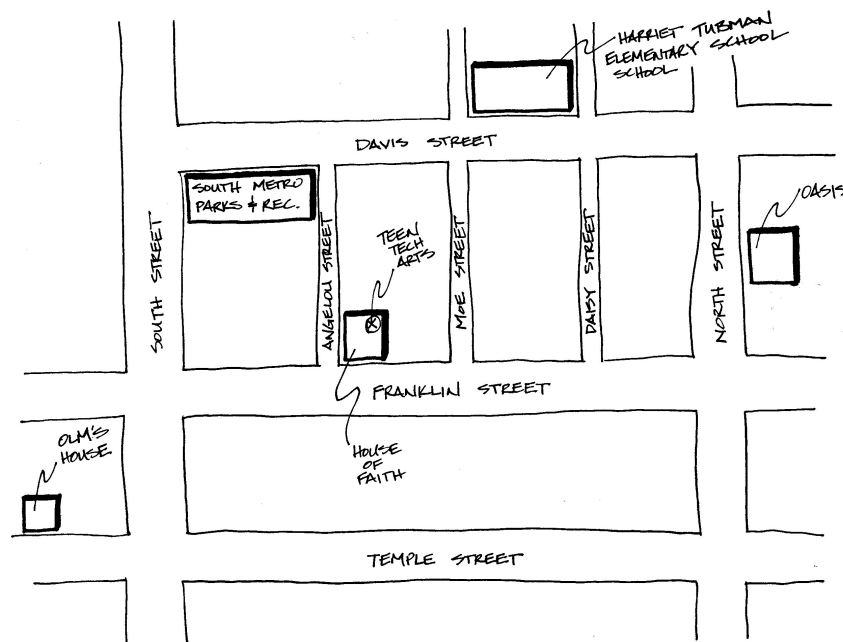
Greeting the Harriets at school not only continued access to this group of youth, it also created greater recognition of Teen TechArts at the YMCA program. More children were able to put a face to the program and signed-up for days to participate. As ambassadors of Teen TechArts, they represented to the youth and individuals in the community, the safety they experienced within the four-walls of Teen TechArts.

For the Prospects for Youth High School students, being picked up ensured that the teens would actually make it to the lab from their school (which was approximately 10 bocks away). It also provided a way for the staff to build rapport with the teens. I argue that this relationship building, too, was related to space, in that it fostered the creation of psychological space for the teens.

Moving Teen TechArts:

A second strategy to manage access was a series of attempts to move the physical space out of the basement and potentially out of the building. Beginning with the initial contract to open a youth community technology center within the House of Faith, conversations and plans to renovate the open storage space in the basement were presented to Georgia. She was told that the space Teen TechArts occupied for three years was "only temporary." In fact, during our first interview, Georgia told me that renovations of the basement had already been "in process" for over a year and half.

> The space has been in the process of 'about to be renovated' for quite awhile. When I was first hired on in the summer of '98, they thought the money was going to come through at that point and that they were going to start construction in September to renovate the entire bottom floor, including adjusting for ADA compliance, and building out the kitchen for greater use and building out the rest of the basement which is about 4500 square feet of completely undeveloped space. Now being used for storage. The timeline has been moved out for 3 months to a year. So, we'll see what happens with that. (Georgia – trspt.1, 1/24/01)

During the four years that Georgia was the director of Teen TechArts, the storage space was never renovated. On one occasion, I observed Georgia sitting around a computer with Ryan and Tania brainstorming a proposal to move Teen TechArts outside of the building. The activity grew out of a request from Derek that Georgia and Ryan revise a contract for a collaborative youth program for which the House of Faith had taken leadership. He suggested that Georgia and her staff plan for the kind of space they thought youth needed and ways that Teen TechArts could do more if they had more space. As Georgia, Ryan and Tania began to answer these questions, they realized they were at capacity. There was nothing more they could do unless there was some sort of commitment to getting other space. Otherwise, they felt it useless to bring on more staff, more funding and more youth. In the past, Georgia had made propositions to the House of Faith about the necessity to "move into the top floor where the program could have natural light and easier access for the youth, and a storefront. And none of that stuff has happened." They knew that if they wanted the management at the House of Faith to take them seriously, they needed to make clear that they "weren't just making requests for making things nicer, it was a *fundamental* prerequisite for doing any kind of quality programming, and especially for expanding it all" (Georgia – trspt.6, 9/4/01). The brainstorm became a sounding board for Georgia, Ryan, Tania and later Keiko through email, to acknowledge the constraints related to space in accomplishing their collective goals for Teen TechArts. After each staff member shared his or her thoughts about an ideal youth space, Georgia and Ryan drafted a proposal to Derek titled "Proposal for House of Faith's youth programming space configuration". The proposal was framed from the perspective of moving Teen TechArts out of the building that was larger and possibility co-located with other youth programs. Going beyond the message that staff needed to be happy and working within and environment that was safe and healthy, they focused the proposal on "what it would mean in terms of the quality of the program." The proposal was filled with concrete ideas around the benefits of moving the space and co-locating with other youth programs (See Appendix XXX for actual proposal). Many of the ideas they presented reflected their struggles around providing

