SILICON VALLEY SPARKPLUGS PROJECT:

BRIDGING ANTHROPOLOGY AND MEDIA TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A Project Report

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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October 2011

ABSTRACT

Silicon Valley Sparkplugs Project:

Bridging Anthropology and Media to Address Issues of Civic Engagement

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What are the possibilities for a relationship between anthropology and media in addressing issues of civic and social engagement? What role can anthropology play in informing the creation of media, and how can media be used as a form of representation for ethnographic research? The purpose of this report is to document the process of a collaborative project between CreaTV San Jose, the SJSU Anthropology department, and funded by the John and James K. Knight Foundation. The purpose was to uncover models of civic engagement presently being explored and utilized in Silicon Valley by individuals we refer to as 'sparkplugs', leaders in their respective communities who are creating change. By creating a multi-media project on Silicon Valley community engagement, we are also experimenting with alternative, digital media-based forms of anthropological data representation that has the potential to reach a wider, more diverse audience.

CONTENTS

ANTHROPOLOGY AND MEDIA

The relationship between visual media and anthropology has a long history. With still photography invented in 1845, it was a technique adopted by many anthropologists and archeologists for gathering, cross checking, and building a record of data (Guindi, 2004). Anthropology, foundationally concerned with understanding the "behaviors, beliefs, and lifestyles of people in other cultures" (McGee and Warms, 2008), is a discipline well suited for using these techniques in order to visually document distinct cultural happenings. Visual anthropology, "logically proceeds from the belief that culture is manifested through visible symbols embedded in gestures, ceremonies, rituals, and artifacts' (Ruby, 1996). Branislaw Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922) is considered to be one of the most famous works in anthropology, creating a new template for ethnography that included still visual images as supplemental data. Hart Cohen even suggests that the use of film in scientific endeavors actually precedes its entertainment value, "and with very specific ethnographic intent" (Cohen, 2007).

As early forms of cinematography were developed in the late 19th century, filming equipment was crude and awkward to maneuver in the field. Cameras were fixed on tripods, film was low exposure, and there was no synchronized sound technology, but the tool was adopted by many anthropologists who saw its potential (Guindi, 2004). Robert Flaherty (Nanook of the North, 1923) and Jean Rouche (Les Maitres Fous 1955) were ground breaking works in the use of motion picture. On his last trip to the Northwest, Franz Boas famously brought 16 mm camera to record the dances, rituals, songs and games of the Kwakiutl, a group he had studied for 40 years (Ruby, 1980).

Margret Mead and Gregory Bateson's famous three year study in Bali included over 25,000 still photographs and 22,000 feet of motion picture film (Prins, 2002 and Jacknis, 1998). Many credit Mead and Bateson with starting the field of visual anthropology, not because they were the first to use film, but because it was the first time it acted as the primary recording device for data collections rather than simply as additional illustration (Jacknis 1988).

By the mid 20th century, the technology had advanced and the sub-field of visual anthropology was growing and increasingly becoming synonymous with ethnographic film. People like Jean Rouche, John Marshall, Timothy Asch and Robert Gardner were compiling an impressive collection of films and shaping the field. The initial motivations for using film in ethnographic endeavors, like Boas' documentation of the Kwakiutl, was simply to record and preserve the cultural phenomena of disappearing civilizations (Ruby, 1990). Ethnographic film was seen as a tool to "preserve, in the mind of the viewer, the structures of the events it is recording as interpreted by the participants" (Asch, Marshall and Spier, 1973). While interest in the medium was growing, so too was the controversy. There were concerns that the highly particularistic nature of filmed data did not complement anthropology's desire for holistic perspectives (Ruby, 1980). By its nature, filming focuses on a particular scene, or particular individuals, leaving to question what is not captured within the frame. The early emphasis on positivist assumptions in anthropology further increased scrutiny of the medium. Film left open the possibility for much subjectivity in the minds of sceptics, providing only an entertaining chunk of the whole story. Many anthropologists were questioning the

'ethnographicness' of ethnographic film (Guindi, 2004), leading others to attempt a more cohesive definition of the sub-field. Jay Ruby proposed four strict criteria for making ethnographic films, while Margaret Mead emphasized precise techniques for increasing the perceived objective nature of the tool. For example, keeping the camera fully static, mounted on a tripod, without any effects of zooming or panning; or being sure to leave the camera running for extensive periods of time, uninterrupted, in order to capture the most 'truthful' and 'natural' recordings (Ruby, 1980). This emphasis on objectivity, and the filming techniques employed, lead to very stale, static representations that appealed only to a narrow audience of researchers, teachers and students. Ethnographic films were placed firmly in the arena of anthropology and not cinema; aesthetics were secondary, if not altogether ignored.

As anthropology evolved and the emphasis on positivism waned, so too did our perceptions on the socially constructed nature of culture. The discipline as a whole began to recognize that since both the subject and the object of an ethnographic study are human, knowledge is then created intersubjectively, therefore making it impossible to have fully objective knowledge of social processes (Upadhya, 1998). Most now accept that even anthropological writings themselves are interpretations, "engaging both the hows and the whats of social reality" (Uprety, 2009), and that understanding of any culture is tentative in nature. This perspective allows new doors to be opened for the use of media in anthropology, with the discipline expanding its reach and focus into many other areas involving media and culture. Much of the current literature tends to center on an ethnographic investigation of mass communication as representation. Jay

Ruby famously explores the relationship between reflexivity and film (Ruby, 1980, 1990), while others investigate the effects of television on culture (Fiske, 1987 and Gerbner, 1976). Some researchers take an even broader scope to understanding the representational processes of all things media, from still photography to electronic representations, rituals and art (Banks and Morphy, 1999). With the advent of digital and multimedia technology, visual anthropology has the potential to become an invaluable tool for research and teaching. According to Guindi, it could even prove pivotal to increasing understanding of global social issues if given some emphasis within public news media (Guindi, 2004). Ulf Hannerz adds that the public culture in which news is embedded offers an important role for anthropology, as it is continually created and recreated in changing contexts (Hannerz, 2002).

With the potential of visual media in anthropology more widely recognized, there are opportunities to "produce observations that contribute to the discovery and advancement of knowledge about humankind" (Guindi,2004). The question now is how can we use film to create pictorial expressions of anthropologically constructed knowledge that is both true to the research and intellectually accessible to a public audience (Ruby, 1998). Visual anthropologist Sarah Pink argues for a shift in our perspectives, methodology and terminology in order to make this transition. She states that as we move into new terrain for visual anthropology, it will be critical to take a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to doing visual research (Pink, 2003). The anthropologist with no knowledge of production techniques will result in the same poor quality outcome as a filmmaker with no anthropological competence. In order to

produce something that is anthropologically sound, with high production quality, and value to the broader society, a collaborative effort is necessary. Pink urges that we learn from each other, "without seeking narrative foils to assert the supremacy of their own discipline at the expense of others" (Pink, 2003). Much of the twentieth century saw professionalized anthropology grow used to turning inward toward one another, rather than to wider audiences outside academia (Hannerz, 2002), which is precisely where our contributions are needed. Using research to address complex social issues requires the applied anthropologist to become an expert collaborator.

