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Honors Math for Liberal Arts

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Public Art and Little Free Libraries Discoveries Report

Our group has found several things worth mentioning that have affected the way we perceive the way our class should approach the issue within Census Tract 505. After re-analyzing the statistics from the graph and speaking with the Public Art and Little Free Libraries project head, Steven Finke, the findings suggest that intervention is not appropriate at this time. However, intervention could be possible in future circumstances if Project Hope continues to work with people inside the community who show high levels of dedication and motivation and understand limitations and possible outcomes for this project.

In prior research, the tables constructed from observing Census Tract 505 and its surrounding communities displayed that the tract did not follow the class's initial prediction that 505 would be in a far worse condition than its surrounding areas. In fact, in the categories of median household income, number of high school graduates, holders of bachelor degrees, and number of people in the labor force, 505 in the most recent census is never the lowest (though it is always at least in the bottom half of surrounding tracts). While 505 has been improving throughout the years, it appears to have been unable to reach its full potential in categories like education, a primary issue within the community. Could education be the key to 505's success? If so, how should we bring about change to this community, and how have Public Art and Little Free Libraries affected educational awareness?

According to Steven Finke, this particular project was unsuccessful in aiding education. He felt that the students lacked the ability to create projects of such a high scale and create an impact on the community in the way the project is seeking. Since he worked with a beginner class, he was unable to determine the students' skills, and it turned out that they were not even beyond basic techniques needed for this project. Some students lacked motivation and dedication, which is crucial for a project of this magnitude. He came to the conclusion that "If projects are materially based, then there needs to be more preparation up front concerning sites, sponsors and budgets." If intervention were possible, then it would have to be with students who are aware of the issue at hand and are prepared for large-scale intervention.

He also mentions "artistic activism," the idea that art is able to impact a community through its use of emotion and its ability to send a proper message. He mentions that a possible problem with his project was "imposing upon a community that does not need outside help." He thinks that if people *within* the community are able to approach this issue, the impact would be much greater. They are the ones with inside knowledge of the community's culture; its social, economic, and political issues; and the people surrounding it. He mentions that it would be a good idea to study people who are doing artistic activism within their own communities, such as Tim Rollin of K.O.S, Lilly Yeh of Broneers Talk, and L.A. artist Judy Baca, who are all doing creative projects to help bring awareness to issues they care about.

Another important step in beginning any sort of activism endeavor is bringing proper awareness to the issue. Students' projects were showcased on Newport on the Levee, but the effect on the community was minimal. He said, "people are more likely to see art in a mall than in an art museum." It would therefore seem to be a good idea to take the approach Monica

Remmy did with her project, which was connecting people through a common interest (in her case, food) to bring about awareness.

In the end, it seems that there are plenty of ideas about how to help this hurting community, but not enough people going about it in the right way. First, there is a need for collaboration with those living in the community to see what the needs actually are and to make sure that our analyses are accurate and that we are not imposing ourselves on a community that does not want help. Secondly, we need to increase our own understanding of the issue before we try to take any interventional action. Only then can we accurately share the story of Census Tract 505, educate, and inspire people to help bring the neighborhood to a better place.