the youth of South Metro access to their program. In addition, when I asked Georgia about the proposal brainstorming episode, she shared that the document represented not only the ideals of each of the staff for Teen TechArts, but also a moment when she felt she had a staff team that was committed to the program and worked well together.

Excited about their proposal, Georgia and Ryan scheduled a meeting with Derek, the Interim Program Manager of Youth Projects at the time. Unfortunately, their idealism and naiveté led did not prepare them for the reality of the lack of institutional fit of Teen TechArts within the House of Faith. Derek did not share in their excitement, nor did he find the insertions of in-the-moment comments by the staff an expression of their commitment to the ideas presented ("happy staff means happy kids" Tania, age 17, 8.8.01 3:08pm or "plethora of program opportunities" Ryan, age 24, 3:19pm 8.28.01). Derek's reaction validated Georgia and Ryan's commitment to the notion that Teen TechArts must move out of the building if it wanted to survive as a youth development program. In an act of "employee disobedience" Georgia and Ryan co-wrote a follow-up memo to Derek. The tone of this document was not an idealistic and positive proposal of ways to extend the existing program. Instead the memo focused on the inadequacy of the existing program and space. The message they wanted to convey was about the program being in jeopardy.

> Yes, we can do these small, isolated things, and we know that we as individuals do quality work when the youth are isolated and safe within our lab and we can keep people out, but frankly it's been in jeopardy. It continues to be in jeopardy. It's not safe for the kids, and there's no way of thinking of it as being a long or even medium-term viable thing because every time we build up relationships with youngsters or build up relationships with collaborators, it all gets broken down by these space infringements, by mean treatment, by staff at the House of Faith, by our inability to have space and resources when we need, by our inability to pay for supplies or for vendors or anything (Georgia – trspt.6, 9/401).

Ironically, when I interviewed Derek after this incident, he seemed to express compassion and empathy for Georgia and Ryan's position and recognized the lack of

institutional support they were feeling. However, he also spoke from a management role that did not completely understand where the staff of Teen TechArts was coming from.

> And the organization, because it is not a youth organization, does not have at the senior level and the board level, the kind of understanding of youth development issues – that imperative, creative, youth nurturing environment.

> So to that extent the program does act somewhat in isolation and even in protection from the adult programs or adult mentality that is pervasive because this is not a youth service organization. It's fortunate enough to have a youth program staff which is very savvy in terms of youth development issues, but it's bringing about some growing pains, not only for the program, but for the organization (Derek – trspt.1, 9/27/01).

Derek expressed an institutional idealism about the potential of Teen TechArts and youth programming at the House of Faith. In terms of ways to improve the program, he spoke from a funding perspective to express a positive vision for future expansion that was coupled with the staff's psychological needs. He also mentioned hiring additional staff when the program expanded and garnering more funding for more computers. He failed to recognize the fact that Georgia and Ryan felt that the House of Faith did not and would never hold a youth development perspective on youth programming and that for them this was the fundamental problem that compromised the program with respect to space.

Halfway through my study, the lab space finally moved upstairs to what used to be the executive director's office. The space was actually about half the size of the basement lab space, however there were windows on two walls and the youth program was finally on the same floor as the rest of the House of Faith Services. Participants now had access to the program through the front doors on Franklin Street. They could wait inside the building while someone came to answer the bell and developed increased face recognition with more of the House of Faith staff. Although Teen TechArts was still not a storefront community technology center, Georgia had begun to notice that there was much more interaction between the inside and outside of the space.