Van Willigen and Kedia emphasize the importance of "broader dissemination of research results, increased skills in communication of findings to new audiences in new formats, and employment of techniques from other fields" (van Willigen and Kedia, 2005). Practitioners cannot let the high esteem in which ethnography tends to be held by anthropologists (Hannerz, 2002 and Cohen, 2007) prevent the exercising of flexibility, communication and compromise. "Audiences may just be somewhat impatient with our in-house enthusiasms, and our ethnography may need to be fitted into more mixed genres"(Hannerz, 2002). Heavy interdisciplinary activities require us to focus instead on the tasks of representation. The collaboration, ideally, should be continued throughout the duration of the project, from data collection to final production. Staying involved helps ensure that the data informs the final output and nothing critical gets lost in the translation from researcher to filmmaker. Communicating research to producers can be a challenge. All the minutiae we value because it provides authenticity, may not make for an aesthetic piece that appeals to a wider audience. Balance between aesthetic needs

and faithfulness to data are critical, but achieving this is difficult. According to Guindi, "it is an empirically based research cycle of observation, analysis, and film construction" where data analysis guides filming as a gradually formulated framework (Guindi, 2006). This interactive process between collaborators can be a challenging, but can also lead to interesting discoveries and broadening of skills.

The bridging of ethnography and film may seem inherently difficult, as one might feel the process of creating visually pleasing media undercuts the process of raw data collection. However, addressing these difficulties is worth it, for visual media is the easiest way to reach a large audience quickly. Imagery is compelling and is an excellent way to get mainstream awareness of anthropological data, especially given the current ubiquity of technology use. The digitizing of content, on-demand access to it, and ease of sharing make visual media central to the way new audiences get and share information. Combine this with the expressed desire within anthropology to communicate the field's knowledge beyond academia and the familiar circles, and it becomes clear how "interactive media...permits drastic, new intellectual possibilities for film and video in anthropology" (Biella, 1996). Researchers can generate data with a camera, study it, and write up the results without ever screening the footage for anyone. Likewise, one can shoot footage for a film without ever intending it for research purposes (Ruby, 1980). What we are essentially attempting to do is bridge these two outcomes, create something that generates data for study, but with the added intentions of public viewing and dissemination. The real value of visual ethnography is as a tool for educating and for driving action, highlighting the utility of ethnographic

investigations in addressing social issues.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Silicon Valley region is home to many people who have identified community needs and challenges in fresh ways, and who seek solutions that draw upon assets of the region, such as its local and global social networks, use of information technology, entrepreneurial ideas, and embrace of innovation. They are also drawing upon their own personal assets and skill sets, such as professional backgrounds in business or extensive participation in social justice issues. Our team wanted to understand the process of this type of community work, literally *how* these leaders are working, in order to help create conditions that will support their work, as well as create more 'sparkplugs' in the community. This is our attempt to create an accessible, public, digital and visual resource on sparkplugging in Silicon Valley that is grounded in ethnographic data and analysis, in order to reach a wider audience and support community change.

Beginning Stages

The foundations for this project began in April 2009 when a meeting was called by Dave Mills, former regional director for the John and James K. Knight Foundation (JJKF). Those in attendance were; Nicole Conand and Chuck Darrah (SJSU Anthropology Department), Chris Block and Andrea Faiss (American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley), Jaime Contreras (Generation Engage), Raj Jayadev (Silicon Valley Debug), Suzanne St. John-Crane (CreaTV San Jose). The meeting began with a discussion of a recent Gallup poll done in collaboration with JJKF called 'The Soul of the Community' which sought to

uncover what makes a community desirable to understand people's attachment to place. The results of that poll, which included 26 different communities across the U.S, were unsatisfying since they did not lead to obvious actions. Furthermore, the data failed to identify relevant characteristics of the Silicon Valley region. The vague underlying idea was that when people are more attached to a place, they are more engaged, and a more engaged community is a better community. We began discussing next steps to develop a more substantial project. Ultimately, Darrah, St. John-Crane and I emerged as responsible for developing the means to tell the story of regional engagement. Taking advantage of the political climate in California at that time, we decided to do some semi-structured polling interviews during a special election, conducted by myself and other anthropology students, with the help of camera crews from CreaTV. We wanted to start gauging and understanding engagement in Silicon Valley, and what better place to start than voting behavior at a time when dissatisfaction with political leaders was widespread.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity: Polling Interviews

  With the help of a few current and former anthropology graduate students and "shooters" (film crews) from CreaTV, our team would film several short, semi-structured interviews at polling locations around the south bay during the special April 2009 state election.

Process: Two person teams consisting of an one SJSU anthropology student, and a

"shooter" from CreaTV, went to 11 polling locations throughout Silicon Valley and

interviewed people at random regarding their opinions on this election. We developed a

short list of questions:

1. Why did you decide to vote/not vote in this election?

2. How did you get prepared to cast your vote? What did you read and who did you talk to?

3. What do you think is at stake for our region in this election?

4. If you could meet with the top political leaders in the state, what would be the top three things you'd tell them to do to solve the state's budget problems?

5. What makes you the most optimistic about the future of California/this region? What concerns you the most about the future of California/the region?

6. What are three of the most important things that could be done to make this region a better place to live?

       Our goal was very basic at this stage. We wanted to gain some understanding

about how people get informed to make these political decisions, where people get this

information, how they think about political issues, and some general sentiment about

the state of the politics in California during that difficult period.

The location sample represented multiple neighborhoods in the San Jose area, including;

       Palo Alto, Los Altos, Saratoga, Edenvale, Silvercreek, Old Oakland Road,

Milpitas, Eastside San Jose, Willow Glen, Gardner Community Center, and the Billy

DeFrank Community Center.

Once completed, these taped interviews were reviewed by myself, Darrah, and two of the anthropology student assistants, Marina Corrales and Alicia Murphy. Logging of times, and identification of key themes, ideas or lessons from the interviews were done. I then prepared a one page summary of our conclusions, as well as a list of further questions that were raised.

Outcome: What emerged from these interviews was that people were disengaged, uninformed and feeling somewhat ambiguous about the state of California government and what role average citizens played. There was a lot of finger pointing at Sacramento, and little personal responsibility was expressed; there was a sense that it was 'someone else's job' to fix things. When we met again with Mills and St. John-Crane to discuss our findings and ideas, we came away with a few larger questions that helped steer the development of the sparkplugs project. We began to discuss what a regional community engagement strategy would look like, and what it would take for individuals to stop waiting for changes and start creating interventions. How do we get people to act? While initial thoughts revolved around starting from scratch to design some engagement strategy, Darrah and I quickly began to realize that this might not be necessary. We then took the position that there must be people already acting on behalf of their communities in Silicon Valley, and by simply gaining a better understanding of how they are working, and where the barriers and opportunities lie, we could better develop a strategy for both supporting that work and help create additional sparkplugs. Where are

the average citizens who are working quietly, yet diligently and creatively to meet needs

in their communities and what can we learn from them? Darrah, St. John-Crane and I

developed the project concept and grant proposal (APPENDIX A) and then set out to find

these 'just plain folks' who might be developing new or interesting models for

engagement in a new era.

Activity: <u>Sampling</u>

We set out to get a sample of 10-15 individuals engaging in distinctive

community work in Silicon Valley. Our team agreed that they must not be familiar faces

and names of Silicon Valley that have the social and financial capital to make things

happen. We wanted to find those people working "under the radar" who might be

developing some new concepts even unbeknownst to themselves. Without this focus,

the project could easily turn into a litany of familiar successes. What gave this project

the potential to emerge to offer something new was getting less known, distinctive

bedfellows together. Having a dialogue that highlights how they work, and the barriers

and opportunities they encounter, and then providing an opportunity to learn from their

experiences in order to produce conditions under which 'sparkplugging" can thrive was

our goal.

Process: Identifying the sparkplugs, started slow. Looking for people at this this level was

difficult because by nature of their 'under-the-radar' status, they are not easily found.

We began a unique version of network sampling that started by consulting some experts

to obtain names, groups or organizations for starting points. We picked those known players in the Valley and asked them for lists of individuals they thought were doing interesting work in their communities. Sometimes these people would name each other or others from their own networks of movers and shakers. However, sometimes we would get a new name, someone unfamiliar who was working down a level, so to speak. As more possible leads for sparkplugs began to be compiled, they were distributed and divided between myself and some student assistants to speed up the process. We would then contact that person, assess whether they were a good fit for the project, and if not, keep digging by asking them for a list of individuals as well. We proceeded in this fashion for months attempting to get names of suitable participants.

Once names of interest were obtained, I did some online research in order to find out more information regarding their work. I would see what organizations they were connected to, read any articles or mentions about them and try to get an understanding of what they are doing in the community. If they still seemed to be a good fit I would contact them through email or phone about participating in the project. Most people received the communication well, and were happy to participate.

Outcome: Given the difficulty in identifying individuals at the level we were seeking, our team decided to work with a smaller sample of seven people rather than the initially intended ten to fifteen, as time constraints were beginning to become a factor. The final Sparkplugs were:

ANDREW KILLE

Rev. D. Andrew Kille, Ph.D., is a Baptist minister with over 30 years of experience working in the Bay Area. He founded his website, Interfaithspace.org in 2003, which is a valued information source on diverse interfaith opportunities around the Bay Area. Through his longstanding experience here in the South Bay, he has built a significant network of connections and contacts, as well as a reputation for being a central player in finding out what's going on in interfaith.

JASMINE RAST

Jasmine's family has been a part of Japantown for generations. In an effort to continue that tradition as well as create a space for the larger community, they built Roy's Station, a coffee house at the site of their grandfather's gas station. From displaying work from local artists, to holding bone marrow drives, this is also more than just a place to purchase coffee. Roy's acts as a hub in the heart of Japantown, bringing people in the community together while also connecting them to the issues and individuals of the larger regional community as well.

JOHN WASZILY

John is a former Director of Goodwill's Homeless Veterans Reintergration Program where he helped to develop several opportunities for homeless vets to get the help, jobs, skills, and training needed. A former business owner and successful engineering consultant, John lost everything to substance abuse and was a homeless veteran himself. His experiences gave him both the skills and the credibility to run the vets program very successfully for four years. However, because John is still in recovery,

the stresses of his role in the program took a significant toll.

RAJ JAYADEV

Founder of Silicon Valley DeBug, Raj has become a well known name is the region. What initially started as somewhat of a labor organization in reaction to the conditions of temporary workers, has become a community for outsiders and the marginalized who have a desire to make their voice heard. Within DeBug, Raj has created a place where individuals can express themselves through various media of their choosing, while also being strong voice in the shift to more transparency for the local government.

JAVED MOHAMMED

Javed is Bay Area writer who attempts to make topics salient by combing fiction and non-fiction aspects in his books that the reader can relate to. He is also the founder of myfavoritereview.com, a website that acts a directory for positive and inspiring films for the Muslim community and beyond. Javed's initial goal was to address the lack of positive role models for Muslim youth, though he quickly realized there was also a need to create and highlight positive the images and contributions Muslim culture can offer to the wider public as well. Given his focus, Javed's work requires him to work simultaneously locally and globally for resources and networks.

RAUL LOZANO

The former executive director of the latino theater company, Teatro Vision, Raul made a huge shift in his career by starting La Mesa Verde in 2009. As the executive director of this program, Raul utilizes a volunteer network from Sacred Heart Community center and the Master Gardeners program of Santa Clara County, to build organic vegetable gardens in the homes of low-income and working poor families in San Jose. The ultimate goal of this food security program is to help these families gain skills to maintain these gardens and be self-sufficient, as well as create relationships across cultural boundaries.

ADRIANA GARCIA

Adriana is a member of a local organization called M.A.I.Z and is affiliated with several groups that operate within that organization. She is a grassroots community organizer, poet, and artist working to build leadership and connections in the Latina community locally and globally by utilizing art, technology and social media in unique ways.

Reflections: Our goal was never to gain an exact representative sample of Santa Clara County, due to the limited sample size. However, we did want to ensure there was diversity in ethnicity, age, sex, and areas of interest. One disappointment was that most of the sparkplugs were located in San Jose, so that regional diversity was not included. With the exception of Andrew Kille and Javed Mohammed, whose work seemed to stretch out to the larger county, we didn't have representation from other areas like Los

Gatos, Campbell, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Gilroy or Morgan Hill.

There was also the issue of female representation in this project. Out of our six participants, we only had one female, Jasmine Rast, despite the fact that the majority of our leads were to females. Our team was given the names of many men and women involved in community work and we pursued several women reagrding participation in the project, often over many weeks. There was often a lack of follow through on their behalf. Initial emails and conversations would occur, and interest would be expressed but when it came to setting times to meet or for initial interviews, most women would stopped responding without explanation. Understanding the contributions made by women and the distinctive challenges they face is a critical component of developing a comprehensive approach to supporting sparkplugs, and is worthy of further research.

Activity: First Round Instrument development

Developing an interview instrument for the first round of audiotaped interviews with the sparkplugs.

Process: Darrah and I started by brainstorming a very large list of questions and I then took that list, cut it up and clustered them in groups of like topics. This both created to the instrument and allowed me to combine questions that were redundant. We took this new list and further refined it, rewording some of the questions for better clarity, developed probes where necessary, and re-organized the questions for a better "conversational" flow. The final instrument was shared with St. John-Crane and Mills for

further input.