Youth who passed by the lab would toss up their jackets on the window for participants to look down and interact with them. In addition, participants would notice familiar faces that passed by and wave. The youth were able to see the sky get dark and know it was time to head home or back to the school to be picked up by their parents. The Teen TechArts' door was actually located just inside the front reception door. Being able to hear activity in the lab while they waited to be let inside, participants psychologically felt more at ease. There were clean, better lit bathrooms on the upper floor. The staff kitchen allowed the program easy access to storing and preparing of snack. No longer did the youth need to fill up pitchers for juice from the bathroom or escorted upstairs to wash cups. The lab phone was next door in an office for Teen TechArts' staff. Georgia's desk was no longer in the middle the room shared by all the staff. Gaining access to the institutional space made it more familiar and extended the lab space into the building. The physical space was an important element of address the issue of accessibility. It was related to the program's ability to support youth development. In addition, the access was not a static feature of the program that was planned for and established when the program opened. Instead it was a dynamic feature that was constantly being reexamined and renegotiated between the adult staff and youth participants over time.

Practices for creating a sense of safety within Teen TechArts

> The leaders of successful youth organizations explicitly take their adolescents' broad view of what safe passage means in the inner city. The result, seeing young people of promise duck the bullet one by one, is enough to sustain many wizards through the tough challenges they face as directors of organizations that more often than not operate on shoestring budgets, far from the public eye and public praise (McLaughlin et al., 1994, p. 104-105).

Ensuring safe passage:

Early experiments around creating a sense of safety within Teen TechArts were coupled with efforts for managing access. They revolved around ensuring safe passage to and from Teen TechArts. As Georgia and Ryan escorted groups of Harriets to and

from the lab, they created recognition on the street. Not only did they scaffold youth in the protocols for managing access to the program, they also developed a routine around when they as adult "protectors" would usher youth back and forth on the same route between the school and the lab. For example, the homeless man, George, mentioned above became a safe stranger near the program. Georgia and Ryan's efforts to greet him, engage in brief conversation and share their lunches with him were ways to recognize that this man was "safe." Georgia's role as protector could also be quite explicit, as illustrated in an incident that occurred as she escorted the original lab members home one day.

> Just the other day I was walking home with three girls who live over on Temple across South Street from where we are, and there is this one man that we always watch out for, whom they know and now I know through them, who grabs at them. It's not clear how much of what's going on with him is substances and how much is other things. He's not in good shape, but he's extremely aggressive with young girls. I've seen him grab a little bit. Usually, he's a little hesitant if there's an adult with them, but I was walking not more than a foot and a half behind them, just far enough away that I didn't step on their feet, the other night and he lunged out and almost caught one of them, came within an inch when they jerked away. Just grabbing at their bodies, literally and he doesn't say anything when he does it. But it was so extreme and scary for even them, and they are used to it. That is when he did it, I'm used to watching out for these kinds of things, that my immediate response before thinking was just a huge guttural, "NO!" and just moving my body towards where he was to let him know that that was not okay and that they (the girls) were going to be safe from him. And there was an adult couple, near where he was and the adult man noticed the whole thing as well and immediately started also laying into him about what was he doing and how could he go after the children. And the little girls, even the one who's the clown, Susie Lu, who's the boldest one and the brave one who gets them to do crazy things, right afterwards unsolicited said to me, 'Oh, that really made my heart flutter. Oh, that really scared me. I wasn't expecting that."

Although walking the Lab Member girls home after a session began as a way to get "buy-in" from their parents and to facilitate access for the girls to the program, this incident highlighted the reality of the kind of neighborhood the youth grow up in. The routine of escorting the youth home was not only a way to manage access, but a way to

ensure safe passage to and from the program. In addition, during the different seasons and as the years passed, the topic of getting home was negotiated and re-negotiated based on this one event. During the summer months, when the girls arrived earlier and it stayed light out longer, the girls could walk themselves home. Knowing that they all lived in the same building, they felt there was safety in numbers. However, during the winter months, Georgia began to shuttle the girls home in her car, as she too felt unsafe during the evenings along on the streets. As the girls developed a closer relationship to Georgia, they also began to call the lab to let her know they were on their way or planning to stop by unexpectedly.