Outcome: A two-page instrument to be used for the first round interviews with all sparkplugs first round of interviews (APPENDIX B).

Reflections: Darrah and I reflected on the process we had used for the interviewing, agreeing that it may not have been necessary to do the first round of audio interviews. Because we were both new to the world of media and film, and because this was a distinct project we were inventing as we went, we assumed these background interviews were necessary in order to collect background data before doing filmed interviews: we feared wasting hours of camera time. A lesson for future projects is that the initial interviewing can likely be streamlined and the project time reduced.

However, the issue of reflexivity implies that the process of filming an interview yields different results than audiotaping. The environment created by filming is more daunting, even for the experienced interviewee: there are lights, microphones, wires, camera, and other miscellaneous equipment, not to mention an extra person listening in on the interview. This can result in different answers and maybe even a hesitation to discuss certain topics. In addition, the audio taping provided a rehearsal that built trust and allowed the interviewers to proceed more confidently during the filming.

Activity: Expert Interviews

Conduct filmed interviews with a number of selected regional 'experts' in Silicon

Valley from various fields to add context and background data regarding general trends in the South Bay.

Process: Mills was responsible for this activity, as he and St. John-Crane jointly selected a list of experts from a range of organizations in Silicon Valley. Mills conducted the interviews at the CreaTV studio, using an interview instrument Darrah had prepared for preliminary interviews with both Mills and Jaime Contreras (APPENDIX C).

Outcome: Eight regional experts were selected and interviewed:

(1) Chris Block, CEO of the American Leadership Forum-Silicon Valley, (2) Frederick J. Ferrer, CEO of the Health Trust, (3) Doug Henton, Chariman and CEO of Collaborative Economics, (4) Sam Liccardo, San Jose City Councilmember, district 3, (5) Sally Lehrman, Santa Clara University Chair in Journalism and Public Interest, (6) Richard Konda, Executive Director of ALA, (7) Connie Martinez, Managing Director and CEO of 1st Act Silicon Valley, and (8) Kim Walesh, Chief Strategist and Director of Economic Development San Jose.

The purpose of these expert interviews was to provide background on the macro-level processes affecting the Silicon Valley and thus the decisions that could and should be made in it.

Reflections: These interviews were longer than expected and how they would be integrated into the project was not clear. Simultaneously, different conceptualizations of

the project were emerging. Mills presented a model for the project that conceptualized the sparkplugs and experts as equally important to the project goals, while assuming that the sparkplugs aspired experts some time in the future. This issue was never dealt with due to the departure of Mills from his position at the Knight Foundation very shortly after the project was off the ground. The project ultimately developed around the sparkplugs, with the expert interviews included on the website.

This activity also provided Darrah and me a first experience being in-studio. We watched the Fred Ferrer interview from the CreaTV control room which provided a glimpse into film production with a producer's eye. We were intrigued by the details of the recording process and how the technician at the controls knew when to switch views or cameras, or how to instruct the cameraman. In other words, we found ourselves conducting the ethnography of the recording studio. This was a point where I knew we were playing in a new and unfamiliar environment, and not only were some new skills going to be necessary on our part, but we were also going to have to learn how the media-savvy partners in our project work in order to adapt and work with them successfully. Once we could identify what they are looking for in filming, we could then package our deliverables appropriately.

Activity: Semi-structured audio interviews with Sparkplugs

These interviews were conducted by either myself or Darrah. The purpose of this interview was to gain a more in depth understanding of these individuals and their community work, and generate rich data to analyze and synthesize for the second round

of interviews. We undertook this activity due to our initial impression that we needed to understand more about the participants before we could begin developing the instrument for a filmed interview.

Process: The interviews took place at various locations around the South Bay, typically in a place of the sparkplugs choosing. It took several months for us to complete all of these first round interviews, and overlapped with other activities in the project.

Outcome: The team compiled over ten hours of audiotaped interview to be transcribed and analyzed.

Reflections: One of our original sparkplugs participated in the audiotaped interview portion of the project but then dropped out before the filmed interviews. We did not include any of his information in the final products of the project and his spot was later filled by Adriana Garcia.

Activity: Interview analysis and round two Instrument development

We would use the analysis from the first interview to develop a second instrument that would be used in a filmed interview. This second round instrument would be more structured and directive than the first (APPENDIX D).

Process: In order to expedite the project, we decided to employ some student assistants from the anthropology department to help with transcriptions of the audiotaped interviews. We organized a team of five students and set up a Wiki page in order to more easily share documents and provide for shared editing. As interviews were completed, I would upload the audio files to the Wiki page, assign each to a student, and then when the transcription was completed, the student would post it. This was a very helpful tool for speeding up the sharing of necessary documents and allowed for everyone to see all of the information.

All of the transcriptions were read by both Darrah and myself, and we collaborated on the subsequent analysis and summary. This was a process of first developing individual analysis for each sparkplug, in order to fully understand each interview independently. Simultaneously we began to identify common themes, which informed the next step of a general analytic summary of the first round interviews.

Darrah and I met on several occasions to talk through our analysis, which was very helpful for the process. By discussing general themes we saw in the transcriptions and emerging general domains of interest, sensitizing concepts such as obstacles and opportunities, uses of technology, networking and communication, motivations and personal history. This required several iterations to create one concise instrument to be used for all the sparkplugs. By doing it in this way, common topics could be easily identified among the individual interviews, facilitating the editing process to create a streamline documentary of sparkplug vignettes. St-John Crane, too, reviewed the instrument. She added a few suggestions for topics that had not been included, such as

personal motivation and inspiration. We took her suggestions and reworded them into questions that fit into the layout of the instrument.

Outcome: We considered in some depth the layout and flow of the questions, starting from a discussion of general principles, to the specifics of sparkplugs work, and concluding with more individual and personal topics. Our final version was a concise, 15 question instrument (APPENDIX E).

Reflections: While the majority of the sparkplugs interviewed were individuals, Jasmine Rast requested to be interviewed with her mother. I had never conducted such an interview, which presented some new challenges for me and for the students assistants who were transcribing the interview. It was not only the three voices, but Jasmine and her mother would talk over each other at times, or start and finish each others sentences. In addition, I conducted the interview in their busy, noisy coffee shop and it seemed we had created a transcribing nightmare. In order to eliminate such problems in the future, Jasmine's filmed interview was done solo.

At this point in the process we were still doing what was for us, familiar anthropology; traditional interviewing, data collection, and creating written interpretations of the data. When presenting this information to the non-anthropologists of our working group, I never felt that they fully understood our process and were happy to leave this portion of the work to us without comment. I felt the need to present increasingly concise documents to update them on the progress of the

research, as a four or five page summary would not be read. This also, however, reflected the level of trust in our working relationship. Even though our process may not have been familiar to them, they trusted the outcome. It also supported me in the development of my own identity as a competent professional.

Up to this point in the project I would consider most of the activities to fall within traditional definitions of anthropological methods. After the lines of definition become more vague and the activities pushed me to adjust my anthropology lens and approach. This is also a point in the project where Darrah and I, the researchers, could have begun to fall away from the project. Soon we would undertake the filmed interviews, and could then easily have passed along the research findings, and allowed the producers to perform their work. However, we consciously attempted to stay involved for the entirety of the project, by remaining valuable assets in the development of the film. This was important because it allowed us to have more input into the representation of the data, ensuring its accuracy and relevance to the research. Also, by showing our ability to be flexible in our methodology, learn new skills quickly, and work across disciplines, we explored the value of applied anthropology as a field in collaborative projects, showing we can do more than just research.

Activity: <u>Transcription 'Cleaning'</u>

Our team wanted to make sure all information in the project was accessible, including the original interview transcripts. We found it necessary to review the transcriptions and edit them in order to ensure they were appropriate for the website as

an open-source, public document.

Process: Due to the fact that the interviews were going to be public, the process included editing grammar and punctuation (there are no commas in talking: we decide where to add them), editing out repetition, asides, "hems and haws", unnecessary interviewer dialogue, as well as mentions of embarrassing or harmful information. Names of people and organizations, and places or words in other languages needed to be clarified. Darrah and I initially assigned this task to one of our student assistants, Megan Aufdermaur. She would take a first pass at the cleaning, then forward it to me for a second pass, and I would forward it to Darrah. In the first attempt, Aufdermaur and I were reluctant to edit much and Darrah edited more heavily so the interviews would be read by a general audience. Subsequently, we followed suit, although this process was actually one of the most time consuming and tedious activities in the project, with hours spent on several passes through each transcription.

Outcome: All of the cleaned, shortened transcriptions were completed and posted to the website (discussed later) for anyone interested in some of the background data that went into the project.

Reflections: I found this activity difficult for a number of reasons. The primary difficulty was an ethical issue regarding the concept of editing an interview transcription. Throughout my education in anthropology I have been taught to value the words of the

subject in their authentic form. When transcribing, we include all of the words and utterances the interviewee says because it all could matter. I was now going to be making judgment calls on what should stay in, what should get deleted, and what should simply be re-worded or changed so it could be understood. While it was challenging my concepts of anthropology, I fully understood the reasoning and value for the activity, realizing that in doing a unique project, you may have to not only utilize new methods, but be flexible in your perspective. In effect the interviews were no longer just ethnographic data but narratives that had to engage a larger audience.

The second difficulty was operational, simply making the decisions on how to re-word, where to change punctuation, and when to simply delete. If this was going to be open source, it needed to be readable. I began to approach this task as I would the editing of a paper for class which really helped the process. Though the time it was taking to complete this, and the difficulty with the last few transcriptions over others, Darrah took on the task of finishing up this activity rather than doubling the amount of time put in by having me review them first.

Activity: Filmed semi-structured interviews with Sparkplugs

Conduct a second round of semi-structured interviews with each sparkplug on camera, collaborating with producer Mike Pierce from CreaTV.

Process: Each sparkplug interview was done on location, with sites chosen by Mike Pierce following site visits to assess if they would be visually and acoustically

appropriate. Setting up of camera, lighting, screens, microphones and more were the first steps in the process. This was Pierce's area of expertise; he had the experience and eye for set-up that I do not have. The interview was set up in a way so that only the interviewee would be seen on camera, with Pierce setting up directly behind me and the sparkplug facing us. Interviewing on camera changed the process slightly, in that while asking questions I had to reiterate to the sparkplug that they answer in full sentences so that it can stand alone without hearing my questions. Also having to consider pausing for outside noises that may interrupt the sound quality, or asking them to stop and repeat an answer for more clarity in delivery. Occasionally Pierce would also stop the interview to adjust lighting, microphones, switch tapes or even to simply adjust the hair or shirt of the sparkplug. Each interview took roughly one to two hours to complete.

Outcome: After completing this activity we complied over twelve hours of interview time with the sparkplugs, that now needed to be edited down to approximately eight minutes of film for each individual.

Reflections: In doing on-site, filmed interviews, we learned to consider the entirety of the environment and context. What's going on that is influencing the relationship between informant and researcher? How does this process affect what the interviewee reveals and does not reveal? How does the added element of the camera and the cameraman affect the process? The comfort level of being filmed varied for each of the sparkplugs, as some had more experience in this than others, and for a few it was

difficult to relax. Helping them do so became part of our jobs.

This interviewing format was also a learning process for me as well. Initially I was not comfortable stopping the informant and asking them to repeat themselves, or say something in a different way, with the fear of effecting the authenticity of the interview. However, I quickly became more comfortable with this as we went on, understanding that it serves a purpose in creating cohesive, clear video for editing. I also became more aware of the nuance of filming interviews and began to develop more of a producers lens so to speak. I was more intuitively aware of when and where to stop people, or make adjustments, even anticipating an approaching noise and pausing for it. Also, because we were in the editing phase of some interviews while still filming others, I began to gain a better understanding of what we were looking for in the editing room, and could adjust the way I interviewed the others accordingly. While at it's core this is basic ethnographic interviewing and very familiar to me, filming definitely requires a new set of skills, an adjusted perspective, and importantly, conscious reflections about anthropological ethics and angst.

Activity: <u>Unstructured secondary interviews</u>

Secondary filmed interviews for the sparkplugs with purpose of getting outside feedback regarding the success of the sparkplugs work. We would find two individuals per sparkplug to provide this supplemental data.

Process: First, our team would start by simply asking each sparkplug to identify some

individuals who they felt were familiar with their work and could speak to it. Whenever possible, we wanted to get one person who worked closely with the sparkplug, and another who was a bit more objective or removed for a balanced perspective on the sparkplugs' impact. There was not a standard instrument developed for these secondary interviews and Darrah and I typically would prepare a brief guideline for questioning beforehand that was specific to that individual and the sparkplug for which they were being question about.

Outcome: These interviews were typically much shorter that the sparkplug interviews, roughly a half hour to forty minutes.

Activity: Story Writing

In order for the producer to develop a 'script' and flow for the vignettes, a basic outline needed to be developed for each sparkplug to guide the rest of the editing process. Someone had to figure out the story to be told and write it so it can ultimately be used to guide editing and narration on film.

Process: As amateurs to this process, Darrah and I initially decided to proceed in a fashion that proved unproductive. At this point we were working very much from an anthropological methodology. Since we knew this activity was to inform the next steps of editing, we organized our thoughts around the 'bins' we would create for editing clips, with a naming system very similar to codes we would use in an analysis. We came up

with ten codes/bins we extracted from our knowledge of the interviews and other data, then began looking at film and attempting to select and sort clips. Within a few days we completed sorting two of the sparkplug interviews into these ten bins.