Creating "the bubble" – physically and psychologically

Other practices to manage access also served the purpose of ensuring safety. The game of answering the doorbell was not only about letting kids in, but also was a reaction to several incidents the House of Faith experienced when safety was compromised. The decision to keep the doors on Angelou Street locked at all times was one made by the House of Faith, due to the possible dangers in the neighborhood. In addition, the types of services the House of Faith provided were such that there was always the potential to create unsafe environments (e.g., services for drug addiction, case management for mental health needs). On three occasions Georgia recalled evidence that the security had been violated or that a person engaging in unsafe activity was within the building (e.g., a man smoking a crack pipe in the hallway). When the House of Faith decided not to hire a security company because it was too expensive, Georgia began to construe the lab door as the boundary of safety. "OK, this space is not going to be friendly and welcoming to youth, let alone sometimes even safe. We literally have to think about the lab door as the boundary for safety, and almost think of the rest of the place as a continuation of the outside, which is very difficult to do" (Georgia – trspt.6, 9/4/01).

In the early years, Georgia explained that she tried to shelter her participants and staff from interactions with House of Faith staff and spaces outside of the lab, escorting

youth to and from the lab as a shield. Many of the issues around accessibility and safety that Teen TechArts experienced stemmed from a lack of consideration of "institutional fit" (Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993) by the House of Faith in proposing to open a youth serving CTC within its building. The lack of fit hindered Georgia and her staff's ability to implement her program vision and in many ways defined how she, her staff and the youth participated in the space. Interestingly, issue of access and safety not only potentially compromised the kind of program Georgia was able to provide the youth; it also potentially compromised the staff's access and safety within the House of Faith. Although technically they were equal in status to the staff that worked on the main floor for the HIV/AIDS services, the staff of Teen TechArts expressed feeling of physical and psychological inferiority (Georgia – SFG, 10/10/01). They lacked a sense of belonging within their own agency. As described in the previous chapter, the House of Faith may have initiated a community technology center focused on expressive arts. However, the original founders made little consideration for the institutional fit of Teen TechArts within the building and institutional culture. With an executive director who spent most of her time evangelizing about social ministries, the details of program implementation were not her main concern.

In addition, I often times overheard youth expressing to each other what a "scary" place the different spaces of the House of Faith were, especially the Harriet/YMCA kids. On one occasion, a girl who had never been to Teen TechArts was being forewarned by a regular participant, that the stairs heading down to the basement were "scary" and as they'd pass the storage room she said "sometimes strange people are hiding in the corners of that open [storage] space. So be careful." Other times, I heard little children asking Georgia if they could go to the bathroom and when Georgia confirmed that it was okay the child ran out the room. Often times they ran back in asking if another child could go with them because it was "dark and spooky." However, within the four walls of Teen TechArts, the youth expressed feelings of comfort. Youth did not refer to dark places or strange people. It was a place where youth seemed to feel physically safe to participate in activities.

<u>Negotiating psychological safety:</u>

A perception of Teen TechArts as a space that was not only physically safe, but also psychologically safe was something that was negotiated in a slightly different manner. As an aspect of boundary-defining work that was characteristic of a number of activities at Teen TechArts, it was apparent that for Georgia, psychological safety was equally important to ensuring the physical safety of the youth. By initiating activities such as warm-ups where youth and adults shared pieces of their identity with each other and practices such as identifying "experts" for the day and assigning new roles for participants to take on such as "Lab Members" and "Youth Staff," youth felt safe which allowed them to gain a sense of belonging within Teen TechArts over time. Teen TechArts was not a place where youth could 'flip out,' be disruptive, and disrespect other participants or Georgia and Ryan. In fact, all new participants were introduced to the Community Agreements of Teen TechArts and regular participants were reminded on numerous occasions what the Community Agreements were.

(1) To respect oneself and each other.
(2) To learn and be creative.

Georgia established the "community agreements" as norms to govern behavior in the lab. As a code of conduct that all new participants were introduced and veteran participants were reminded of. Georgia initiated these overarching norms and values of Teen TechArts based on her construal of Teen TechArts as a youth development program and an after-school program enhanced by technology. The agreements were referred to regularly during program time. On those few occasions when youth interpreted these norms and values of participation differently than the adult staff did, an opportunity for defining the norms with youth arose. These agreements were general, and did not have any specific behavioral indicators attached to them. This meant that the agreements were always a matter of negotiation and interpretation when Georgia or

Ryan felt an agreement had been breached. How such breaches actually got negotiated and interpreted, then, was important to understanding how these guiding norms of participation got negotiated in activity.

Interestingly, how these agreements were construed, challenged and defined happened on a day-to-day basis. Sometimes episodes or events would trigger an opportunity to refer back to these agreements and engage in some boundary-defining work around maintaining psychological safety for the participants.

A particularly salient episode with a group of participant called the Angels[2] became an opportunity for the staff to define what it meant for Teen TechArts to be a safe space for youth. Beginning with two of the Angels disregarding an agreement made with Georgia to wait at school to be picked up by walking themselves to the lab at an earlier time. A series of behavioral challenges exhibited by Barbara, one of the Angels, snowballed into Georgia and Ryan attempting on multiple occasions to explain to the girls that what they had done was unsafe, disrespectful and unacceptable for Lab Members. Through writing, lecture and brainstorming activities, Georgia and Ryan let the girls know that what they had done had first of all disappointed them and secondly was dangerous. However, it soon became clear to Georgia and Ryan that the Angels, in particular Barbara, were not able to not understand the significance of their actions. They continued to be disruptive and disrespectful during the debriefing sessions. In a conversation about disbanding the Angels, during a debriefing session amongst the staff Keiko expressed empathy for what Barbara is going through.

> It's funny how I'm relating all this stuff with Barbara to myself…[heavy sigh]. At the age that she is, I experienced the same frustrations as her. Emotional weight issues with family… I was able to find outlets to dealing with the same problems, still channeling…. I can see where her rejection comes from. More

---

[2] The Angels were a group of girls who had been participating through the Harriet/YMCA program who were invited to become Lab Members and participate in a curriculum intervention project called the CTF project. (See Chapter 6 on the Organization of Activities for more details on the CTF project) Due to behavior issues, these girls were disbanding from being a group with special privileges and greater access to the space. The disbanding of the Angels became an opportunity for the staff of Teen TechArts to discuss and negotiate a new understanding of what constituted a safe space for youth.

than counseling, we, whoever it is should work to help her find another outlet of expression (TTA-SRI – trspt.10, 10/24/01).

She saw herself in Barbara. A youth who had troubles at home and perceived Teen TechArts to be the safe haven where she could be disruptive and out-of-control some of the times. Keiko herself had had many arguments and family strife. She, too, had sought sanctuary at Teen TechArts.

Georgia was not aware that Keiko had identified with Barbara in this way and interpreted Teen TechArts as a the kind of space that would allow youth like Barbara to come and be disruptive because it is a safe place for her to do so. While Keiko construed Teen TechArts' safety as affording youth like her and Barbara space to express their frustrations, Tania also drew upon her family dynamics to make sense of what had happened and the decision made to disband the Angels.

> Kids in my family just would not play that. In my family you would get the belt. Savannah (the other girls who violated the agreement), her best friend, following Barbara around. It's really sad. Don't know what we are going to do if she were going to lash out again. I really would hate to ban Barbara. I don't want her to come by herself, because that would be depressing (TTA-SRI – trspt.10, 10/24/01).

Unlike Keiko, Tania's family life had particular kinds of rules of behavior that she drew upon rather than the emotional connection that Keiko focused on. For Tania, psychological safety was ensured when you did follow through with a commitment.

Finally, Georgia explicitly exerted her role as the program director in setting the boundaries of the kind program Teen TechArts was and the kinds of psychological safety that were sanctioned. In doing so she highlighted for her staff (both adults and youth) and the youth participants that safety was a significant aspect of Teen TechArts. Ensuring the safety of all participants was a critical and fundamental goal of the program. When jeopardized, there was no longer a collaborative negotiation, she dictated to how and what was important. In describing the kinds of behaviors that Barbara had exhibited, she used references such as "shutting down," "degenerated," and

"safe enough for her to lash out." Both she and Ryan recognized that Barbara had psychological problems that needed to be addressed and acknowledged that she probably did perceive Teen TechArts as a place where she felt safe enough to express her frustrations. However, during this meeting, Georgia made it very clear that Teen TechArts was "not a counseling service." She defined Barbara's problem as "beyond every other participants'..... Teen TechArts is definitely a safe space and about identity stuff. But I don't want to get us in deeper. If we were a counseling place then that would be our goal" (TTA-SRI – trspt. 10, 10/24/01). By the end of the debriefing session, it seemed as though all the staff members understood that disbanding the Angels was the most appropriate action to take given the circumstances. In addition, everyone had appropriated the notion that Teen TechArts was not a counseling service although it was designed to be a space where youth felt physically and psychologically safe. In deciding to disband the Angels, Georgia was letting her staff know the boundaries of psychological safety Teen TechArts could handle. It was not able to provide sanctuary for disruptive, "shutting-down," and disrespectful behaviors that were rooted in much more extensive psychological problems. Rather, it was to serve as a safe haven from the psychological chaos experienced outside the walls of Teen TechArts. Additionally, disbanding the Angels was an effort to preserve the psychological safety of other youth participants within Teen TechArts.