A later conversation with Pierce shifted our perspective on how to proceed in this process. When explaining our procedure, Pierce stated that he simply needed to know the introduction to the story , its 'heart', and why the story is significant. With this new understanding of the producer's lens, Darrah and I readjusted our approach. We deleted our previous bins and created three, simply titled, 'introduction', 'heart' and 'significance'. Our new procedure was to first watch a sparkplug interview in its entirety, step away and have a conversation about what we saw, then develop the substance for each section of the story; introduction, heart and significance.

Outcome: Each sparkplug had a two-three page summary story of their case study that lays out the introduction; background information, where they came from, the beginnings of their work, the heart; the concrete details of what they are doing and how they are working, and the significance; we also asked what makes these individuals important, what gives them legitimacy and sets them apart (APPENDIX F). These were to guide both Darrah and me in the first round of editing, as well as Pierce in the remainder of the production tasks.

Reflections: This activity and the subsequent adjustments we had to make to the process was an interesting point in the project. It highlighted the inter-disciplinary

aspects of what we were doing in a subtle way and created an opportunity to rethink an assumption about procedure for us as anthropologists. When hearing the producer state what he's looking for or in other words how he sees a film, we were quickly aware that how we were processing the information was not supporting the translation. It was up to us to adjust the way we were approaching the task, and present the data in a way that the producer could easily comprehend and use for editing the film.

Activity: Film Logging and Binning

Review all of the sparkplug interview film and select clips appropriate to each section of their three part story, keeping the total time of the initial clips per sparkplug under 30 minutes.

Process: Darrah and I received fifteen minutes of instruction about how to use an editing software program (Avid Media Composer) from Pierce, as well as instructions that we needed to start 'binning' (selecting start and stop points for clips and sorting them into the introduction, heart and significance bins). As I discussed in the story writing activity, we began this process by first watching an entire interview and then stepping away to develop the notes for the storyline. Then we returned to the editing room and watched the interview again, this time logging the film. Specifically, we looked for clips or sound bites from the interview, wrote down the start and stop times, placed it in the introduction, heart, or significance bin for the sparkplug, and titled the bit of film for reference. By using our storyline notes, we could more quickly select the clips

and organize them into their respective bins.

Due to the inconvenience of being tethered to the Avid workstation and competition for its use, this activity became difficult to complete. We decided that it would be more efficient if I performed the logging from home. We transferred all of the video files to an external hard drive, and purchased the Avid software to install on my computer. This allowed me to do all of the viewing and hand-written logging from home, so the CreaTV workstation was only needed to do the actual binning. This process took several weeks to complete and was one of the most time consuming activities.

Outcome: Each one to two hour sparkplug interview was edited and sorted into the three bins that corresponded to the written stories. In order for Pierce to have a manageable number of clips, we kept the total combined time for each sparkplug's three bins about 30 minutes.

Reflections: Due to my novice status in the world of film editing, this process got off to a frustrating start, because I didn't quite understand what I was looking for in the videos: "seeing" film as an editor si different than as an anthropologist. Choosing a good quote from a transcription to highlight a theme or a point is different from choosing one for video. I had to consider not just whether what they said was important to the research but whether it was stated clearly; that there was no background noise or interruptions; and, most importantly that the film clip was concise, as we have only eight minutes to tell the sparkplugs' story.

These factors complicate choosing, as there may well be something that the interviewee said that was poignant and interesting, but it was unusable: they stuttered through it with several pauses and restarts, or perhaps a bus went by in the background. To overcome this, I began to learn how to cut the film differently, and perhaps use the first twenty seconds and the last twenty seconds of a clip I found important, cutting out the run-on portion in the middle. There were a few similar techniques that became clearer to me as this activity unfolded. It was very much a 'learn as you go' process, developing more of an eye for what is not only good anthropology, but good film as well.

Activity: 'B' roll filming

Collecting additional footage related to each sparkplug, his or her communities and activities, to use in the vignettes. This provides visual context for the community work of the sparkplugs and overlay for dialogue, as well as enhancing the aesthetics of the vignettes.

Process: Almost all of the what the producers refer to as 'B' roll, was collected by Pierce alone. He independently contacted sparkplugs in order to coordinate times and places to get footage. This would range from street shots of the city or neighborhood, to sparkplugs interacting with friends, coworkers, etc. Since there was no interviewing component to this activity, it was not necessary for either of the researchers to participate, making it one of the few activities throughout the project that we did not have a direct hand in.

Outcome: Several hours of film in various locations to intertwine with interview footage in creating the final vignettes.

Activity: <u>Creating the website</u>

Create an open source website dedicated to the Silicon Valley Sparkplugs project, to include all of the various data compiled.

Process: To undertake this task St. John-Crane brought on board one of CreaTV's website designers. All of the content was written by our team, and would include as much of the data collected as possible. This included: the cleaned versions of the transcribed interviews; brief introductions of the sparkplugs plus their photos and videos; introductions of our team members with photos; background text on the project; the overall themes we identified from the interviews (APPENDIX G), and a survey Darrah and I constructed that could be taken by both non-sparkplugs and sparkplugs alike in order to gain more ideas about community work in the region and be used as data for future applications (APPENDIX H). As final versions of these different documents were completed and approved by the team, they were sent to St. John-Crane, to then be forwarded to the web designer for upload.

Beyond organizing the content for the site, there was also the process of designing the site itself. This was done by CreaTV's web designer but did include our feedback as our team reviewed several different layouts and homepages, as well as different iterations of Sparkplug logos and color schemes to be used on the site and for

other PR.

Outcome: www.sparkplugsproject.org (APPENDIX I) was successfully launched in March 2011. We chose not to make the vignettes available online at that time, and instead used the site to draw attention to a premiere screening of the film.

Activity: <u>Planning the Event</u>

Planning and organizing a screening event to premiere the vignettes along with a question and answer session with the seven sparkplugs, and a dialogue or participatory discussion with the audience.

Process: From the onset of the project, we had in mind an event that would be a component of the research and videos. The concept for what this would look like evolved, with our team originally envisioning two events. The idea of two events would require splitting the sparkplugs between them and grouping them based on some commonality in their work. We would show the videos and then have some sort of group discussions about spark plugging in Silicon Valley and what all of this means.

In another version, we considered having the two events, but showing the film at one, then having the question and answer and dialogue at a second event. This recognized our concern that attempting to all of those activities in one day might become monotonous or boring and lose the interest of the audience. Where exactly this

event would take place was still very much up in the air in the early stages, though we all agreed that it should be in the community and not the studio.

In our discussions we bumped up against the issue of who exactly would attend such an event and how to find them. St. John-Crane suggested we might want to partner with the ALF on this and utilize their contacts and board members. Our team has several meetings and phone conversations with different members of ALF, including Chris Block and Andrea Faiss, to consider their contributions and ideas for planning such an event, given that organizing community dialogues is a tenet of how ALF works. ALF advised that getting people to come to two separate events would be more difficult than getting them to sit through one that is a little more lengthy; we settled on a single event. We also decided to ask Chris Block, the CEO of the ALF, to moderate the event for us. Given his experience and visibility in this area, it might increase the likelihood of a successful event.

In the weeks approaching the date set for the event, Darrah, St. John-Crane and myself had a meeting at ALF with both Block and Faiss to review plans for how everything would unfold. The location and date were set, Camera 3 Cinema in downtown San Jose on March 28th at six o'clock PM . The tentative plan was to start by showing the film, proceeding to an Q & A with the sparkplugs, then, some sort of participatory discussion about engagement in some way. Block's ideas for this portion centered around asking the audience for testimonials, calling on particular individuals to share commitments to engaging their community, after seeing the examples provided by the sparkplugs. We left the meeting concerned that this approach did not really build on

the research done with the sparkplugs, and it put pressure on audience members to publicly state their intention to become sparkplugs.

In a later meeting Darrah and I decided on a different path for this portion of the event. Taking a cue from a previous project we had collaborated on, we incorporated a brainstorming activity that entailed participation from the audience. We utilized the survey we developed for the website to present the audience with five questions designed to elicit ideas for how to support sparkplugs and their work. We would then distribute Sharpies and multi-colored Post-Its to the audience and have them contribute their own ideas for each of the questions presented, and stick them up on large pieces of butcher paper in the front of the theatre. This activity fulfilled two important functions. First, it allowed for collaboration within and participation from, the audience, but without the added pressure of public commitment. They could quietly discuss ideas, write them down and put them up anonymously. Second, with this type of activity, we were not just getting immediate statements from people that may not go anywhere later, but collecting more data that can then be looked at and used for future iterations of the project, especially in developing the website.

 Outcome: The final plan for the event was as follows:

5:30 arrival and hors d'oeuvres for the sparkplugs, 6:00 introduction by St. John-Crane and start film; 7:00 begin Q & A with the sparkplugs with questions from audience fielded by Darrah and me; 7:30 begin brainstorming activity to be moderated by both Darrah and me; wrap up by St. John-Crane at 8:00 in order to clear the theatre by 8:30.

This event would also be filmed live by the CreaTV crew.

Reflections: Event planning was not an area that either Darrah or I were familiar with, and so we deferred to CreaTV's judgment. ALF's recommendation to shift from two events to one was also important, changing how we saw the unfolding of the event. This meant that we has less time to do everything we wanted, but were more likely to have higher attendance. There were three major things that we wanted accomplished in this event: showing the film in its entirety; Q & A with the sparkplugs, and some sort of audience participation. Our goal was to leave the event with more data that would be generated during the event. While event planning may not have been our strong suit, eliciting information from people is, and therefore we decided to design the data collection activity ourselves. This type of activity did not align with the perspective and methods of ALF, and resulted in the organization stepping back from its intended role in the project, and Block opting out of the moderator role. Instead, myself, Darrah, and St. John-Crane split up the moderation based on activities, which seemed more appropriate.

Activity: Screening

A three hour film screening and discussion about Silicon Valley Sparkplugs at Camera 3 cinema in Downtown San Jose CA, that would also be filmed live by CreaTV.

Process: The logistics for this activity were arranged and completed by the crew at

CreaTV. A few hours prior to the event start time, they began setting up cameras, lighting and sound. Our preliminary work was minimal and mostly involved reviewing the questions we were going to ask during the activity, preparing 'plan B' in case there was no participation or we ran short on time. I handwrote large posters for each of the questions that would be put at the front of the room for the brainstorming activity as well.

When Darrah and I arrived at the theatre around 4:30, the crew was doing final touches on lights and sound, as well as showing a test run of the film. Over the next hour, folks began to trickle into the theatre, having battled pouring rain to attend.

6:00-St. John-Crane gives a welcome, introduces the project and the team and cues the film. Darrah and I sat in the back of the theatre and watched the completed film for the first time on the large screen.

6:50-Film concludes and St. John-Crane calls the sparkplugs up to the front where Darrah and I take over for the Q & A. The seven sparkplugs sat on barstools in the front of the room with individual microphones, and Darrah and I had wireless mics to roam the room and take questions. Coming directly after the showing of the film, interest in the sparkplugs was high and hands began to raise quickly. Some of the questions asked were directed at all the sparkplugs, requiring us to field the questions and direct them to one person in particular. We took questions for about 20 minutes before wrapping up and having the sparkplugs return to the audience.

7:20-With help from friends and former SJSU students, we began to distribute the Post-It

pads and Sharpies to the audience and put the brainstorming posters up in the front of the room. Darrah and I would alternate questions and the assistants went through the audience collecting the Post-Its with ideas on them, and stuck them on the poster of the corresponding question.

The assistants helped us avoid having everyone coming up to the front of the room themselves, which was important for a few reasons. First, logistically it would be chaos with fifty to seventy-five people all crowding around these posters trying to put their ideas up. We wanted to make participation easy for the audience and with this process they may have gotten frustrated and ceased participating. Second, because CreaTV was filming this event, it was important not to have too much activity going on. With everyone moving around to room, blocking shots or even possibly damaging equipment, the crew could not have worked effectively. Designating a handful of people to move around the room avoided too much commotion, streamlining the activity to ensure that the crew could get quality shooting. In addition, the Post-Its were properly placed on the posters.

Outcome: The event succeeded, in terms of attendance, participation and data collection. There were no mishaps or unexpected events that arose (except the stormy weather), and we were able to stay within our timeline quite well. I would have liked a little more time for the Q & A portion as interest seemed high, but it was perhaps better to end on a high note rather than draining the audience of questions (APPENDIX J).

Reflections: The production quality of the film was professional: Pierce is an Emmy

Award winning editor and it clearly showed in the film. In the beginning stages of the

planning to do some kind of film, I never envisioned something this polished and of such

high quality. Given my familiarity with ethnographic film, this was leaps and bounds

ahead in terms of the production and aesthetics. In the editing phase, I had concerns

regarding whether the short time frame of the vignettes would be enough to really

convey the information and provide enough depth into the sparkplugs lives. When

seeing the final product at the screening, I was impressed how well the story of each

person was told, staying faithful to the research, in just eight minutes.

When we pitched the brainstorming activity to the rest of team, they were

agreable but it was obvious they did not fully comprehend what it would look like in

action. I had slight concerns that the audience might not get it as well, but it turned out

to be very successful. After an initial hesitation at the first question, the conversation

level rose and Post-Its were rapidly produced. Quickly, the front of the room was

covered in colorful Post-Its as a very visual sign that ideas had been generated. Plans for

analyzing and using this data in future applications of the Sparkplug Project are currently

in progress.