Summary and discussion

This chapter identified and illustrated four main ideas contributing to the meaning of accessibility and safety at Tee TechArts: (1) accessibility is hardly ever ideal, (2) accessibility is something that is negotiated and strategized about by the program leaders of CTCs, (3) all program have their "dangers" including ones that youth face in getting there, and (4) accessibility and safety are features of a program that are jointly constructed with participants. Although the expectations of community technology centers and youth development program are important for newly established center to have models to assess their program by and to identify practices that contribute

to youth development. However, evaluations tend to gloss over how the features of community programs that promote youth development get constructed on a daily basis. In this chapter, the basic features of accessibility and safety are carefully examined using a sociocultural approach, which focused on interactions between adults and youth. Creating an environment that was free from violence, physical harm, unsafe health conditions were ensured inside the walls of Teen TechArts. Outside, all the adults and youth could do was to create practices to ensure that these dangers were minimized. In addition, great efforts were made to create a psychologically welcoming and safe environment so that during youth's time participating in activities, their experience was one that supported comfort, freedom to express oneself, try new things and make mistakes. Again instituting various practices to ensure that within the walls of Teen TechArts youth felt psychologically safe.

A common phenomenon within the CTC movement has been for an already existing community-based organization to create access to technology within its organization without considering issues of "institutional fit" (cite Niccolopolou). Many of the issues around accessibility and safety that Teen TechArts experienced were rooted in a lack of institutional fit between the House of Faith's other programs and overall vision with that of Teen TechArts. Never did any of the programs within the House of Faith collaborate with Teen TechArts to provide technology access for their "clients." Teen TechArts was also the only youth development program and learning program provided by the House of Faith. All other services were related to the needs of those suffering from HIV/AIDS and drug addictions and those needing housing. The other programs were based upon on a social service and counseling model rather than a youth development model. This disconnect in vision became viewed by Georgia and her staff as factors that compromised two basic and fundamental features of community technology centers and youth development organizations – accessibility and safety.

Over the years Georgia developed practices to manage access and to create a sense of safety so that the youth experienced a place where they felt welcomed and safe. The strategies that Georgia developed with the youth were not perfect. Some times

youth were not able to get in the building and some times they were scared and did not feel safe. In the end, there was a Speakeasy called Teen TechArts, a place where youth enjoyed themselves with their peers while creating artwork and stories using new technologies. Teen TechArts had achieved an inner sanctum within the House of Faith. Teen TechArts had won the space battle. The youth of South Metro had a safe space where they learned to use new technologies and developed close relationships with other youth and adults as a result of having to deal with these issues.

In the chapter that follows, I examine the organization of activities within this setting of accessibility and safety. Given that youth were able to get to Teen TechArts and felt a sense of safety, the next chapter discusses the kinds of activities made available to youth and the kinds of practices and participation structures within the activities that afforded youth opportunities to take deepen their sense of belonging, take ownership of the space and make it into something of their own choosing. Examining the norms for participation within the different kinds of activities I continue to identify the different ways that Teen TechArts was a youth development focused community technology center.

Korbak, C., Penuel, W. R., & Daniels, M. (2000). *CTC Program findings summary: A review of 1999 grantees' performance reports* . Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Nicolopoulou, A., & Cole, M. (1993). Generation and transmission of shared knowledge in the culture of collaborative learning: The Fifth Dimension, its play-world, and its institutional contexts. In E. A. Forman, N. Minick, & C. A. Stone (Eds.), *Contexts for learning: sociocultural dynamics in children's development* (pp. 283-314). New York: Oxford University Press.

Stone, A. (1996, 2000). *Center Start-Up Manual* (1st), [Website & downloadable document]. CTCNet. Available: www.ctcnet.org/publics.html.