LESSONS LEARNED

For Darrah and me, it was a unique experience to be part of a film project from

ideation through to completion. By doing so, I was able to see how much a project can evolve, grow and change as it unfolds. Even when I look back at our original proposal, some of the activities changed or perhaps were deleted, and the timeline we had originally suggested turned out to be extremely modest once research and data collection began. In the early stages, we stuck fairly strictly to this timeline, but once we began to be realistic about how much time this effort would require, we collectively decided it would be better to do something of higher quality, something that could have an strong impact on the wider community. Working with a three person team, making time to find the right individuals, to complete all interviews, B roll, secondary interviews, editing, setting up the website, and planning the screening event put us over our initial timeline by over a year. However, if we had rushed we would not have the distinct, high-quality products that eventually emerged. When working for clients in the future, timelines will be more strict and this amount of flexibility rare. The ability to conduct rapid appraisals is valuable and if I were to undertake a similar project in the future I feel I have a solid model from which to work under more constrained timelines.

There were also elements of the project that remained ambiguous, which has the possibility of creating anxiety. For example, while we knew we wanted to have some kind of event, conversation or dialogue, it was not until the very late stages of the project that it took form. Even the films themselves were not scripted or storyboarded early on. In fact, not until Darrah and I began writing the stories in the early editing phase did we begin to see the flow of the film and understand the message we were trying to convey. These examples really highlight the need for flexibility in such work, but

also the need for anticipation and planning. As new information becomes available, or leads and ideas go nowhere, you must be comfortable with assessing, moving on, coming up with something new, and simply being able to work towards something even though you're not completely sure what it is. Excessive rigidity can stifle creativity, resulting in missed opportunities. This project would not have been as successful as it was if our team did not have the balance of structure and flexibility, with the vision to accept ambiguity and change. We went into that initial meeting with Dave Mills having little idea what was going to come out of it almost two years later, but we were all pleased with the outcome.

Working on this project also provided me with an opportunity to work across disciplinary boundaries, allowing for reflection and a few lessons for future collaborative work. While working with media producers allowed me to learn new skills and perspectives, it also required me to reflect on my own training, on what anthropology is, to *me*, and how I am willing to use it in a variety of applied projects. Cleaning transcriptions, filming interviews, and editing footage are all activities that push the boundaries of anthropology, but rather than having angst, I readily adjusted my ideas about what constitutes anthropology. As anthropologists, we tend to put ourselves in a very conservative and narrow box of definition, questioning projects or activities that push us into new or unfamiliar territory. In doing any kind of applied work, you have to expect that there will be challenges to the anthropological status quo, and assess your own ability to accept them or not. As a discipline that attempts to put individual perspectives into a macro social context, one that has a keen ability to uncover emic

perspectives, we have an opportunity to contribute to deeper, more robust kinds of media production, but it requires us to redefine anthropology, or, at least reassess our relationship to it. By not being tied to the *title* of anthropologist, I was allowed the flexibility to focus on the work necessary to complete the project. Once I did that, much of the angst regarding whether something *is* or *is not* anthropology became less of a concern.

The Silicon Valley Sparkplugs Project was a model for inter-disciplinary collaboration. As the researcher in such a project, there is the risk of being limited to that specific role, with possible contributions to other aspects of the project going unrecognized. Ideally, as a researcher I would like to stay at table as long as possible, to ensure that the research is comprehended and utilized, and for the opportunity to gain new perspectives and skills as I work. To keep yourself in the game longer as a researcher, you have to make the effort rather than waiting for the invitation. It is my responsibility to show that my skills are not limited, and demonstrate my value to the project long term. I need to be able to walk the line between disciplines. Exercising my ability to learn and acquire new skills quickly, making myself useful in ways that may be unfamiliar because inter-disciplinary collaboration will not work without some humility. I have to be able to acknowledge when my own methods may not be the most appropriate for the task at hand. Though simultaneously, I am maintaining a strong foundation in my own skills and expertise, as it is that unique perspective of anthropology that adds value to my role in the project. I have to open to learning new approaches, be able to reflect on my own methodologies for legitimacy and

appropriateness, and be willing to adjust accordingly.

<u>FUTURE APPLICATIONS</u>

Workplace studies are of growing significance in many disciplines, particularly in applied anthropology where the body of literature is constantly being expanded. We have become increasingly aware of the value for understanding *how* people are working, as uncovering these nuances can lead to positive changes that support workers, and increase productivity and satisfaction. For many of the individuals in this sparkplugs project, doing community engagement work is their job; it becomes a very integral part of their lives. They are interacting with technology in distinct ways, utilizing networks, and leveraging entrepreneurial skills, making community engagement a unique type of work taking place. This work is also becoming more critical, as we continue into a period of struggling governments, increasing economic hardships and cutting of social services across the spectrum. By expanding our scope to the work taking place in the social justice arena, and applying our knowledge to *how* this type of work is occurring, we can support an increase in community engagement, service and leadership in our communities.

A step in that direction has been this sparkplugs project; identifying grassroots individuals who are already working successfully in their respective communities, and exploring the processes and structures of that work. What were the barriers and obstacles they encountered? How was communication happening? How were they interacting with and appropriating technology for their own purposes? How do they

cooperate with other individuals or groups? The answers to these questions has increased our understanding of how community engagement can be better supported and encouraged. Projects like this can help us expand our concept of 'work', and the various ways it can be defined, and make progress in how we understand community leadership, and civic engagement in this era.

The use of film in this project highlights the future contributions that anthropology can have in the media realm as well. There are many possibilities for using anthropological data to inform a range of media productions, to create representations that are research-based and informed, but also accessible and aesthetically pleasing for a wider audience. The growing lack of informed content on television presents many opportunities for creating more substantial programming from an anthropological perspective. Local level organizations such as CreaTV that allow for community created and produced content to be put on the air are a starting point. The possibilities for production of news and other shows through community television, that are supported by strong ethnographic research, yet also appealing to an audience of non-academics are now accessible. Even further, the ease at which media content can now be shared and exchanged via the web only increases the ability to reach an increasingly wider audience without the need for technological expertise. This also highlights a model for bridging anthropology sub-disciplines as well, as an opportunity for combining applied anthropology's goals of using research to find solutions to practical problems with visual anthropology's methods of representation in a more polished, fresh way that has potential to bring our work into a public sphere.

Lastly, we should also consider how this information contributes to a wider conversation about civic engagement. This project provides a model for understanding how community leaders work, which has the potential to inform a curriculum supporting a growth of engagement, as well as how to better support those individuals who are already are involved. A resource on civic engagement in a digital form can be easily shared and utilized in classroom settings, corporations, non-profit or local government entities. Our team is already brainstorming the possibilities for creating individual modules based on the larger themes we uncovered during the course of this project, and organizing workshops around them that can be tailored to at variety of audiences with a range of goals. A Civics class 2.0 if you will, which can be a foundational piece to start a shift in our thinking, about what leadership means, and *how* we engage with our communities in a fast changing, dynamic and complicated world.

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